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**A Safe and Secure  
Environment for Older  
Australians**



# **A Safe and Secure Environment for Older Australians**

Marianne James, Adam Graycar and Pat Mayhew



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# Foreword

All who have some policy responsibility for the well-being of older people strive towards the goal of a healthier and safer ageing Australia. This report, written by the Australian Institute of Criminology for the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, blends concepts of safety, security and wellbeing.

Research in recent decades has consistently shown that older people are far less likely to be victims of crimes than people in other age groups. Despite this decreased risk, the patterns of victimisation of older people differ in important respects from patterns in younger age groups. Research has also consistently shown that older people are more likely than younger people to be more fearful of crime.

The Australian Institute of Criminology has been researching crime and older people for more than 10 years. This publication adds substantially to the previous research in that it outlines a crime prevention framework for dealing with an older population. In so doing, it demonstrates some of the ways forward for achieving enhanced wellbeing that combines health and safety. This report also challenges some of the traditional thinking on fear of crime.

Empirical research was conducted for this project. This allowed a fuller picture to be obtained of the extent to which current policies, services and programs are providing the opportunity for older Australians to live a safe and confident life in our communities, as well as documenting the relevant issues which impact on their perceptions of safety and security.

It is important that policy both reflects the perceptions of older people and also creates an environment that ensures their safety. Reducing crime and its causes, as well as the fear of crime, supports the key objective of safe, healthy and supportive communities.

**Adam Graycar**

**Director, Australian Institute of Criminology**

**June 2003**

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## Disclaimer

This research report does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the Commonwealth Government.

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# Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
CCTV	closed-circuit television
CLASP	Community Liaison and Advisory Safety Project
COTA	Council on the Ageing
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
CSS	Crime and Safety Survey
HACC	Home and Community Care program
ICVS	International Crime Victims Survey
NCAVAC	National Campaign against Violence and Crime
NCP	National Crime Prevention
NHMP	National Homicide Monitoring Program
NSA	National Seniors' Association
WHO	World Health Organisation

# Executive Summary

As is the case with all Australians, older people are concerned about their safety. People aged more than 65 years are counted as our older population. In Australia today there are 2.4 million people in this age group. The numbers are growing rapidly, with one-quarter of the population projected to be aged over 65 years by the middle of the century. Older people are a diverse group and few generalisations apply across the board. Almost two-thirds of women aged over 75 years live alone; just over half of people aged over 65 years have some form of disability (this being significantly higher in the 80-plus age group); and one-third of older people were born overseas (a little over one-quarter of whom come from a culturally and linguistically diverse background).

This report outlines a crime prevention framework for dealing with an ageing population. In so doing, it demonstrates some of the ways forward for achieving the goal of a healthier and safer ageing Australia.

The broad pattern of victimisation for personal offences (such as robbery, assault, sexual assault and homicide) is consistent with findings throughout Western countries: older people face far lower risks than other age groups. Risks for older people are also lower for household crimes such as burglary and vehicle theft. However, while older people are less likely than younger people to be subject to consumer fraud, within their age group consumer fraud occurs more frequently than other types of crime. A recent Australian survey showed that for older people consumer fraud was over twice as frequent as assault or theft for instance, and 13 times more frequent than robbery.

It is not old age *per se* which reduces the risk of crime, but some of the other factors associated with it—for example, the tendency to spend more time at home, to live in more secure forms of accommodation, and to not own a motor vehicle. However, some groups of older people will be more at risk than others, as is the case for all Australians. In particular, older people in high-crime areas will be little protected, since property offenders are unlikely to know who owns the property they are targeting.

Regardless of risk, crime can impact greatly on some older people's lives. Some groups of older people are more afraid of crime than others. Those most likely to be afraid are those who:

- are more socially and physically vulnerable to the consequences of crime;
- live in areas with high levels of crime and disorder;
- are on a lower income; and
- have been previously victimised or in contact with other victims.

There is research that suggests a relationship between anxiety about crime, community involvement and self-confidence. Those older people who are most active and involved in their communities, or who are made to feel involved, are least likely to be anxious about crime. Conversely, the more isolated older people become from others, the more likely they are to lose confidence and trust, and to withdraw further.

Town planning and land-use decisions are important crime prevention, public safety and public health issues. Overall, physical and mental health benefits can result when people live in accessible, safe, well designed, thoughtful structures and landscapes. The social and built environment can facilitate integration with other resources and other generations.

Noting the effects on older people, the media should be encouraged to minimise sensationalist reporting of crime against older people. They should also provide practical information on crime prevention, and promote positive images of active and involved older Australians in local communities.

The empirical research conducted for this project included discussions with stakeholder groups. These groups included all levels of government, the police, older people's organisations and older people themselves. A questionnaire, the aim of which was to catalogue programs that increase the safety and security of older Australians, was developed and sent to all relevant agencies. Focus groups were also held in various centres across Australia. Their aim was to elicit how older people perceive crime in their local area and the types of strategies they would like to see introduced to make them feel more secure.

The AIC survey identified three types of programs that are currently running in Australia which specifically aim to increase the safety and confidence of older people. These are:

- programs which increase personal safety and property security (56 per cent);
- programs concerned with social interaction and community participation (24 per cent); and
- programs which deal with the financial exploitation of older people (two per cent).

A further 18 per cent of the programs identified were concerned with the safety of the community as a whole.

The focus groups revealed that crime is of particular concern to many older people. In particular, it was noted that young people gathered together in groups have the potential to affect older people's use of public space. The focus groups also revealed that older people are concerned that there is no longer a visible police presence on the streets. Keeping active and socialising with other people, as well as living in interactive neighbourhoods, was said to reduce fear of crime.

The priority is to create safer communities for older people while diminishing their fear of crime. It was concluded that local government is the most appropriate level of government to recognise and effectively respond to local needs and aspirations. Crime prevention and fear reduction programs for older people are therefore best implemented at local government level, as part of a community safety strategy, and in partnership with other key agencies and stakeholders.

However, it must be recognised that not all local government areas have the same level of commitment to implementing appropriate programs. Nor do they have sufficient resources to regard programs for older people as a priority. It is for this reason that, while local government may be best placed to bring together the wide range of community groups and organisations to address the issue of crime prevention and fear reduction, local government is not the only authority to be considered in bringing these people together. A partnership approach that capitalises on the collective influence and ability of all the key stakeholders to promote crime prevention programs for older people may also be successful.

Guidelines for the development and implementation of programs to increase the safety and security of older Australians could be developed by the Australian Institute of Criminology in consultation with Commonwealth and state/territory government agencies for dissemination to local government agencies and community organisations. Financial assistance could be obtained from the corporate sector.

Reducing crime and its causes supports the key objective of safe, healthy and supportive communities. It requires partnerships that include all levels of government, the private sector, non-government organisations, the police and community organisations.

There is relatively good information available on the scale and nature of the crime and safety problems confronting older Australians, although more would always be useful. There is a need to target strategies to those contexts where older people are vulnerable and where, for various reasons, they have disproportionate fears about crime to the extent that it limits their quality of life and results in social isolation. The challenge, as the Australian population ages, is to achieve a balance between responses that protect older people who are dependent and vulnerable (due to physical or mental frailty) whilst at the same time acknowledging the needs, experiences and potential resources of older people who do not fit into these categories. This report will add to the knowledge base for creating a safer Australia.

# 1 Introduction

## Background

Reducing crime and its causes, as well as the fear of crime, supports the key objective of safe, healthy and supportive communities. Generally viewed as a whole-of-government outcome that works best through consolidated cross-agency efforts frequently involving partnerships, crime prevention work and fear reduction strategies can include all levels of government, the private sector, non-government organisations, the police and community organisations. While some agencies or groups will take major responsibility for achieving various crime prevention outcomes, these goals will often be broader than individual agency-level outcomes, thereby requiring significant inter-sectoral cooperation.

## Current Policy Challenges

Current policy challenges are to ensure that all older Australians not only live a safe and confident life as part of our communities, but that they also feel safe and secure within those communities. To ensure this, the main policy emphasis should be on:

- promoting a sense of security and safety to reduce older people's fear of crime;
- implementing programs that increase the physical security and personal safety of vulnerable older people;
- implementing programs that ensure the financial safety of vulnerable older people;
- identifying and using crime prevention techniques that encourage supportive social environments;
- effectively utilising the social capital that is available within the older population and in the wider community; and
- reducing media sensationalism.

These policy challenges are discussed in detail in the following chapters of this report.



# Crime Prevention and Healthy Ageing

Crime prevention emphasises the need to examine the causes and not just the consequences of crime. In the late 1980s, several Australian states began to take an interest in the potential of crime prevention to address the growing crime problem (Cameron & Laycock 2002). In recent years older people have been an important component of this policy attention.

In its simplest form, crime prevention can be viewed in terms of primary prevention (stopping the problem before it happens), secondary prevention (early identification and intervention) and tertiary prevention (treating the problem after it has occurred to prevent its recurrence).

So, while primary prevention in the public health realm may involve action to avoid the occurrence of a disease or negative health consequences in the first place, in the crime prevention realm that action will focus on measures to reduce or prevent the occurrence of particular forms of crime. Such action might focus on reducing opportunities for crime, strengthening community and social structures, or developmental strategies for reducing individual risk or enhancing protective factors.

Similarly, while secondary prevention in the public health field may address the early identification and treatment of illness, with a view to preventing its recurrence, crime prevention work will also focus on rapid and effective interventions designed to manage and divert (frequently young) offenders from reoffending.

Finally, there will also be a need to manage chronic or recurrent health/crime problems as part of the tertiary prevention phase. In the case of crime prevention, such measures are likely to involve the larger institutions of the criminal justice system (such as courts and prisons) but, just like the public health sector, a wide range of other players will need to become involved if prevention is to remain the long-term outcome.

The concept of healthy ageing is gaining momentum as an important goal for all societies currently experiencing unprecedented population ageing. In a 1999 report, the World Health Organisation determined that:

*...the view of ageing as a crisis must be rejected; ageing has a lead time of decades rather than years and provides societies with the opportunity to prepare themselves through appropriate policies and programs for an ageing population...the need to focus on promoting health and*

*minimising dependency of all older people is a common principle of action. This approach has been termed “healthy ageing” or “ageing well”.*  
(World Health Organisation 1999)

Healthy ageing both facilitates and is facilitated by active participation in life. It is important that people have physical, social and mental wellbeing throughout their lives. Through certain life choices, individuals can play an active role in determining *how* they age. This development is a lifelong process (Baltes 2002; Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing 2001).

These are all goals that can be shared with and integrated into actions for the prevention of crime against older Australians. What is required is an improved understanding of the scale and nature of the crime and safety problems confronting older Australians, the range of suitable preventive actions available, and the contexts and ways in which they may be applied.

## The Demographic and Social Context

Aspects relevant to the demographic and social context of ageing in Australia are summarised as follows:

- In 2001, 13 per cent (n=2,494,705) of the population was aged over 65 years; three per cent (n=581,610) of the total population was aged over 80 years. The percentage of people aged over 65 years is projected to rise to 16 per cent in 2016 and then to 26 per cent in 2051. The internal structure of the older population is also changing significantly, with projections showing that one-quarter of the aged population will be more than 80 years old in 2016 (ABS 2002a; AIHW 2002).
- Presently in Australia, almost two-thirds of women aged over 75 years live alone (ABS 2001).
- The population aged over 65 years in many rural and regional areas is increasing more quickly than the rest of the population (ABS 2002a).
- One-third of those aged over 65 years were born overseas, and one in four of these people come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (ABS 2002a).
- One in 38 Indigenous Australians are aged more than 65 years (using standard definitions of old age for Indigenous people is problematic as their lifespan is almost 20 years less than other Australians) (ABS 2002a).
- Just over half of people aged over 65 years have some form of disability and this is significantly higher in the 80-plus age group (ABS 2002a).

- The personal capacities of older people should be taken into consideration. People must be assessed on the basis of their own merits; some may be sprightly at 90 or incapable at 65. Defining what is “normal” for any age group can create the danger that those who are most capable will be taken as the general standard. This could create unrealistic expectations for others in that age group and disappointment if they fail to meet the standards expected (House of Representative Standing Committee on Long-Term Strategies 1992).

## The Project

The present project was undertaken by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), in partnership with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), the Council on the Ageing (COTA), and the National Seniors’ Association (NSA), on behalf of the Office for an Ageing Australia in the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. The aim of the project was to obtain a fuller picture of the extent to which current policies, services and programs are providing the opportunity for older Australians to live a safe and confident life in our communities, as well as documenting relevant issues which impact on their perceptions of safety and security.

The project included:

- examination of existing knowledge about crime prevention as it relates to older people;
- an audit of crime prevention programs concerned with older people from all jurisdictions in Australia;
- an analysis of the victimisation, crime experiences and fear of crime of older people;
- identification of good practice in crime prevention programs;
- examination of the partnerships involved in crime prevention; and
- a policy framework.

The project required that the stakeholder groups be well defined and that the methodological tools be capable of eliciting information that truly reflects the various views of the stakeholder groups. The stakeholder groups included Commonwealth, state and local governments, the police, older people’s organisations, community organisations and older people themselves.

The consultancy was conducted from October 2001 to March 2003 and included the following steps:

- a reference group meeting was held in Canberra to clarify the objectives, scope and work program and the expectations of the consultancy (12 September 2001);
- a reference group meeting was held in Canberra (23 October 2001) to discuss the draft questionnaire and the location of the proposed focus groups;
- the questionnaire was distributed to all Commonwealth and state government agencies with responsibility for older people, all local government agencies, state and territory police, older peoples' organisations (such as COTA, NSA and APSL) and community organisations (such as the Salvation Army, Apex and Lions clubs) (31 October 2001);
- collection of criminal justice data in relation to older people was undertaken (30 September 2001 to 30 March 2002);
- a progress report was sent to all reference group members (26 March 2002);
- focus groups were conducted in Perth (5–6 March 2002), Townsville (13–15 August 2002) and Canberra (5 September 2002); and
- a roundtable seminar was held at the Australian Institute of Criminology (6 December 2002).

This report demonstrates some of the ways forward for achieving a healthier and safer ageing Australia, presenting findings and recommendations from the project. This first chapter has introduced key crime prevention and healthy ageing concepts as well as a demographic and social overview of older Australians. Chapter 2 provides a crime prevention framework. Chapter 3 documents the risks facing older Australians, with reference to criminal justice data. Chapter 4 examines older people's fears of crime victimisation. Chapter 5 presents the methodology and findings of the present study. Chapter 6 identifies practical measures that can be put into practice to prevent crime victimisation. Finally, Chapter 7 provides a policy framework.

# 2 Crime Prevention Framework

A specific research and policy focus on the issue of crime against older people needs to be poised between tackling an important and pressing social issue and compounding unhelpful stereotypes that portray older people as vulnerable and dependent. Making distinctions between groups of people on the basis of age alone overlooks or masks a range of other important social indicators, as well as the diversity of experience, status and social location within that group.

In order to enhance the personal safety and security of older people, it is important to recognise that most are not dependent and are not apprehensive about crime. However, it is equally important to understand that the achievement of personal safety and security for older Australians must not be viewed as a marginal benefit merely to a small group of people, for which the cost is not justified. Crime prevention work is distinguished by some highly varied patterns of investment, the returns of which will be varied. Not all of these returns will be immediate or quantifiable in direct financial benefits. Crime prevention for older Australians will be one of those mixed investment/benefit scenarios where the major returns will be felt by the broader community.

This chapter presents a framework for interventions to prevent crime against older people. It addresses the elements that make up the three levels of the basic prevention model: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. It also outlines the special role of collaborative partnership approaches in crime prevention work, as well as the importance of evaluation both for measuring program effectiveness and informing future directions in crime prevention work. Finally, aspects of approaches to designing local crime prevention and community safety strategies are outlined, particularly as they relate to issues for older Australians.

## Conceptualising Crime Prevention

As already described, crime prevention is commonly described in terms of three levels of intervention: primary, secondary and tertiary (Brantingham & Faust 1976).

## Primary Prevention

Primary prevention, like primary health care, is directed at stopping the problem before it happens. It is defined by Brantingham and Faust (1976, p. 290) as identifying “conditions of the physical and social environment that provide opportunities for or precipitate criminal acts”. To simplify their approach slightly, primary prevention falls into two parts: social and situational.

### *Social and Developmental Prevention*

Social prevention addresses risk factors for offending: alleviating poverty, improving health and education and reducing unemployment. It may, for example, involve school-based programs to encourage law-abiding behaviour or reduce truancy. Social crime prevention may also involve the community, organising residents to take preventive action and to increase surveillance and guardianship. Developmental approaches to primary prevention are a special form of social prevention in that they focus more specifically on identifying and strengthening personal and community protective factors that will work to reduce the occurrence of crime in the first place.

### *Situational Prevention*

Situational prevention, in contrast, addresses the physical environment. This entails not only the design and physical layout of buildings in accordance with the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), but designing goods and services with crime prevention in mind, increasing the risks associated with committing crime and reducing the rewards for the effort (Clarke & Homel 1997). In its simplest form, situational prevention has been portrayed as a combination of “lights, locks and landscapes” —encompassing, for example, those aspects of the physical environment most likely to be identified by offenders as weak points that make their offending easier, as well as those areas most amenable for direct intervention.

It is often argued that situational approaches to primary prevention are cheaper and quicker to achieve than social and developmental strategies. However, each comes with its own patterns of costs and benefits. For example, both a school-based developmental initiative and a closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance system (a situational measure) will have significant set-up and ongoing operational costs. Yet the benefits from the

CCTV system are often seen to be immediate, while the benefits of the school-based initiative are long-term and effectively deferred for several years. Evidence suggests, however, that measures like CCTV can have a significant decay in their effectiveness over time (Eck 2002) while school-based initiatives can provide significant continuing benefits (Gottfredson et al. 2002).

## **Secondary Prevention**

Secondary prevention, on the other hand, “engages in early identification of potential offenders and seeks to intervene in their lives in such a way that they never commit criminal violation” (Brantingham & Faust 1976, p. 290). It addresses those at risk of offending in the way that secondary preventive medicine operates to inoculate those at enhanced risk of disease from becoming infected. It may involve targeting high-risk neighbourhoods or establishing neighbourhood dispute resolution schemes (Cameron & Laycock 2002).

## **Tertiary Prevention**

Tertiary prevention is essentially about the operation of the criminal justice system. It deals with offending after it has happened, and involves intervention in the lives of known offenders in such a fashion that they will not commit further offences. In so far as it is preventive, it operates through incapacitation and individual deterrence, and perhaps offers the opportunity of rehabilitation through treatment in prisons or through other sentencing options (Cameron & Laycock 2002).

Table 1 provides a conceptualisation of the elements of a crime prevention framework.

## **Collaborative Working and Partnerships**

Crime prevention frequently works best in partnerships, and the strength of responses is achieved through inter-sectoral cooperation. Dealing with crime has historically been the responsibility of the criminal justice system (for example police, courts and prisons). While each of these continue to have an important role, the involvement of other agencies is also important for developing a broad and effective approach. Responsibility for putting into place the necessary means to prevent crime is often beyond the scope of any

**Table 1: Model of crime prevention**

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Tertiary</b>
Social	Education and socialisation, public awareness and advertising campaigns, Neighbourhood Watch	Work with those early in their offending careers: youths, the unemployed, community regeneration	Rehabilitation, confronting offending behaviour, after-care, diversion, reparation
Situational	Target-hardening, surveillance, opportunity reduction/removal, environmental design, general deterrence	Target-hardening and design measures for “at risk” groups, risk prediction and assessment, deterrence	Individual deterrence, incapacitation, assessment of “dangerousness” and “risk”

Source: Home Office 2002

one agency or sector, including the criminal justice system. Achieving successful crime prevention work is an example of fundamental change in the way government policy operates and can be seen in a number of sectors, particularly in the delivery of human services. What this means is that the broader community must be encouraged to accept ownership of, and show leadership in, community safety and crime prevention. It also means government agencies that would not normally be involved are engaging in the crime prevention enterprise.

This requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach, and is about breaking down barriers and cooperating to achieve negotiated, shared outcomes of mutual benefit. These agreed outcomes must be built into the business plans of all relevant agencies in both the government and private sectors. It is not about altering or diverting the core business of these agencies, but creating a recognition that community safety outcomes have a value in their own right in improving core business results.

Partnerships between the criminal justice sector, health services, social service departments, recreational and educational institutions, housing departments, local government, older people’s organisations, voluntary organisations and older people themselves need to be supported and encouraged by Commonwealth and state government agencies.

This collaborative approach also needs to consider the perceptions or experiences that hard-to-reach groups may have had as victims of crime, or those who experience fear of crime (such as frail older people, isolated older people and older people from some sections of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds).



## Evaluation

Effective public policy and practice needs to be based on the best available evidence. Effective crime prevention policies and programs are no exception. As far as possible, what is done to prevent crime should be based on what works. Where evidence is poor or tentative, interventions need to be subject to rigorous evaluation in order for the available evidence base to grow to better inform future program and policy development (Sherman et al. 2002).

Successful crime prevention work characteristically includes a proactive, evidence-based approach, targeted priorities, supported and enabled by collaborative partnerships that engage the community.

Evaluation is necessary to measure whether significant programs have been successful in meeting their objectives. These evaluations establish a body of evidence about the types of programs that work under certain conditions to prevent and reduce crime, and highlight what types of programs are unsuccessful in preventing and reducing crime. Evaluation can also work to reveal procedures that are flawed or particularly successful. This sort of evaluation, which focuses on processes, is particularly important in areas where methods and techniques are adapted from other populations or settings. It also helps to strengthen project management processes and capacity.

## Local Crime Prevention

There are a number of very well established principles of local crime prevention. These include:

- local leadership and involvement;
- a partnership approach;
- strategies based on good information;
- strategies which link solutions to problems;
- evidence-based initiatives;
- public consultation—responding to local concerns;
- building the means to evaluate action—ideally looking at cost-effectiveness and the best solutions;
- support by central government resources; and
- setting targets and requiring reports on how far these targets are met.

# Community Safety Strategy

As outlined above, there are numerous approaches to crime prevention at various levels. However, much of the focus at local level has tended to concentrate on situational crime prevention. This has involved manipulating the physical environment, and includes such measures as:

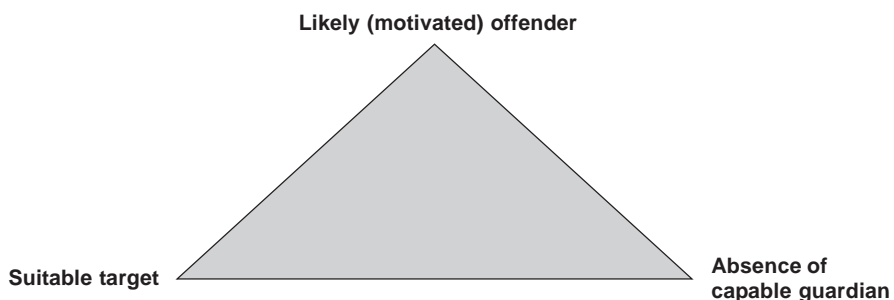
- target hardening (for example, car locks and door chains);
- altering/influencing environmental design (for example, defensive planting schemes); and
- surveillance (for example, CCTV).

However, such strategies only deal with one factor in the crime prevention equation and often do not impact upon the wider concept of community safety (Home Office 2002.)

Following on from the UK's Crime and Disorder Act (1998), it is now much more appropriate to talk about community safety rather than crime prevention. A community safety strategy (Home Office 2002) draws on a "recipe" of crime as shown in Figure 1.

This model is based on a much respected theory within criminology (Cohen & Felson 1979), and suggests that it is when the three elements or points of the triangle converge then crime is increasingly likely to occur. In thinking about crime prevention, therefore, all these elements must be addressed, not merely one angle of the triangle. This model of crime prevention takes into account the social and situational context of crime and advocates strategies at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

**Figure 1: Crime prevention theory**



Source: Home Office 2002, adapted from Cohen & Felson 1979

By emphasising a community safety strategy, using an underlying crime prevention model, it is possible to focus on the following key areas:

- crime;
- fear of crime;
- quality of life issues; and
- local solutions and partnerships.

Cohen and Felson's (1979) model suggests that crime is likely to occur when a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian all converge in time and space. By addressing this principle, it is possible to address the social and environmental sources of crime. Crime is recognised as a multifaceted and complex phenomenon and the model explores the links between community safety and a wide range of social issues (Home Office 2002).

Whilst community safety encompasses and/or facilitates crime prevention, it does have certain key defining features. Community safety has therefore come to mean working within a context of partnerships, and addressing quality of life issues with an additional focus on fear of crime. Its strategies fit into the various dimensions of the model of crime prevention shown in Figure 1. A community safety strategy encompasses a range of specific initiatives in order to improve community safety at a number of levels (Home Office 2002).

## **Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing**

The safety, health and wellbeing of older people impacts on, and is influenced by, the entire range of services provided in the community, not just the criminal justice and health sectors.

Key contributory elements influencing the other determinants of wellbeing in older age are:

- having positive attitudes, both as individuals and as a society, towards ageing as a normal stage of development;
- supporting continued independence; and
- preparing for increasing frailty and dependence associated with growing older.

For many older people, quality of life is determined by the strength of their family relationships, the links they have with the broader community, and the extent to which they feel they are valued and respected members of society. As the population ages, the wellbeing of older people depends on recognition of the importance of these factors. It is also necessary to recognise that continuing social changes will have an impact on some of the traditional support networks available to older people. For example, family relationships are changing, with the result that older people may have less of a “family network” to call on than in the past. The demands of working lives and modern living have also meant that people’s links with the broader community might be fewer than in the past (Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing 2001).

If older people’s links with their family and the broader community are weak, life-changing events such as retirement from work or the death of a partner can result in older people becoming isolated or requiring levels of formal support that are greater than would otherwise be the case. It is important that older people do not become marginalised by their communities as this could increase their levels of fear about becoming a victim of crime (Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing 2001).

Personal safety, both in the home and in the community, is an important issue for older people. Those older people who are vulnerable through factors such as physical disability or residence in a high-crime neighbourhood need to be a particular focus of policy attention. In a similar manner, policies are necessary which target older people who experience fear of crime to the level where it limits their quality of life and results in social isolation (Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing 2001).

## Healthy Cities

Over the past decade, the principle that community safety is a key factor in health and wellbeing has been promoted internationally by the World Health Organisation (1999). In the WHO Safe Communities context, the term “safe community” implies that the community aspires to improvements in safety in a structured manner, and this structured approach underpins the processes that can result in a local community being recognised by the WHO as a safe community. One of the criteria adopted for Safe Communities is that the concerns of high-risk groups (such as children and older people)

and high-risk environments be addressed to ensure equity for vulnerable groups. (Several local government areas in Australia have been recognised as Safe Communities, for instance Moreland City Council in Victoria and Townsville City Council in Queensland.)

Healthy Cities/Communities is also a WHO program to introduce health concerns more definitely into the priority-setting and decision-making process at the local level. A Healthy City/Community is defined as:

*...one that is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential.*

(WHO 1999)

In both of the above concepts, there is close interaction between the community, its social and economic activities and the available resources and environment. Local government plays an important role in the success of the programs through its planning, coordination and service.

## **Social Isolation**

Social isolation and loneliness are issues of relevance to the safety and health of older people. The lack of social relationships is as much a risk factor for health as cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, obesity and lack of physical activity (Tang et al. 1995). Strong support networks and positive family and social contact are important factors in how well older people cope with disability and increasing frailty. Epidemiological studies show associated positive health outcomes where people are part of a network of family and friends (Rowe & Kahn 1987). This impacts across a range of health-influencing factors, from participation in physical activity or exercise programs, to mental wellbeing and maintaining independence in the community. Poor social support, loneliness, social isolation (including living alone) and family conflict have been shown to increase rates of anxiety and depression (Maxwell et al. 1990).

Adequate community facilities and programs, a safe neighbourhood and secure home environment help reduce anxiety and fear of crime among older people, and encourage them to be physically and socially active. Regional and local government authorities are key agencies in providing a safe, supportive community environment.

Programs which contribute to improving self-esteem and self-worth and provide social support to older people give positive messages about ageing and contribute to older people feeling valued, a part of the community, safe and empowered.

## Social Capital

Communities could potentially be enriched by using the accumulated “social capital” that is embedded in the older population. This relates to how engagement in society by groups of people leads to trust and cooperation for mutual benefit. The value and wealth of experience of the older population is a vast source of social capital which can not only benefit the wider community, but can also sustain and maintain older people’s engagement within that community (Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing 2001).

Social order is an integral part of community functioning. It has been said that the successful prevention of crime is a reflection of the accumulation of social capital that is invested in our communities. Social capital has been variously defined as “society’s stock of shared values” (Fukuyama 1995) and the “networks, norms and trust that enable participants [in a society] to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (Putman 1996). Communities can be enriched by the use of the accumulated “social capital” that is embedded in the larger older population. Engagement in society by older people leads to trust and cooperation for the mutual benefit of all.

Policies, services and programs that intervene to prevent crime and fear of crime against older people can help them to live safe and confident lives in their communities. The introduction of crime prevention techniques that encourage supportive social environments leads to the establishment of a safer community and a healthier aged population. Strong links between older people, their families and their communities are crucial for the success of any intervention program.

Through the development of both community and family support, as well as the encouragement of personal skills for older people, communities are strengthened and enhanced (Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing 2001). To achieve this it is necessary to involve partnerships between several agencies. These include the police, health services, social service departments, recreational and educational institutions, housing

departments, local government, older people's organisations (such as the National Seniors' Association, the Council on the Ageing, the National Pensioners' and Superannuants' Association and the Older Women's Network), voluntary organisations and older people themselves. Federal and state governments have a pivotal role in terms of program facilitation and program funding.

## The Social and Built Environment

The quality of the immediate physical environment as well as the social environment influences the health and safety of older people. Access to regular and reliable transport and social support, as well as appropriate housing, is a fundamental determinant of health and wellbeing.

Town planning and land-use decisions are important crime prevention, public safety and public health issues. Overall physical and mental health benefits can result when people live in accessible, safe, well designed, thoughtful structures and landscapes. The design and location of housing can facilitate integration with other resources and other generations. For example, the location could be near health centres and could also encourage interaction with neighbourhood social life. By creating more practical environments, older people would be able to remain independent longer and also increase their wellbeing and security.

The absence of transportation can result in an environment that isolates older people; the presence of transportation could be one of the keys to an active and healthy old age. Planning for the mobility of older people (both active and disabled) should be incorporated into environmental planning.

The principles of CPTED, discussed earlier in this chapter, have an important role to play when considering the safety and security of older people. By addressing the physical environment, it is possible to prevent opportunities for crime including theft, vandalism and threats to personal safety.

Local government is the most effective level of government to recognise and effectively respond to local needs and aspirations. Providing and maintaining adequate street lighting and footpaths, for example, can assist in discouraging crime, while the provision of adequate service facilities by local government can reduce social isolation.

# International Directions in Crime Prevention

## France

Crime prevention in France was developed on a system that was heavily promoted by Gilbert Bonnemaïson, the Mayor of Epinay-sur-Seine. This system was community-focused—an approach facilitated by the highly structured system of local government in France where the local mayors play an important role. Successful implementation in France was also helped by the coincidence of strong socialist governments at both national and local level. The development of the Bonnemaïson system was embedded in the observation that many of the major public housing programs developed in the 1960s and 1970s ignored the social needs of the residents and led to their exclusion from the most productive and valued elements of society. In responding, the municipality or neighbourhood was seen as a locus for action where partnerships between the community and local agencies, including the police and housing, public welfare, teachers, doctors, public transport, and the private sector, were to be encouraged. Bonnemaïson points to three essential ingredients for the successful delivery of crime prevention:

- a defined territory (in France, the municipality);
- partnerships at the local level; and
- a strategy based on a “local crime analysis”.

This involves all partners and has, as its first objective, a precise and well documented analysis of the conditions, nature and evolution of local crime (Cameron & Laycock 2002).

In practice the French system is interpreted as being community-focused, with little emphasis on “crime audits” or even partnerships beyond those between the local government and something vaguely defined as the “community”. The French system was seen as so obviously the correct strategy, by both the central and local governments in France, that evaluation of local programs was not seen as necessary and was therefore not funded (Cameron & Laycock 2002).

## The Netherlands

The approach to crime prevention in the Netherlands was developed in a more pragmatic and less highly publicised manner than the French system. The focus is on opportunity reduction, increased guardianship in public and



semi-public space, and reduced exclusion of young people from schools, training and employment (Willemse 1994). One of the notable successes of the Dutch was their ability to implement the policies that they claimed as effective. So, for example 1,300 new “security, information and control” officers were employed to patrol trams and railways in three major cities (van Anandel 1989). There was also more commitment to evaluation. Willemse (1994) describes four successful situational projects covering:

- public transport (also discussed by van Anandel 1989);
- school truancy;
- public housing; and
- shopping centres.

The Dutch model has less of an inter-sectoral focus and, while there are some elements of social crime prevention, there is a greater emphasis on situational crime prevention.

## United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), 376 statutory local community safety partnerships were established. The aim of these partnerships was to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour to make communities safer. The Act requires that local agencies work together to achieve this goal, and that councils and police shoulder the responsibility for achieving community safety. The provisions of the Local Government Act (2000) built on this responsibility by requiring councils to achieve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of communities. Responsibility for community safety policy lies solely with the Home Office. However, other departments also have an interest (the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Health, the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). Since 1999, the Government has provided £2.36 million specifically to implement crime reduction and community safety (Audit Commission 2002).

Crime prevention planning in the United Kingdom therefore includes:

- a mandatory requirement for local authorities to form partnerships;
- an emphasis on evaluation; and
- a requirement to meet crime reduction targets.

## European Union

After reviewing a multitude of local crime prevention programs offered throughout the European Union, the European Forum for Urban Security (1996) identified key supports for effective policy and practice in promoting safer neighbourhoods. These include:

- the formation of a central coalition to define problems and available resources to address them, draw up action programs and delegate responsibilities, and readjust local policy and programs as required;
- a technical coordinator to supervise and maintain the coalition's focus on strategic objectives, implementing targeted programs, arranging evaluations and ensuring local citizen and official participation; and
- local security surveys to detail crime rates, levels of fear, and hidden victimisation in problem neighbourhoods, as well as the views of groups who can contribute to reducing insecurity.

## United States

Crime prevention in the United States varies by state, however there are a few distinct features. Crime prevention is heavily based on police initiatives, although with some elements of prevention partnerships. It is also fairly heavily focused on “problems” (for example, problem-oriented policing) and “hot spots”, rather than general social issues. Police are accountable for reducing level-of-crime problems, and there is a comparatively strong reliance on crime data rather than community consultation.

## Canada

In 1998, Canada launched its National Crime Prevention Strategy. The strategy is based on a proactive social development approach with the aim of providing communities with the tools, knowledge and support they need to deal with the basic causes of crime at a local level. The Canadian strategy draws heavily on the Bonnemaison approach (National Crime Prevention Centre 2000).

## New Zealand

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Justice oversees a crime prevention program with an operational focus that coordinates community-based crime prevention initiatives through a national network of 65 Safer Community

Councils. This has been implemented with reference to the spirit and intent of the Treaty of Waitangi, which promotes the need for involvement of the Maori people in public decision-making (Ministry of Justice, New Zealand 2000).

While the organisation of local crime prevention in New Zealand shares many features of Australian jurisdictions, there are some important differences:

- the majority of partnerships are formed through non-government bodies (for example, charitable trusts or incorporated societies);
- there are consortiums of partnerships in rural areas;
- Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse groups are given prominence in agenda setting; and
- consideration is given to evaluating the process of local crime prevention.

## Australian Directions in Crime Prevention

From the late 1980s, several Australian states began to take an interest in the potential of crime prevention as an official public policy response to the growing perceptions of crime as a key social problem, and began looking for ways to develop such an approach. South Australia was the first state to do so, although other states, notably Victoria, were not far behind (Sutton 2000).

The South Australian approach was developed after a series of international reviews and visits. It theoretically drew on a combination of both the French *Bonnemaïson* system and the Dutch approach. The French system, however, had more influence than the Dutch, to the extent that some commentators have characterised the approach as exclusively that of *Bonnemaïson* (Sutton 1997). This is despite the work done, for example, on planning and design, alcohol-related crime and, more recently, crime mapping. Notwithstanding the early aspirations for the South Australian model, including the injection of \$10 million in support, the policy drifted towards “community development” as a dominant theme, with comparatively little attention paid to fostering focused expertise or inter-sectoral partnership (Sutton 2000). Recently, in South Australia, the crime prevention program has been substantially reduced and is in the process of being reviewed.

Victoria was the first Australian jurisdiction to experiment with locally-based prevention. Since 1988 there have been three distinct schemes: the Good Neighbourhood scheme, the Safer Communities scheme, and now the Safer Cities and Shires scheme (officially launched in 1997). In contrast to South Australia, Victoria's policy development unit has strong links with academic criminology and a strong commitment to training (Sutton 2000).

By the early 1990s the Commonwealth Government had also turned its attention to issues of crime prevention. In 1992 the Labor Government released an issues paper indicating that the Commonwealth Government would take a role in managing crime prevention. In 1997, under the Liberal-National Government, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department launched the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime (NCAVAC), which has since become known as National Crime Prevention (NCP) (Cameron & Laycock 2002).

Commonwealth initiatives led to a renewal of interest and enthusiasm at state and local levels, along with a significant change of emphasis. Victoria and New South Wales addressed the problem of the role of community by making local government a key agency in developing and implementing any crime prevention strategy. In Victoria, for example, local government is regarded as a key participant because it is well placed to engage government and non-government agencies, the private sector, educational institutions and community groups in partnerships to improve community safety (Button 2000). Policy-makers in New South Wales also argue that as local government provides many of the services relevant to addressing local crime problems, and can bring together members of the local community, it has an important role to play in developing and implementing crime prevention strategies ([www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd)).

By early 2001, most Australian states and territories had launched or relaunched their state-level initiatives. In 1996, the New South Wales Crime Prevention Division was established in that state's Attorney-General's Department. In 1998, Western Australia launched Safer WA, which is part of its Ministry of Justice. Safer WA was established as a means of bringing government agencies, local government and the community together in order to develop local solutions to local crime problems. Crime Prevention Queensland was launched in 1999 and is responsible for the implementation

of the *Queensland Crime Prevention Strategy – Building Safer Communities* launched in 1999. Crime Prevention Victoria was established in 2000 and is situated in the Department of Justice.

It should also be noted that the House of Representatives Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is currently compiling a report entitled *Crime in the Community: Victims, Offenders and Fear of Crime*. The Committee is expected to report later in 2003.

# 3 The Risks for Older Australians

There are two broad categories of risk for older Australians, notwithstanding some overlap. The first, which is the main focus here, is the risk of criminal victimisation through assault, robbery, burglary or even homicide. The other is “elder abuse”, in which the relationship between independent older people and their carers is marked by physical violence, emotional manipulation, deliberate neglect, psychological disorders and financial exploitation.

Elder abuse was dealt with in detail in Kinnear and Graycar (1999). That paper points to a basic lack of information about the extent of elder abuse, in part because of under-reporting and in part because some older people may not wish to define themselves as abused. The most systematic attempt to establish a prevalence rate for Australia is a 1992 study by Kurrle, Sadler and Cameron which estimated that approximately five per cent of older people are abused in some way—a figure which seems broadly in line with estimates from other countries (taking considerable definitional and methodological differences into account). Elder abuse is not considered further here except for some discussion of financial exploitation.

For other forms of criminal victimisation, a number of sources of information are drawn on in this study. They include:

- *Recorded Crime Australia*, the national collation of police figures by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (see ABS 2002b for the latest figures).
- The National Homicide Monitoring Program run by the Australian Institute of Criminology.
- The Crime and Safety Survey (CSS) conducted by ABS. The last results are from the survey in April 1998 that measured victimisation experience over the previous 12 months. A nationally representative sample of 42,200 people aged 15 or more provided self-completed questionnaires (a response rate of 82 per cent). Age differences can be analysed reliably for assault and robbery.
- The Australian component of the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS). The ICVS is a standardised survey which has been carried out in 17 industrialised countries (see van Kesteren et al. 2001). The

Australian survey incorporated a supplement targeted at older persons (see Carcach, Graycar & Muscat 2001).

- The National Crime Victimization Survey of the United States (for example, Klaus & Maston 2000), and the British Crime Survey (for example, Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2002). Both are very large-scale surveys that tend to provide more information about risks to older people. There is little reason to think their findings are inapplicable to Australia. Demographics and cultural and institutional conditions are similar, and when equivalent results from Australian *are* available, they are very similar.

Police figures provide comprehensive information on homicide and are also useful for charting differences in assault, sexual assault and robbery risks by age. There are limitations, though, in measuring crime simply through what is recorded by the police. This is because many crimes go unreported—especially those of an interpersonal nature, where offenders may be known to the victim. A pertinent point here is that older victims tend to report crimes more often to the police. The 1998 CSS, for instance, shows that 42 per cent of assault incidents were reported by victims aged 65 or more, as against 27 per cent reported by younger victims. The respective figures for robbery were 70 per cent and 44 per cent. (Incidents of sexual assault are too low to provide a reliable indication of differences in reporting.) Survey data from other countries also show rather higher reporting rates among older victims for a wider range of crimes (for example, Klaus & Maston 2000). The important point is that the picture of victimisation derived from the number of crimes recorded by the police will slightly overstate the contribution of older victims because younger victims report crimes to the police less often.

Because of the small number of victims in the older age groups, neither police nor survey data are disaggregated beyond 65 years of age. There is little way of knowing, therefore, how experiences differ within the older age group, although evidence from the United States suggests decreasing risks as people age more.

## Overview

The broad pattern of victimisation in Australia is consistent with findings throughout Western countries: older people are far less likely to be victims of crime than other age groups. This is according to both police records and crime surveys (for example, Gilbert & Zdenkowski 1997; Klaus & Maston

2000; Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2002; Bachman et al. 1998). Presented below are figures for homicide, assault, sexual assault and robbery (derived from police and survey data), and victimisation by property crime (from survey data).

A few general points are worth drawing out before considering different offences in more detail:

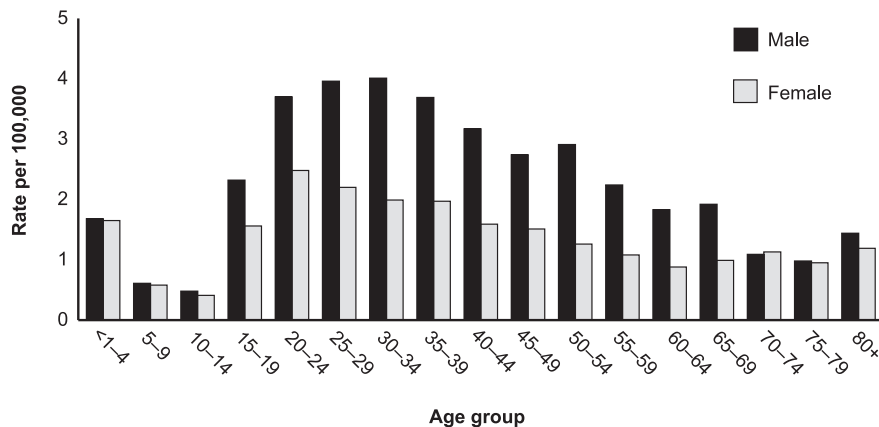
- Compared to other age groups, older people are disproportionately affected by property crime. In other words, the burden of violent crime is relatively less for older people (Klaus & Maston 2000).
- Risks for older people are not uniform. As is the case for all people, risks are higher in some geographic areas than others. Those who are more economically disadvantaged are generally more at risk. This is partly because they tend to live in higher-crime areas.
- Some people experience a disproportionate amount of victimisation (for example, Pease & Laycock 1999). This phenomenon of multiple victimisation has clear implications for crime prevention if known victims can be targeted in ways that reduce their risks. But while it also applies to older people, it appears to do so to a lesser extent. For instance, in the UK in 1999, eight per cent of burglary victims aged 60 or older were burgled twice or more, as against 20 per cent of burglary victims younger than this. For violent crime, the figures were 14 per cent and 35 per cent respectively (Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2002).
- US work indicates that, compared with other age groups, crime incidents involving older people mainly occur in or near their homes, or in daylight hours. Differences in lifestyle will mainly account for this, but it is nonetheless a pointer for crime prevention advice.

## Homicide

The National Homicide Monitoring Program shows that between 1 July 1989 and 30 June 2002 there were 4,421 victims of homicide in Australia—an average of about 340 per year. Males between 20 and 34 were most at risk, with a rate of about four per 100,000 (Figure 2). The risk of homicide for older people was low, at about 1.5 per 100,000. Similarly, lower homicide risks for older people also apply in other countries.



**Figure 2: Rate of homicide victimisation in Australia, by age and gender (n=4,421)**



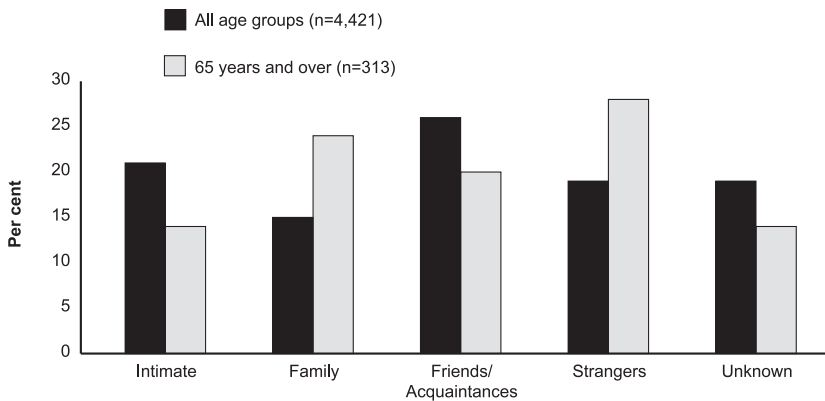
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Homicide Monitoring Program, 1989–2002 [computer file]

In Australia overall there were 313 older victims during the period between 1989 and 2002—an average of 24 per year. They comprised seven per cent of all victims.

There are a few differences between older victims of homicide and other victims:

- In contrast to homicide victimisation generally (where about 40 per cent of victims are female and 60 per cent are male), older victims of homicide are evenly distributed according to gender (NHMP 2003). As a proportion of the population, then, men and women over the age of 65 years are equally at risk.
- Older people are more likely to be killed in the home than in a public place.
- They are also more likely to die as a result of injuries from a blunt instrument, rather than a firearm, a knife or other weapon.
- Older people are equally likely to be killed by a stranger as by someone known to them, whereas for younger age groups most homicides are committed by a person known to the victim. Figure 3 shows how the pattern of victim–offender relationship in homicide differs by age.
- When homicide stems from the commission of another crime (usually a robbery), an older person is twice as likely to be the victim. Of all homicides in Australia, 13 per cent occurred during the course of another crime; of homicides of older persons in Australia, 28 per cent occurred during the course of another crime. This is consistent with results from other countries (Copeland 1986; Fox & Levin 1991; Falzon & Gregory 1998).

**Figure 3: Relationship between homicide victim and offender**



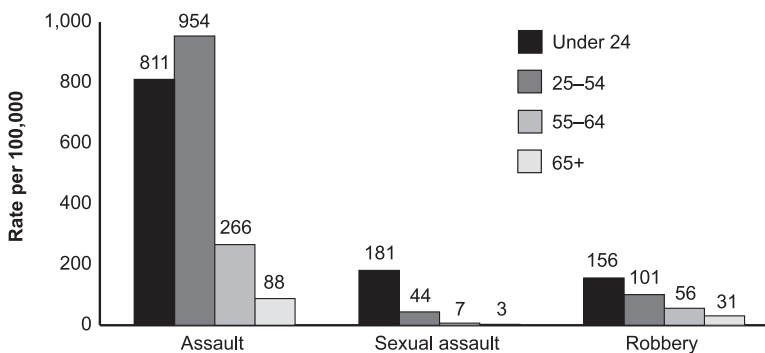
Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Homicide Monitoring Program, 1989–2002 [computer file]

- Older women who live alone are more likely to be killed as a result of a robbery in the home. Such incidents tend to hit media headlines, albeit without mention that the likelihood of such an event occurring is very low indeed.

## Other Violent Crime

There is both police and survey data on assaults, sexual assaults and robbery incidents affecting older people. Figure 4 shows police figures for the number of incidents per 100,000 population for different age groups. Risks generally decrease with age for all three offences.

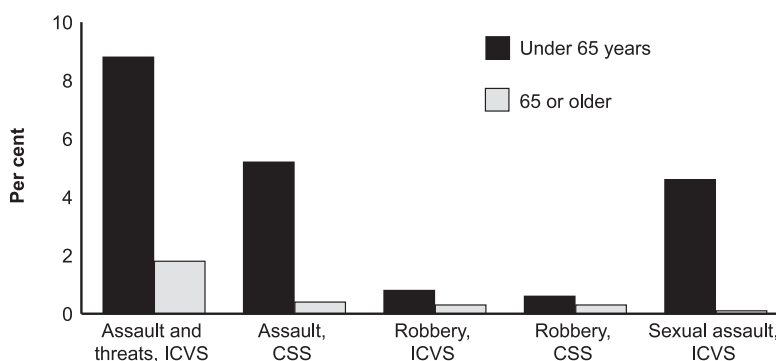
**Figure 4: Rate of assault, sexual assault and robbery recorded by police, 2001**



Source: ABS 2002b

Figure 5 shows results from the Crime and Safety Survey and the International Crime Victims Survey. The figures relate to the proportion of people victimised once or more in the year before the respective surveys were done. The ICVS asked women, but not men, about sexual assault. Both surveys testify to lower risks for older people.

**Figure 5: Per cent of survey respondents reporting assault, sexual assault and robbery victimisation, by age**



Note: Includes people victimised once or more.

Source: 2000 International Crime Victims Survey (van Kesteren et al. 2001); 1998 Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 1999).

Another way of showing the lesser vulnerability of older people is by looking at the proportion of incidents against them of the total offences committed. Table 2, for instance, shows that only 1.5 per cent of all incidents of assault recorded by the police were against those aged 65 years or more. The Crime and Safety Survey shows the same. For robbery, the survey data show a rather higher proportion of incidents against those aged 65 or more compared to police figures, but not too much should be read into this because of the small numbers. Very few sexual assaults recorded by the police involved older victims. The sum result from police figures, then, is that whereas those aged 55 to 64 form nine per cent of the population, they account for only three per cent of victims of assault, sexual assault and robbery. Those aged 65 or more form a larger 12 per cent of the population, but only two per cent of victims.

**Table 2: Proportion of incidents against older people (%)**

	55–64 years	65+ years
<i>Percentage of population, 2001</i>	9.0	12.0
Police, assaults	3.4	1.5
CSS, assaults	3.8	1.5
Police, robbery	4.8	3.6
CSS, robbery	4.8	8.1
Police, sexual assaults	0.8	0.5

Note: Police figures are based on the number of victimisation incidents. CSS figures are based on the number of people victimised once or more.

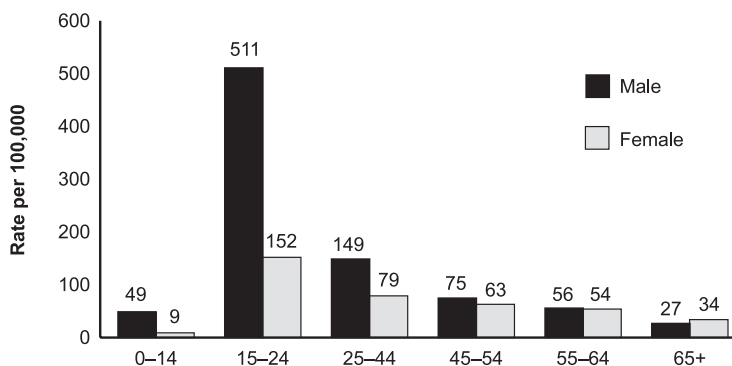
Source: Police figures (ABS 2002b); 1998 Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 1999).

## Robbery

The risk of being a victim of robbery, up until the mid-40s age range, is markedly greater for men than for women, but the gap narrows after that age. Figure 6 shows this on the basis of robberies recorded by the police. Risks for men aged 45–54 are slightly higher than those for women. Men and women aged 55–64 share the same risk. For those aged 65 or more, women have a slightly higher risk of victimisation (34 per 100,000) than men (27 per 100,000). This may be the result of handbag snatching.

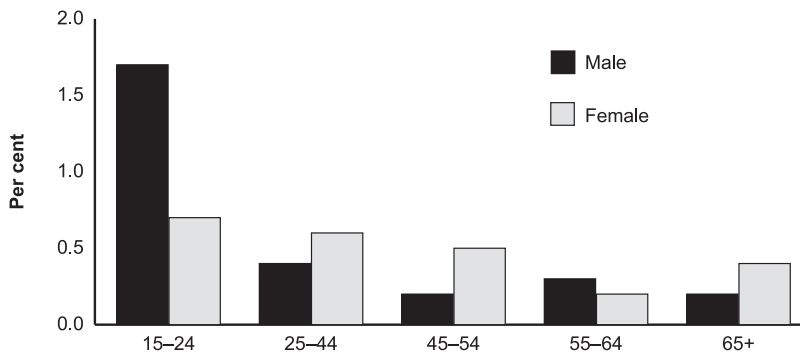
The Crime and Safety Survey shows the same pattern, with an even more heightened risk for women aged over 65 compared to men of that age (Figure 7). Notwithstanding this, older women’s risk of victimisation is still lower than that of women in other age groups.

**Figure 6: Risks of robbery, by age and gender, 2001**



Source: ABS 2002b

**Figure 7: Per cent of robbery victims, by age and gender**



Source: 1998 Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 1999)

An analysis of robbery patterns in the US National Crime Victimization Surveys in 1992–1994 (Bachman et al. 1998), as well as in US police figures (Faggiani & Owens 1999), pinpoints some distinctive features of robbery among the older population:

- female robbery victims aged 65 or more are more likely to sustain injury compared to other age groups, including older males;
- robbery incidents involving older people are more likely to be perpetrated by strangers than people known to the victim, even incidents taking place at or near a private residence;
- women are more at risk than men for incidents where the offender was known to the victim; and
- most robbery victims who are aged 85 years or older are robbed at home, but most adults between 65 and 74 are robbed when performing routine activities outside the home.

Neither police figures nor the crime surveys give information on theft from the person, which includes purse snatching and pick-pocketing without violence or threat of violence. However, US survey information indicates that risks for older people are about the same as for robbery and, more important, are *higher* than for younger age groups (Klaus & Maston 2000).

A 1987 study of handbag snatching by the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (1987) also shows that risks of handbag snatching are higher for older women than for younger women. In the 42 incidents examined, half of the victims were aged over 55, and nearly all were female. None involved the use of a weapon, but most victims were pushed from behind.

## Property Crime

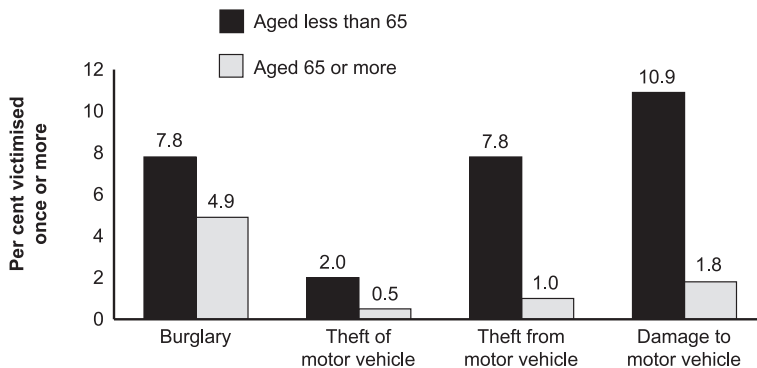
Neither police figures nor the Crime and Safety Survey analyse property victimisation by age. The ICVS data, however, have been looked at with regard to households in which all members were aged 65 or more (Carcach, Graycar & Muscat 2001). Figure 8 shows details. For all offences, households occupied by older people were considerably less at risk.

It would be unlikely, of course, for most offenders to know whether the house or car they have targeted belongs to an older person. The lower risks, then, would reflect the fact that older people *by and large* live in safer areas and have lifestyles that protect them to a degree. They park their cars in less risky places and at less risky times, for instance. Older people being at home more than younger people also provides some protection from burglary.

There is a substantial body of research that highlights the groups most at risk of property crime. These groups will subsume older people. The level of crime in an area is a major factor for all forms of property crime. In addition, burglary risks will be higher for:

- single and low-income older people (Mirrlees-Black et al. 1998)—they may, of course, often lack the resources to prevent initial or repeat victimisation; and
- those who live in detached houses, or houses with low levels of security, or houses on a main road.

**Figure 8: Household crime victimisation, by age**



Source: 2000 International Crime Victimization Survey (van Kesteren et al. 2001)

For vehicle-related crime, factors that will increase risks are:

- having an older vehicle; and
- having little access to secure parking.

## Financial Crime

Financial crime has the potential to have a devastating effect on older people. Not only can a comfortable lifestyle collapse, but older people also have less time and opportunity to recover financially. A blow to financial security can be a permanent and life-threatening setback, producing fear, lack of trust and possibly the onset of acute and chronic anxiety.

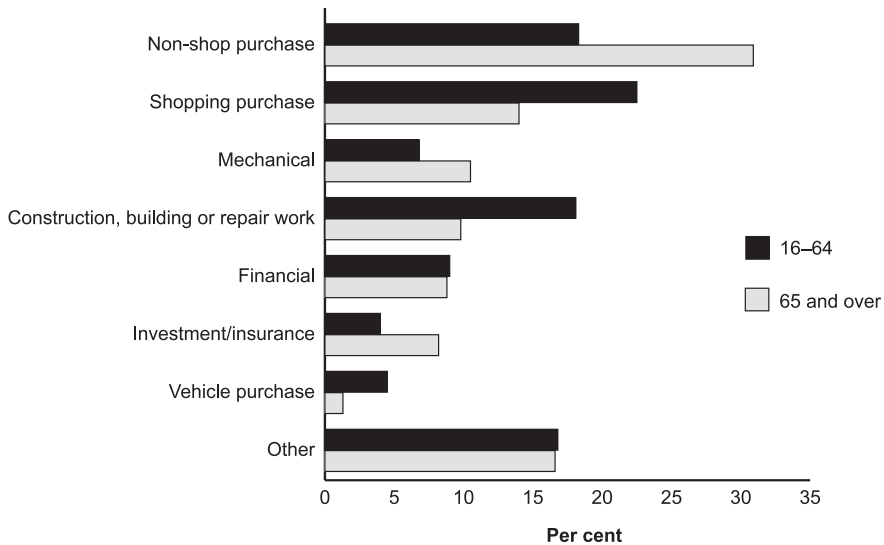
There are two clear ways in which older people might be vulnerable to financial crime. One is through fraud, and the other through financial exploitation by people close to them.

### Fraud

There is little reliable data on the nature and extent of fraud generally in Australia. Nor have data that do exist been much analysed in terms of the age of victims, except in relation to consumer fraud (a topic in the ICVS).

Of those aged 65 or more in the ICVS, about four per cent said they had experienced consumer fraud in the past year (1999). This was less than half the level among younger people (about nine per cent), whose broader range of activities and greater consumerism no doubt increases exposure to potentially deceitful transactions. Consistent with this was that older people were more vulnerable when they were more socially, commercially and financially active (Muscat, James & Graycar 2002).

Although risks were low, older people were more likely to experience consumer fraud than other offences. Thus, consumer fraud was more than twice as frequent as assault or theft, and 13 times more frequent than robbery. Figure 9 shows how victims described the most recent incident (some victims, of course, may have experienced more than one incident). The most common experience was some type of selling or purchase fraud that did not occur in a shop setting. Here, the incidents to which older people were particularly vulnerable were door-to-door selling, being sold items over the telephone, and being on the receiving end of questionable mail order purchases.

**Figure 9: Types of consumer fraud experienced by victims**

Source: 2000 International Crime Victims Survey (van Kesteren et al. 2001)

Lower risks of fraud were also evidenced in a victimisation survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the early 1970s (ABS 1975). Titus and Gover (1999) found the same in the United States.

New technologies and changes in commercial practices pose new risks for all Australians. This includes, for example, telephone contests in which there are no winners, opportunities to purchase goods and services of dubious value, and invitations to get-rich-quick schemes. Many deceits are Internet-based, so as more older people bring themselves up-to-date with this new means of communication, they will become even more vulnerable.

## Financial Exploitation

Financial exploitation includes:

- making improper use of an older person's property or money without his or her knowledge or permission;
- forcing older people to change their wills to benefit specific individuals, such as health care providers or relatives; and
- denying older people access to their money, or preventing them from controlling their assets (Fielding 1995).



Not all financial exploitation is regarded as criminal, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish abusive conduct from well intentioned but insensitive behaviour. On occasions, what starts as being in an older person's interest may end up being an abusive situation. For example, family members, friends or professionals may initially offer helpful advice on financial investments to an older person but, as that person's mental faculties decline, the adviser may take over financial management or misappropriate funds. Determining the exact point at which abuse or fraud occurs is difficult as the circumstances may be unclear and evidence hard to come by (Smith 1999).

## **Enduring Power of Attorney and Guardianship**

An area of increasing concern is financial abuse by those acting in a fiduciary capacity as legally appointed agents for older persons. In Australia, it is possible to execute a document known in some jurisdictions as an enduring (or protected) power of attorney. This confers authority on someone to manage someone else's affairs. If the donor of the power later becomes mentally incapable, the attorney will still be able to act unless the power is revoked by application to a court or guardianship board.

Guardianship and administration boards have been established in each state and territory to protect the interests of those unable to manage their affairs because of specified forms of disability or mental deterioration. Public advocates (or guardians) can also be appointed to assist the disabled in protecting their interests. Where older people are unable to manage their financial affairs, an administration order may be made to allow the estate to be managed by a legally appointed administrator who is required to act in the party's best interests without taking profit. Where agents breach their obligations, they can be sued for damages and, in extreme cases, be prosecuted for theft or obtaining financial advantage by deception.

Under any system in which management of financial affairs is delegated, impropriety can only be dealt with if it is identified and brought to official attention. Often an older person may not be in a position to know what has occurred, thereby foreclosing legal avenues of redress. This contrasts with the granting of probate and strict accountability in distributing assets specified in a will following a death.

In the United States, it has been claimed that “powers of attorney may be the single most abused legal document in the American judicial system” (McRae & Mathis 1994, p. 2). The following indicators might signal financial abuse (Fielding 1995):

- standard of living not in keeping with the older person’s income or assets—poor clothing, grooming supplies and so on;
- unusual or inappropriate activity in bank accounts;
- unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills;
- expectations of disproportionately high contributions to household expenses;
- valuable personal belongings going missing;
- signatures on cheques or documents that appear suspicious;
- documents such as a power of attorney or a will drawn up, but not understood;
- lack of understanding of financial arrangements that have been made (for example, an older person may believe they own the home they live in, yet receive an eviction notice); and
- promises of lifelong care by a caregiver or recent acquaintance in return for money or property.

## People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

The proportion of older people born in non-English-speaking countries is rising in Australia and is currently about 14 per cent of all people aged over 70. Little is known about the impact of crime on older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as police statistics and crime victim surveys do not usually provide this information (Gilbert & Zdenkowski 1997).

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Again, police statistics and crime victim surveys do not usually provide information on victimisation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, the 1994 *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey—New South Wales* revealed that 15 per cent of Indigenous people

reported being physically attacked in the previous 12 months (Gilbert & Zdenkowski 1997). Indigenous people are seven times more likely than the rest of the population to be victims of homicide (James & Carcach 1997), and Indigenous women are over-represented as victims of murder, attempted murder and assault (Carcach, James & Grabosky 1998). Older Indigenous people, particularly women, are more likely to be subjected to financial exploitation by younger people, with threats of violence used to obtain access to pension payments (Gilbert & Zdenkowski 1997; Council on the Ageing 2001).

## 4 Fear of Crime

It is often believed that older people are disproportionately fearful of crime despite low actual victimisation rates. Indeed, the argument is so common that “fear of crime” among older people is a more pressing policy issue than the crime they face (for example, Hale 1996).

Although it sometimes appears irrational, fear of crime among older people is understandable. Aligning any given level of objective risk misses the point that people can worry about something which may be very unlikely to happen, but would be extremely distressing if it did. Moreover, fear of crime is not just about the chances of being victimised, it is also about the perceived and actual consequences. Thus, the most fearful groups are those who would be more socially and physically vulnerable to the consequences of crime if it occurred—a point of obvious importance in regard to older people.

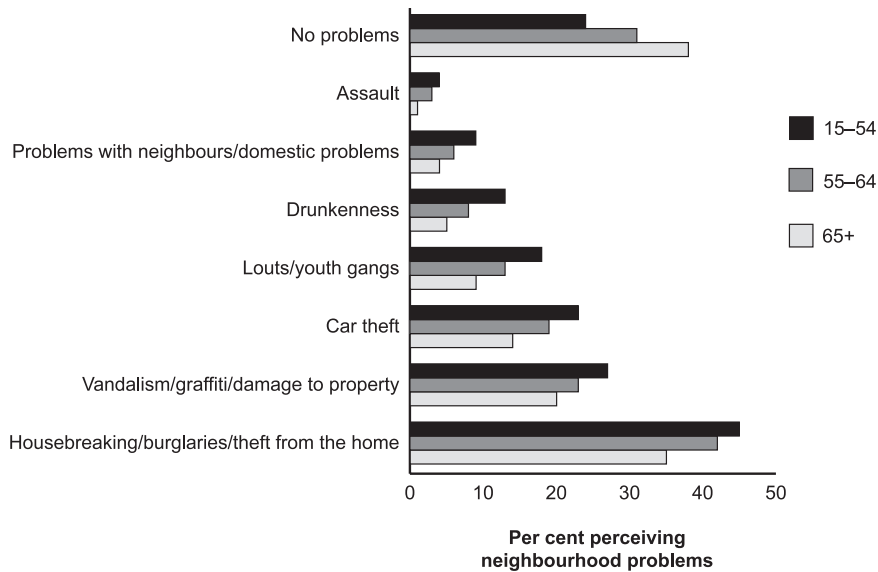
A different point concerns the belief that older people are excessively fearful. Though widely held to be the case, the better empirical evidence draws a much more complicated picture. It shows that older people register higher on some measures of “fear” and concern than other age groups, but lower (or the same) on many other measures.

### Measures of Fear

The last Australian Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 1999) addressed what people felt about various “neighbourhood problems”. There was generally *less* concern among older people. For instance, 35 per cent of those aged 65 or more felt there were no particular neighbourhood crime or disorder problems, as against 31 per cent of 55–64-year-olds, and 24 per cent of those under 55 (see Figure 10).

Figure 11 shows results from the 2001 British Crime Survey on a number of measures of worry about crime (Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2002). These findings are likely to be transferable to Australia given the similarity of other dimensions of fear of crime (van Kesteren et al. 2001). Those aged 60 or older

**Figure 10: Per cent who perceive problems in their neighbourhood, by age**



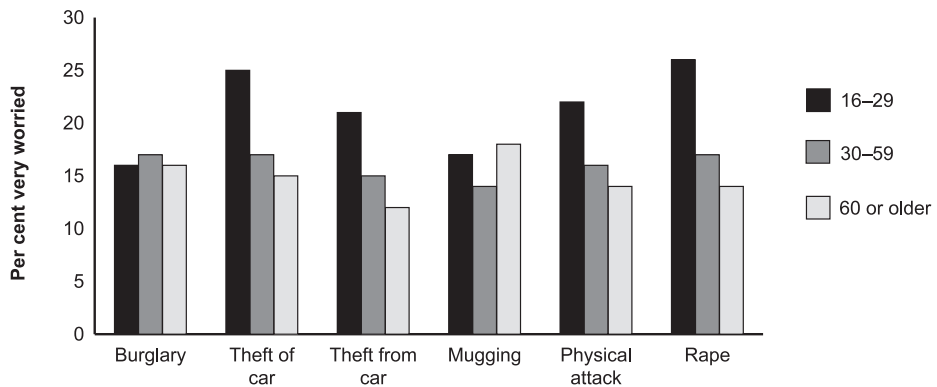
Source: 1998 Crime and Safety Survey (ABS 1999)

were less worried than their younger counterparts for all offences except burglary (where the figures were similar) and mugging (where older people were marginally more concerned).

In contrast, there are two fear-of-crime issues that paint a more worrying picture. First, in answer to a question about feelings of safety when walking alone after dark, older people are markedly more concerned. They are not more concerned, however, about their safety at home alone at night (see Figure 12). The “safety on the streets after dark” question is a very common one in crime surveys, and indeed is sometimes the only one asked. The much higher levels of anxiety among older people in response to this question may well explain why the notion of excessive fear among older people has taken such hold.

The reason why older people are more fearful about their safety on the streets alone at night is not entirely clear. Note that the question does not mention crime, and it could be that the prospect of being out alone on dark public streets may evoke anxiety about a greater range of mishaps (for example, falling over), especially as the emotional, physical and financial consequences could be worse for older people (James & Graycar 2000). The question is also hypothetical for those who rarely go out alone after dark,

**Figure 11: Worry about crime, by age, England and Wales**

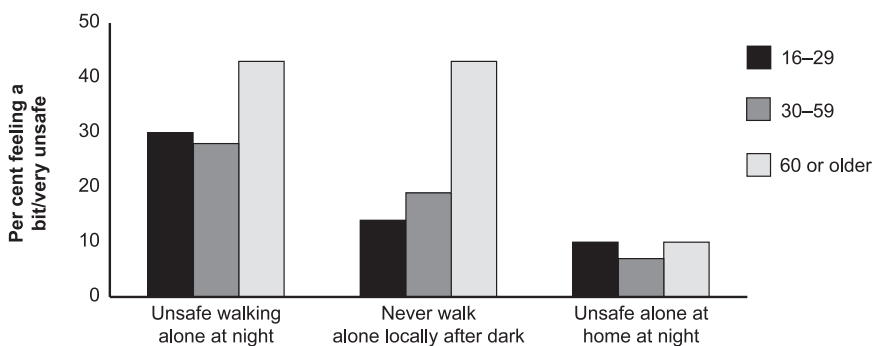


Source: 2001 British Crime Survey (Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2002)

which will be the case for many older people. It might also be that “street crime” affecting older people is particularly overdramatised in the media—and many older people may form their perception of crime through this.

Secondly, the evidence from the UK suggests that while fear levels for many crimes are not disproportionately higher among older people, they are nonetheless more likely to feel their quality of life has been reduced through crime and the fear it provokes. The effect on quality of life has been measured in the British Crime Survey. Ten per cent of those aged 60 years or more said their life was significantly affected by fear of crime—about double the figure for younger people. There was a similar differential for those who said fear has a moderate effect on their quality of life (Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2001). It can only be conjectured why apprehension about crime has a more emotive effect on older people. It may be that for younger people,

**Figure 12: Feelings of safety, by age, England and Wales**



Source: 2001 British Crime Survey (Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2002)

although as concerned about crimes as older people on many fronts, the disquieting effects of being fearful get displaced by other concerns—for instance, juggling a young family and work commitments.

These results suggest that the problem of “fear of crime” among older people needs more careful interpretation than it gets. For one, the emotive impact of being fearful seems more acute for older people than for younger people, even though just as many young people say they worry about some offences. It may be that any given level of concern about social problems affects older people more because of the psychological effects of ageing.

## Conclusions

There are many consistent conclusions from a very large body of work as to which groups are most fearful (see, for example, Hough 1995). These highlight the key groups on which policies to reduce fear might be best focused. A point of some importance is that “high-fear” groups are not especially characterised by age. Rather, differences hold *within* age groups. Thus, for instance, while it is well established that women are more fearful of crime than men (or at least admit to it more), younger women are more fearful than younger men, as well as older women being more fearful than older men.

Apart from the gender difference, other main findings are:

- people who live in high-crime areas are more likely than those who live in areas with lower levels of crime to be fearful;
- being on a lower income is associated with most measures of fear, even allowing for other factors which are likely to be related to income, such as living in a poorer area;
- local disorder (such as noisy neighbours, poor street lighting, and teenagers hanging around) is predictive of virtually all measures of fear; and
- personal experience of being victimised, and greater contact with other victims, heightens fear.

As said, these provide some pointers—and fairly obvious ones perhaps—as to which groups, older people among them, will be most vulnerable to anxiety about crime. But there are some other findings that bear more specifically on older people:

- Community involvement and self-confidence seems to alleviate anxiety about crime (Anderson 1998). Those older people who are most active and involved (and made to feel involved) in their communities are least likely to be anxious. The supportiveness of local neighbourhoods seems particularly strongly related to reducing worry about burglary and feeling unsafe in the area (Hough 1995).
- Although “contact with crime” generally heightens fear, worry about mugging and “feeling unsafe” – particularly pertinent for older people – is *not* related to having been a victim of street crime. In other words, worry about street crime is broad-based and not much affected by personal experience.
- People most fearful of street crime are those who feel themselves more vulnerable in terms of physical size and confidence in their self-defence abilities. This helps to explain why older people are more fearful.
- Related to this is that those who perceive their health to be bad or very bad also worry more about crime – although, as this holds within age group, it is not an issue to do with older people only.
- Those who worry more about non-crime misfortunes (household accidents, for instance) are also most likely to worry about most types of victimisation. However, being a “worrier” is not as closely linked to concern about being out alone at night. Again, this seems broader-based.
- Older people do not assess their *actual risk* of becoming a victim to be any higher than the risk facing younger groups. When they feel more concerned, then, this may stem from wider anxieties to do with increased physical frailty, economic vulnerability and perhaps greater social isolation.
- The fears of older people are not confined to their own safety. One study found that older people were more likely to be afraid for their grandchildren than for themselves (Tulloch et al. 1998).

In sum, then, there is need for a sharper focus on fear among older people than is usually taken. Their disproportionate anxiety seems to centre mostly on “street crime”. For other crimes, their levels of worry are moderate compared to other age groups; or, perhaps to put it another way, the worries associated with the risk in the younger cohorts is ignored. In any event, though, older people’s views of crime cannot be separated from the broader experiences of ageing. Fear of crime may become a focus for broader anxieties. While these may always have been associated with ageing, their



impact may be accentuated for many older people by a profound sense of cultural disorientation brought about by the especially rapid social change of the past 50 years (Anderson 1998).

Like crime itself, fear of crime should not simply be seen as a problem to be dealt with by policing or conventional crime prevention measures alone. While there is value in promoting awareness and use of crime prevention measures among older people, and in educating the public in general about risks of crime, this is likely to have limited impact on its own. A holistic approach is needed which recognises the more general anxieties associated with ageing and seeks to reintegrate older people back into the communities in which they live. The contributions that older people can make to the community should be recognised and valued (Anderson 1998; James 1993).

# 5 Methodology and Findings of the Current Study

The aim of this project was to obtain a fuller picture of the extent to which current policies, services and programs are providing the opportunity for older Australians to live a safe and confident life in our communities. The development of the methodological framework for the project required that the stakeholder groups be well defined, and that the methodological tools be capable of eliciting information that truly reflects the various views of the stakeholder groups. The stakeholder groups included governments (Commonwealth, state and local), police, older people's organisations and older people themselves.

## The Research Method

The research was conducted in two stages, as outlined below.

### Stage 1

The aim of Stage 1 was to catalogue crime prevention programs for older people in all jurisdictions in Australia. To achieve this, a questionnaire was developed (see Appendix A) and sent to:

- all Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies with responsibility for older people;
- all local government agencies;
- state and territory police;
- older people's organisations (such as the Council on the Ageing, the National Seniors' Association and the Australian Pensioners and Superannuants Association); and
- community organisations (such as the Salvation Army, Apex and Lions Clubs).

After discussion with the project's reference group, it was decided that the focus on programs that dealt exclusively with the prevention of crime was too narrow and would therefore only capture a small number of relevant

programs. By extending the focus to programs aimed at increasing the safety and security of older Australians, a broader range of programs could be included. The questionnaire was therefore changed to encapsulate programs that were concerned with personal safety and property security, as well as programs concerned with social interaction and community participation of older people. The questionnaire was piloted through the Council on the Ageing in the Australian Capital Territory and the Townsville City Council in Queensland.

Eight-hundred and ninety-two questionnaires were sent out. Two-hundred and twenty-four were returned with completed information. Sixty-five organisations either returned the questionnaire or telephoned stating that they did not have any relevant programs to report. The effective response rate, therefore, was 27 per cent. This is a reasonable response rate for a mail-out questionnaire. Also, a large number of questionnaires (approximately 700) were sent to local government organisations. Of the local government organisations, just over 100 were Indigenous communities. There was a very low response rate from these communities (just two questionnaires were returned).

Stage 1 also included the Australian Crime Victims Survey. This was an Australia-wide victims-of-crime survey commissioned by the Australian Institute of Criminology and conducted by Roy Morgan Research. As part of the International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS), an elderly supplement was devised. Data collection took place in April 2000 using computer-assisted telephone interviewing, and was carried out in two phases. During the first phase, a sample of 2,005 people was selected from the total Australian population aged 16 years and over. The second phase collected data on the victimisation experiences of 1,026 people aged 65 years and over. The final sample, therefore, was 3,031 respondents. Of these people, 1,334 were aged 65 years and over. The overall response rate was 56 per cent, which is average for a survey of this kind.

Other sources of statistical data on the victimisation and crime experiences of older people were the Australian Bureau of Statistics' recorded crime data, its Crime and Safety Survey, and its Women's Safety Survey (all of which were outlined in Chapter 3 of this report).

## Stage 2

Stage 2 of the project included analysis of the content of program types and program delivery. Stage 2 also included consultations with focus groups. These were held in Perth, Townsville and Canberra.

In Perth, two focus groups were organised through the Office for Seniors' Interest, and were held at the Citiplace Community Centre. The first focus group consisted of volunteers from the Office for Seniors' Interest. The second consisted of people who regularly frequent the Citiplace Community Centre. Both groups comprised a diverse range of people who came from different suburban areas.

In Townsville, two focus groups were organised. The primary point of contact was the Citysafe Officer at the Townsville City Council. Following her suggestion, two focus groups were arranged. The first was with the Townsville Regional Committee on the Ageing (a subsidiary of the Council on the Ageing) and the second was with the local Senior Citizens' Association.

In Canberra, the focus groups were arranged through the Council on the Ageing. These focus groups consisted of people who attend various programs conducted by the Council.

The focus group questions (see Appendix B) were designed to elicit how older people perceive crime in their local area. They were also designed to draw out what strategies and partnerships older people believe should be introduced to make them feel more secure.

## Questionnaire Findings

The results of the research are described below. It should be noted that the research results only include programs covered by the questionnaire responses. Obviously, there are possibly programs being conducted around Australia that have not been included because the information was not forwarded. It can be confidently surmised, however, that most of the major programs, and many of the smaller ones, have been included. The broad pattern of programs that increase the safety and security of older Australians is therefore reflected here.

## Program Type

The programs described in the questionnaire responses did not fit neatly into traditional crime prevention categories, but rather more appropriately matched the community safety strategy which is now favoured in the UK (as described in Chapter 2). They were therefore mainly grouped into two discrete categories. The first of these refers to the personal safety and property security of older people, while the second describes those programs concerned with the social interaction and community participation of older people. A third category, referring to programs that deal with fraud and financial crimes, was also identified.

### *Personal Safety and Property Security*

More than half the programs identified (56 per cent) referred to the personal safety and property security of older people. The most significant of these programs operating Australia-wide are concerned with improving home security. These include the Community Liaison and Advisory Safety Project (CLASP) in the ACT, the Home Assist/Home Secure Scheme in Queensland, the Home-Assist Scheme in South Australia, Confident Living and Project Deadlock in Victoria, and Project Deadlock in Western Australia. These programs only provide assistance to low-income and financially disadvantaged older people, as well as the frail aged and younger people with moderate to severe disabilities (and their carers) who are living in the community and may be at risk of premature or inappropriate admission to residential care.

Neighbourhood Watch is also an important initiative in terms of personal safety and property security. This operates in all states and territories in Australia. It should be noted, however, that Neighbourhood Watch is no longer as well organised or attended as it has been in the past.

South Australia (Break and Enter Prevention Projects) and Tasmania (Project Samaritan) have initiated projects that are specifically designed to help people who have been the victims of repeat house burglaries.

There are numerous smaller programs operating in all states and territories which are concerned with personal safety and property security. These include provision and installation of security hardware and also the provision of personal alarms. These programs are delivered by local

councils, service organisations, such as Lions Clubs, and community organisations. Talks on personal safety and home security can also often be a component of these programs.

Police in all states and territories, often in conjunction with other organisations, conduct safety seminars on a wide range of issues, from home security to ATM banking procedures and personal advice on how to carry a handbag.

### ***Social Interaction and Community Participation***

Almost a quarter of the programs identified (24 per cent) were concerned with the social interaction and community participation of older people. These are mainly conducted by individual community organisations, often in conjunction with local councils. However three significant programs in this category that operate state-wide are:

- the 60 And Better program in Queensland;
- the Safe and Confident Living program, also in Queensland; and
- Confident Living in Victoria.

In Victoria, the Police Community Consultative Committees also deliver relevant programs across all parts of the state. The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services funds programs that encourage community initiatives across Australia.

The regional branches of Council on the Ageing and other senior citizens' organisations conduct programs in this area. These are held in community centres and offer a large variety of services ranging from health services to entertainment, exercise classes and computer classes. Social outings are also arranged.

Telecross is operated by the Red Cross throughout Australia. This comprises a telephone call every morning to ensure the wellbeing of people who do not have family and friends living nearby.

### ***The Community as a Whole***

Eighteen per cent of the programs identified were concerned with the safety of the community as a whole. As mentioned previously, these were mainly crime prevention and safety plans for individual local communities. Obviously any strategies such as these have an important effect on the safety

and wellbeing of older people. For instance, a strategy that includes a well defined, well implemented graffiti removal program increases the perception of public civility.

### *Financial Advice*

Only two per cent of the programs identified referred to preventing the financial mismanagement of older people's property and investments.

## **Partnerships**

Of the 224 questionnaires returned, 182 (81 per cent) indicated that the programs described were delivered in partnership with other organisations. This program delivery typically involved local government, police and community organisations. In the case of the larger programs such as Home Assist and Home Assist/Home Secure, Commonwealth and state government funding is involved.

Several Australian jurisdictions have community consultative committees in place. In South Australia, crime prevention committees are funded by the Crime Prevention Unit in the Attorney-General's Department. Membership of these committees, which operate in urban and rural areas, includes representation from the police, local council, Neighbourhood Watch and other community organisations. These committees have been organised in a similar manner as the Bonnemaison program in France. (It should be noted that the current South Australian government is in the process of disbanding these committees.)

In New South Wales, there are community consultative or community safety committees. These committees are operated through local government and have a membership comprising the police and other members of the community. An evaluation of these committees (Chan 1994) showed that lack of resources at local government level made it difficult for them to operate effectively. Police and community consultative committees also operate in Victoria. In Queensland, many of the local councils have a City Safe Officer. These officers work in conjunction with state crime prevention officers.

## **Program Duration**

Only 15 per cent of the programs have been in place for more than five years. These programs were typically part of the Home-Assist/Home Secure, Safe and Confident Living and the 60 And Better schemes.

## Program Cost

Program costs varied considerably. The larger programs operating state-wide had large budgets (\$100,000 plus), while the smaller programs operating at the community level often ran on very low budgets (\$100 plus).

## Evaluation

An integral part of conducting an audit of programs concerned with the safety and security of older Australians was to determine which programs work best and why. The questionnaire therefore asked for evaluation details of each program. When this information was provided, it usually referred to “in-house” evaluations of one-day seminars on personal safety and property security. This type of evaluation comprised a short set of questions, the aim of which was to determine client satisfaction with the presentation. It is therefore not an indicator of how and if the particular program increased the safety and security of older people—or, indeed, if the program increased the fear of crime.

There were some notable exceptions to the evaluation of the programs. For instance, the CLASP program in the ACT, Home Assist in South Australia, Home Assist/Home Secure in Queensland and the Home Assessment for Safety and Security have all been substantially evaluated, and the evaluation well documented in both qualitative and quantitative terms. These programs, as described previously, have been implemented for several years and are concerned with improving the physical security of property. However, these particular evaluations focused on client satisfaction and the effectiveness in achieving acceptable levels of safety in and around the homes of older people. They did not focus on whether or not the incidence of crime was actually reduced.

The Residential Break and Enter Pilot Project in South Australia included in this report has been evaluated by means of rigorous experimental methods which include outcomes concerned with reducing crime (National Crime Prevention 2002). This program is directed towards the whole community, but older people are an important component of the program.

When evaluating many of the types of programs described in this report, particularly those that refer to social interaction and community participation, it is not appropriate to use rigorous experimental evaluation methods. However, it is necessary to obtain more information than is



currently available. To achieve this it would be best to use a survey method that includes structured questions referring to program content, program implementation (particularly in regard to its usefulness) and program aims (whether they are achievable). It is difficult to quantify programs that increase social interaction and community participation. However, by formulating a more structured survey which obtains more information than simply client satisfaction, it may be possible to elicit suggestions from the existing participants of ways to encourage the social interaction of the more isolated people who are not attending the programs.

When evaluating programs that are intended to make homes more secure, and in some cases prevent repeat victimisation, it is appropriate to use more rigorous experimental evaluation methods in order to quantify if the program is working (that is, whether crime is actually reduced as a result of strategic interventions). This is also useful for the replication of successful programs. It would also be necessary to measure whether or not fear of crime increases or decreases as a result of the program.

While the programs described in this report have all been implemented to increase the safety and security of older Australians, there is no clear evidence that any of them are actually working.

## Summary

The majority of programs available in Australia at the present time concerned with the safety and security of older people are those that relate to improving home security. The most significant of these programs (CLASP in the ACT, Home Assist/Home Secure in Queensland, Home Assist in South Australia, Project Deadlock in Western Australia, and Home Assessment for Safety and Security in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia) receive Commonwealth and state government funding.

Programs concerned with home security are always implemented in conjunction with other agencies, most notably local government, the police and community organisations. CLASP, which is an initiative of the Council on the Ageing, is implemented in partnership with the police and it also receives sponsorship from the corporate sector.

It should be noted that programs such as Home Assist and Home Assist/Home Secure not only provide advice on and install security hardware, but also provide links to other support services such as domiciliary care

services, Meals On Wheels, district nurses, Telecross (the telephone service operated by the Red Cross Society which provides a daily telephone check for older people who live alone), the police, Neighbourhood Watch, the Victims of Crime service, as well as service clubs such as Rotary, Lions and Apex.

Partnerships are a very important component of the delivery of all programs concerned with the safety and security of older people, with four out of five programs benefiting from this arrangement. However, there is a risk that if local partnerships are responsible for setting their own priorities, these could simply reflect a narrow range of concerns. On the other hand, local partnerships organised with the correct mix of agencies and individuals are in the best position to be able to identify local matters.

Any publications relating to the safety and security of older people must be presented in seminar sessions by trained presenters such as the police or local government crime prevention officers. The necessary support to assist people in implementing the advice given must also be available. For an older person to view a publication on personal safety and home security in the isolation of their home could increase their fear.

Programs concerned with the social interaction and community participation of older people rely, for the most part, on individual local government areas and their corresponding level of commitment. This level of commitment can be quite variable. Once again, programs are more durable where significant government funding is available. Examples of state-funded programs in this category are the 60 And Better program (Queensland), the Confident Living program (Queensland and Victoria) and the Police Consultative Committees (Victoria). The regional branches of the Council on the Ageing and other senior citizens' organisations conduct programs in this area. These are held in community centres and offer a large variety of services ranging from health services to entertainment, exercise classes and computer classes. Social outings are also arranged.

Only two per cent of the programs identified made reference to preventing the mismanagement of older people's property and investments. This represents a gap in program delivery, particularly as the focus groups identified telemarketing as a potential problem area. Financial fraud over the Internet can also be a concern for older people.

Another gap in program delivery is the lack of programs directed towards people from non-English-speaking backgrounds. It would also appear that many socially isolated people, who have been identified in the research as being the most in need of community-based programs, do not gain access to these programs. The community-based programs are attended by people who have taken it upon themselves to be “out and about”. Strategies need to be put in place to encourage socially isolated people to participate in social activities.

Generally, there is no clear systematic approach across Australian jurisdictions for the implementation of programs that increase the safety and security of older Australians. In New South Wales, for instance, the police do not focus on older people with their programs. Where the focus is on older people it has typically been in a number of one-off local seminars on safety issues. The state government in New South Wales also does not provide specific programs directed towards older people. Queensland, on the other hand, provides a whole range of government-funded community-based programs. These programs include personal safety and home security as well as programs that encourage social interaction.

Many of the programs concerned with the safety and security of older Australians have been implemented in an *ad hoc* manner with no basis in research and evaluation. Where programs have been evaluated, the criterion has been client satisfaction and not improved safety and security. When looking at whether particular programs actually reduce crime levels, it would be appropriate to use rigorous experimental evaluation methods. However, when evaluating programs that refer to social interaction and community participation, it would be best to use a survey method that includes structured questions which refer to program content, program implementation and programs aims.

Making Australia’s older people feel safe and secure is a concern for government as well as local communities. The skills and resources of a wide range of organisations and people need to be involved. These would include government at all levels, the police, community organisations, private sector organisations, older people’s organisations and older people themselves. It is therefore crucial that, for programs to be successful and enduring, government funding be provided and partnerships be formed.

# Focus Group Findings

Listed below are the similarities, differences and major themes emerging from the focus groups convened for this study.

## *Similarities*

- All groups reported that crime was a particular concern. This concern was increased substantially when the person had been the victim of crime.
- All groups reported that it was important for areas to look and feel safe. If there were incivilities such as broken glass, seats slashed on public transport and obvious graffiti, this caused feelings of insecurity and fearfulness. Those who interacted more with their neighbours and their local community generally felt safer. They would feel even safer, however, if there were more police patrolling their areas.
- Neighbourhood Watch was perceived as an important initiative. However, it was conceded that it is not as active as it was five years ago.
- All agreed that neighbourhood planning was important and design was crucial to crime prevention.
- Young people were perceived to be a problem (although it was agreed that it was only a small proportion of young people). It was also thought that discipline by parents was seen as a contributing factor to this, as well as the fact that they considered that penalties in the criminal justice system were not harsh enough.
- Programs for older people need to be supported by all sections of the community including local council, police, community organisations and older people.
- The distribution of booklets, either in a group session or through the mail, was not an appropriate way of disseminating information on crime prevention. This needs to be done in association with a seminar or series of seminars, preferably given by the police. The distribution of booklets in isolation can increase fear.
- There was a low awareness of crime prevention programs available, particularly those that help with home security.
- It was felt there needs to be recognition of diversity of the aged population and that different groups need different responses.
- Programs for isolated older people need to be developed.

- Sensationalist reporting of crime in the media contributes to fear.
- There is an increased awareness of financial crimes, but this mainly relates to telemarketing.

### *Differences*

- Focus group participants in Perth and Canberra were much more worried than those in Townsville about crime in their area.
- There was a high degree of concern in Perth about Aboriginal people contributing to crime levels.
- The relationship of alcohol and drugs to crime was perceived as a greater problem in Perth than Townsville or Canberra.
- In Perth, programs such as Security Watch made people feel much safer. These programs are funded through a levy to the local council and incorporate security vehicles patrolling suburbs during the day and night.
- In Townsville, local government programs (such as a graffiti removal program) were particularly mentioned as contributing to feelings of safety.
- In Townsville, it was suggested that some town planning strategies, such as putting up high fences, led to more social isolation.
- People who lived in lower socioeconomic areas with less of a sense of neighbourhood interaction felt more vulnerable.
- Focus group participants in Townsville recognised that local government is important for the delivery of relevant programs. However, it was also recognised that local government is very under-resourced. For this reason, it was thought that state government should have a larger role in the implementation of programs for older people in regional areas.

### *Themes*

- Crime is of particular concern to older people.
- Young people were perceived to be a major problem.
- Neighbourhood Watch was seen to be very important in terms of crime prevention.
- It was felt a sense of community and civility makes people feel safer.
- Repeat victimisation made people feel more vulnerable.
- Programs that give advice on personal safety and home security are particularly valued by older people. However, it is important that these

programs are conducted in a structured way, are well publicised and presented by a professional person such as a police officer. The distribution of books on safety and security in isolation is not appropriate.

- Sensationalist reporting of particular crimes in the media makes people feel more vulnerable and fearful.
- An increased police presence would make people feel safer.
- All of the groups advocated that criminal offenders should be sentenced to long periods in prison.
- While some of the people interviewed said that they would be reluctant to go out after dark by themselves, for many there was little incentive to be out at that time. Others did go out at night and, while aware of the risks of crime, their use of public space was similar to that of people in other age groups.

## Summary

All of the older people interviewed showed considerable openness to and awareness of the incidence of crime in the community, although their perceptions were often exaggerated.

One of the most important themes to emerge from the focus groups was the centrality of young people to older people's view of crime and safety. While there was considerable sympathy for many young people among those interviewed, there was also a widespread feeling that young people, especially in groups, could be rude, "disrespectful" and intimidating. Older people's use of public space could therefore be seriously affected by the presence of groups of young people.

There was a widespread belief that there had been a change in the style and effectiveness of policing and that this had contributed to the rise in crime over recent years. It was particularly suggested that the disappearance of the "local police" was responsible for this.

There was evidence from the focus groups of older people being reassured or made to feel safer by the installation of simple security measures. It was pointed out, however, that many people were not aware of programs that assisted older, lower income people to access these measures. In some cases they were excluded by an eligibility criterion that includes pensioners

only – there are many self-funded retirees who may be just above the pension level who may need the service. It was also noted that older people who had been a victim of a household burglary felt more vulnerable and in need of particular assistance.

All agreed that keeping active and interacting with other people and groups of people was important for their general confidence and wellbeing.

The older people interviewed all valued living in good, friendly interactive neighbourhoods. People looking out for each other was seen to contribute to crime prevention. Participants also valued the fact that their neighbourhood, town or city had a feeling of order and tidiness. For instance, graffiti made them feel that there was more crime.

# 6 Practical Crime Prevention Measures for Older People

## Physical Activity

Five per cent of the programs identified in this study referred to promoting a healthier lifestyle for older people through physical activity (for example, exercise classes, Tai Chi). The benefits associated with regular physical activity extend beyond the obvious health benefits to promoting increased independence and increased confidence in dealing with safety and security issues.

The social interaction gained through these classes also enhances the quality of life of older people. This link was demonstrated in a health promotions project in New South Wales, where older people attending community-based leisure programs experienced increased self-esteem, participation in activity and social connection. These positive benefits continued after the project worker was withdrawn because of the involvement of local groups and key community stakeholders who were able to maintain the program (Tang et al. 1995).

## Confident Living Programs

Confident living programs aim to enhance the safety, security, independence and quality of life of older people. They are designed to enable older people to discuss issues of concern to them, including fear of crime. They have been introduced in Victoria and Queensland. These programs, which have a strong crime prevention message combined with a healthy lifestyle message, seek to identify and address those concerns that prohibit older people from feeling safe and secure. Trained presenters deliver lectures and provide booklets covering the following topics.

- Taking care of yourself:
  - staying fit;
  - food and nutrition;
  - smoking;



- alcohol;
- medication;
- ambulance;
- injury at home: the biggest risk;
- state emergency service;
- companionship and social support; and
- assistance at home.
- Living confidently in your home:
  - avoiding accidents and personal injury;
  - fire safety;
  - how to improve the security of your home;
  - security devices; and
  - personal safety.
- Safe travelling:
  - walking;
  - driving;
  - when is it time to stop driving; and
  - safe travelling on public transport.
- Taking advantage of your community:
  - the Seniors Card;
  - assistance with meeting your household costs;
  - educational opportunities; and
  - home modification and renovation services.
- Where to go for help when you need it:
  - police assistance;
  - advice and training to improve your safety;
  - Victims of Crimes Assistance Tribunal;
  - victim support services;
  - legal assistance and personal advocacy; and
  - resolving disputes with family and neighbours.

In Victoria, there is also a specific component of the Confident Living Program that is directed towards the safety of older women. This is called Safer Living.

# Crime Prevention and Community Safety Programs

The Police Consultative Committees that have been introduced in Victoria are dedicated to developing crime prevention and community safety strategies that aim to:

- improve quality of life;
- reduce the actual level of crime;
- reduce the fear of crime;
- reduce the effects of crime; and
- improve relationships between the community and the police.

This, in part, is achieved by delivering programs aimed at older people through initiatives such as Confident Living for Older Victorians and Safer Living.

## Booklets, Pamphlets and Guides

It is important to note that there is an enormous duplication of material providing crime prevention tips for older people published and little would be gained from printing additional information. Organisations responsible for these publications include Commonwealth, state and local governments, police, and older people's organisations. It should be noted, however, that the Crime Prevention Branch in the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department has produced a booklet entitled *Crime Prevention for Seniors: A Guide to Personal and Financial Safety*. It is recommended that this booklet be effectively marketed to the target population and continue to be distributed.

### An Example from the United Kingdom

The Home Office in the United Kingdom has produced a training kit to reduce the number of older people who have been the victims of "distraction burglary". Distraction burglary is a type of burglary where the "method of entry" is by trick rather than the typical forced or sneak entry. The most common guise adopted is that of an official, for example the thief poses as an employee of a utility company, a council worker or a police officer. They can also pose as canvassers or door-to-door sales people (Home Office 2001).

Another method of “tricking” older or vulnerable people is criminal deception. The offenders are often the same, but they purport to be tradespeople, offering repairs, services and maintenance to homes and gardens. They will often carry out inferior work (sometimes no work at all) and charge exorbitant fees. They place extreme pressure on vulnerable people to obtain monies and sometimes accompany older people to banks and building societies to withdraw cash. They do not accept cheques, as these can be traced. These offences are difficult to prove as the offender hides behind the defence of providing a service, which they consider to be at a justifiable price (Home Office 2001).

The Home Office’s training kit consists of two videos. One is designed by policy developers, local council members and practitioners who work directly with, or are responsible for services to, older people. This video aims to:

- raise awareness of the crime;
- cover in more detail the effects of the crime on victims; and
- raise awareness on the various methods which the offender uses to gain entry (Home Office 2001).

The second video is for viewing by older people or vulnerable people in a group situation, and is accompanied by a talk from practitioners. This video aims to:

- raise awareness amongst older people about the crime;
- reinforce that they should not worry unduly about anyone calling at the door; and
- provide some simple steps to deal with unexpected callers.

In order to enforce the message and to gauge whether the messages are being acknowledged and understood, workshop and role-play exercises are provided after the video has been viewed. This is so that any gaps in the audience’s knowledge can be identified (Home Office 2001).

Those at risk of distraction burglary have their homes fitted with a door announcer and/or a door view mirror. Previous research showed that door chains and “peepholes” were not utilised correctly by older people (Home Office 2001).

The program is delivered through a partnership between local government (crime prevention officers, community safety partnerships), the police, housing officers, health workers, Age Concern and Neighbourhood Watch.

Health workers are important in that they are often in the “front line” to identify older people in need of assistance. Corporate sponsorship to help cover the cost of the program is provided by Water UK and British Gas.

## Other Ways to Reduce the Risk

Below are examples of the advice which is given for home security, personal safety, safety in cars and on public transport, personal banking, the avoidance of scams, and for the appointment of enduring power of attorney and guardianship.

### Tips for Improving Home Security

- Ensure all windows are locked.
- Do not place spare keys under doormats, flower pots or in meter boxes. Spare keys should not be left outside the home; leave spare keys with a friend or neighbour.
- Check with your landlord or the electricity authority about a lock-up meter box to prevent interference to the power supply.
- Burglars are attracted to overflowing mailboxes. If on holidays or absent for long periods, ask a trusted neighbour to clear the mailbox or arrange with the post office to hold mail.
- Cancel milk and newspaper deliveries when going away.
- Cut bushes and trees that obscure windows. Ensure that bushes or trees in the garden cannot be used as hiding places by intruders, or used as access to a first floor window.
- Keep all garden tools in locked sheds.
- Make sure the street number is easy to see from the street.
- Wedding and funeral notices that include an address can encourage a burglary. It is a wise precaution to have someone at home to keep an eye on the house if you are out at such a published event.
- Leave lights on inside and out if required – they are not expensive. Invest in sensor lights.
- Have an extra telephone installed in the bedroom or invest in a portable telephone. Program your telephone to allow quick access to emergency numbers.

- Identify property. Marked property is less attractive to burglars, and police can return it to its owners if it is recovered. Marking pens and engravers should be used. The nearest Neighbourhood Watch coordinator can lend marking pens and engravers. Put stickers on doors and windows indicating that the valuables have been marked.
- Lock doors and windows when you are at home, but are elsewhere in the house.
- Fit window locks. There are locks for every kind of window and they cost very little.
- A good quality security door should be fitted to front and rear entrances as they provide an additional lock plus a barrier for the caller.
- A security deadlock is advisable for main exit doors.
- A peephole fitted in the door allows identification of callers before letting them in.
- A door chain helps in order to be able to speak to strangers at the front door before letting them in.

### *Tips for Improving Personal Safety*

- Always be careful who you let into your home; if you have installed a peephole or door chain, you will be able to see who is at the door without opening it. If your door is not fitted with a peephole or chain, look through a window to see who is at the door.
- Always check the credentials of service repair people and do not allow charity workers to enter your home. Talk to strangers through a security door. If you are unsure of a person's motives, ask for the name of their company and telephone number and check their position with the company.
- Always be careful who is present when you are sharing private information about yourself. Be discreet about discussing your financial or living arrangements loudly in public.
- Do not advertise the fact that you live alone through telephone listings or letter box names.
- If you are feeling threatened by someone at the door or someone on the telephone, call out to a "make-believe" partner/companion that "it's okay, I've got it". This may seem silly to you, but could be the action which ensures your safety.

- Do not give your telephone number or reveal any information about yourself to unknown people.
- Do not let strangers know you are home alone or when you will be away from the house.
- If you receive an obscene or abusive call, do not try to talk to the caller—hang up. If the calls persist, keep a record of the times and then contact Telstra and the police.
- Know public transport timetables and routes and avoid waiting for extended periods at stations and bus stops.
- Carry your handbag in front of you, close to your body, not behind you. Rather than carrying a handbag, use a money belt or hidden purse.

### *Personal Alarms*

Personal alarms can range from pendants containing a radio transmitter button worn around the neck, to hand-held devices that emit loud alarms that can frighten attackers or summon help. On deciding on the type of alarm system needed (if at all), it is important to consider issues such as:

- the cost—rental or purchase;
- the weight of the device;
- the type of switch and its ease of operation—press button, air switch or micro switch;
- the location of the switch—on a pendant, wristband or carried in the pocket;
- its function in obtaining assistance in a health emergency as well as a situation of threat.

### *Safety in the Car and on Public Transport*

- Make sure that you do not have onlookers when putting valuables in the car boot.
- When travelling on the train, select carriages near the guard.
- If dropped off by a courtesy bus or friend, ask them to wait until you have entered your house before they leave.
- When travelling alone in the car at night or in isolated areas, lock the doors.

### ***Tips for Personal Banking***

- EFTPOS (Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale) is now widely used as an alternative to carrying cash. A debit card can be used to withdraw money from an automatic teller machine (ATM) or you can withdraw cash using the card in shops with EFTPOS facilities rather than carrying cash. It can be safer to withdraw additional money in a shop when you are buying goods.
- Paying by debit card is like paying by cheque, but safer because you use a personal identification number (or PIN), not a signature. It is much safer than carrying around large amounts of cash.
- If you use a cheque, do not let anyone else fill it out for you. Make sure the cheque is crossed “not negotiable”. Do not sign a blank cheque or make it out to cash.

### ***Tips for Avoiding Scams***

- Be wary of itinerant tradespeople offering “good deals” on home repairs, security devices or home improvement jobs.
- Be wary of direct marketing or telemarketing. This is the selling of goods by the telephone, Internet or by mail.
- Only use a registered financial planner.

### ***Appointing Guardianship and Enduring Power of Attorney***

It is important to choose very carefully the people to whom you give power of attorney to protect your affairs. Choose someone you know well and trust completely and discuss your wishes with them in advance. The Public Trustee can be appointed as your attorney and prepare your will if you are concerned about choosing the right person. Writing and lodging a will with your bank or solicitor is an extra precaution.

# 7 Policy Framework

## The Issues

The framework for the *National Strategy for an Ageing Australia* recognises the major consequences of the relatively new phenomenon of population ageing. There is now a need to identify and meet the social, health and economic challenges, as well as the opportunities created by the major demographic shift towards significantly greater numbers of older people in Australia's population. Within this context, an important issue to be addressed is how best the safety and security of this increasing proportion of older people can be assured.

Older people should not be treated as a homogenous group in relation to crime and crime prevention. Older people are a diverse group. This diversity is reflected in demographic, cultural, social and environmental contexts. There is a considerable variation in the way that individuals react to and deal with seemingly similar incidents.

Regardless of its actual incidence, crime can impact greatly on some older people's lives. This can happen directly, in the case of those who do become victims, and indirectly, in the lives of those who feel anxious about the possibility of victimisation and who may alter their behaviour or lifestyle as a result. Older people who have been victimised once are more likely to be more fearful of crime. Also, older people who live in areas with high levels of crime are more likely than those in "safer" areas to be more anxious and fearful. There may be certain factors associated with ageing (for example physical frailty, low income or social isolation) which exacerbate the effects of crime.

There appears to be a relationship between anxiety about crime, community involvement and self-confidence. Those older people who are most active and involved (and made to feel involved) in their communities are least likely to be anxious about crime and fear of crime. On the other hand, the more older people become isolated from others, the more likely they are to lose self-confidence and trust and to withdraw further.



There are three types of programs that need to be implemented to increase the safety and security of older Australians—those concerned with:

- personal safety and home security;
- social interaction and community participation; and
- financial advice and fraud prevention.

Town planning and land-use decisions concerned with the social and built environment are important public health and crime prevention issues. Overall physical and mental health benefits can result when people live in accessible, well designed, thoughtful structures and landscapes. This, in turn, has a flow-on effect in promoting the safety and security of older people.

Communities can be enriched by the use of the accumulated “social capital” that is embedded in the older population. Engagement in society by older people leads to trust and cooperation for the mutual benefit of all.

Local government is the most effective level of government to recognise and effectively respond to local needs and aspirations (see discussion below). Crime prevention and fear reduction programs for older people are therefore best implemented at local government level, as part of a community safety strategy, in partnership with other key agencies and stakeholders. However, it does need to be recognised that not all local government areas have the same level of commitment to implementing appropriate programs. Local government also does not have sufficient resources to regard programs for older people as a priority. One area from which funding could be encouraged is the corporate sector.

## The Priority

The priority is to create safer communities for older people while reducing their fear of crime. Through a whole-of-government approach, it is necessary to assist local communities to identify local problems and develop effective local solutions that are community-based and sustainable. The priority is also to develop collaborative partnerships and build on existing social capital.

## Existing Structures

There are several levels of existing structures that can be utilised to create safer communities for older people. These are as follows.

### Commonwealth Government

There are several Commonwealth Government departments that could be involved as funding agencies in creating a safer community for older people. These include the Department of Health and Ageing, the Attorney-General's Department, the Department of Family and Community Services, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

The role of the Department of Health and Ageing is primarily through the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program. HACC is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the states/territories. The states/territories have responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the program within broad parameters as set out in bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and state/territory Ministers. Examples of programs funded under HACC which are particularly relevant to the safety and security of older Australians are Home Assist in South Australia, Home Assist/Home Secure in Queensland and Home Assessment for Safety and Security which operates in several states and territories.

There are no overriding guidelines that could assist state and local governments in implementing appropriate programs. Guidelines for program development could be formulated by the Australian Institute of Criminology in consultation with Commonwealth and state/territory government agencies for dissemination to local government agencies. In this instance, consideration would be given to joint funding initiatives.

### State Government

State government is potentially better equipped than any other level of government for integrating and coordinating crime prevention programs for older people. Consequently, this is where the correct implementation of an inter-sectoral approach is not only most viable, but crucial for its success. State governments should provide clearly enunciated guidelines for the various agencies involved.

Appropriate state government departments that should be involved in crime prevention strategies for older people include the departments of housing (built environment), transport (mobility), health (health and safety issues) and the police (crime prevention). The state/territory departments of Attorney-General, particularly the crime prevention units, should also be included.

State/territory governments should be responsible for integrating, coordinating and providing some funding for local crime prevention initiatives.

## **Local Government**

The majority of crime is localised in nature. Some communities experience higher levels of crime than others. Local councils have day-to-day contact with most, if not all, of the major players/participants in a local community. These include residents, business people, sporting and community service organisations (including groups for older people, developers, government departments and authorities, the local media, local politicians and the police.

Even though it is recognised that local government in Australia is limited in its range of responsibilities, particularly compared with many other countries (for example the UK, France and the Netherlands), it is still in the position of being the agency with the most knowledge of individual needs in particular areas. Local government is best placed to understand the context of local crime problems and is able to respond to local concerns and initiate crime prevention programs within the framework of other services. Local government concerns can be closely and relevantly attuned to the needs of individual people.

Local government is therefore one of the key structures to take a leading role in community crime prevention measures for older people. However, efforts would be needed to seek funding and additional support from both other government agencies and the corporate sector. Policies for older people therefore need to be refined at local government level in partnership with Commonwealth and state/territory governments. Indeed, there are many social programs that have links to the safety and wellbeing of older people which are already funded by state and Commonwealth governments, but

delivered by local government. There is also a significant role for local government in situational crime prevention, particularly in planning and design.

However, while local government may be best placed to bring together the wide range of community groups and organisations to address the issue of crime prevention and fear reduction, local government is not the only authority to be considered in bringing these people together. A partnership approach that capitalises on the collective influence and ability of all the key stakeholders to promote crime prevention programs for older people may also be successful.

## **Media**

The media has an important role to play in the public perception of older people. Negative, sensationalist reporting not only produces stereotypes, but also has a detrimental effect on the way older people view the incidence of crime. This can lead to greater fear and isolation. By adopting a positive, focused approach, media reporting, particularly in relation to crime prevention issues affecting older people, could be part of the solution, not part of the problem. In local areas, the media could assist by publishing crime prevention tips in the local newspaper. On a national level, the media could help disseminate information to older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds through SBS television. Illiterate older people could also benefit from television advertising. The media also needs to be educated on the ramifications of sensationalist reporting.

## **The Corporate Sector**

The corporate sector should be encouraged to have a key sponsorship role in the implementation of crime prevention programs that increase the safety and security of older Australians.

## **Seniors' Organisations**

Existing seniors' organisations could disseminate information on personal safety and home security through their regular publications and newsletters. Existing programs which focus on social interaction, healthy lifestyles, safety and security conducted through these organisations could also be built on. Nationally, these organisations have a membership of almost 700,000 people.

## Older People

Older people have a positive role to play in the implementation of crime prevention and fear reduction strategies relating to themselves. The majority of older Australians are fit and healthy. Many have high levels of skills and expertise that could be used as an important resource in the wider community. Older people often have the time, the energy and the ability for voluntary work in and for the local community. They are the ones who could contribute to the social capital of these communities.

**Table 3: Draft strategy for crime prevention and fear reduction programs for older people**

Focus	Objectives	Target areas
Reduction in fear of crime	To address the reasons for older people's fear of crime and to create safer environments in which everyone feels secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-crime areas</li> <li>• Repeat victimisation</li> <li>• Relationship between anxiety and fear of crime</li> <li>• Relationship between older people and younger people</li> <li>• Perception of order with local areas</li> <li>• Media response to crime</li> </ul>
Increase physical security and personal safety	To address the concerns of victims and potential victims of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-crime areas</li> <li>• Repeat victimisation</li> <li>• Educational seminars</li> <li>• Information pamphlets/booklets</li> </ul>
Increase financial safety	To address the issues relating to financial safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational seminars</li> <li>• Information booklets/pamphlets</li> </ul>
Provide supportive social environments	To strengthen communities by increasing social control and social cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crime prevention linked to social planning</li> <li>• Crime prevention linked to the built environment</li> <li>• Promote local ownership of problems and solutions</li> </ul>
Effective utilisation of social capital	To strengthen and enhance communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the personal skills of older people</li> <li>• Promote partnerships between relevant agencies</li> </ul>

## Towards a Strategic Approach

Current policy challenges are to ensure that all older Australians not only live safe and confident lives as part of our communities, but that they also feel safe and secure within those communities. To ensure this, the main emphasis should be on:

- promoting a sense of security and safety to reduce older people's fear of crime;
- implementing programs that increase the physical security and personal safety of vulnerable older people;
- implementing programs that ensure the financial safety of vulnerable older people;
- identifying and using crime prevention techniques that encourage supportive social environments;
- effectively utilising the social capital that is available within the older population and in the wider community; and
- reducing sensationalism in the media.

Table 3 outlines a draft strategy that could form the basis of crime prevention and fear reduction for older Australians.

### Local Crime Prevention

These strategies can be further refined for delivery at the local level. The principal rationale is that local agencies are best placed to:

- understand the context of local crime problems while reducing fear of crime;
- respond to local concerns; and
- initiate crime prevention and fear-reduction programs within the framework of other services.

There are a number of very well established principles of local crime prevention. These include:

- local leadership and involvement;
- a partnership approach;
- strategies based on good information;

- evidence-based initiatives;
- public consultation—responding to local concerns;
- building the means to evaluate action—ideally looking at cost-effectiveness and the best solutions;
- support by Commonwealth and state/territory government resources; and
- setting targets as well as reports on how far these targets are met.

Table 4 identifies four main strands for local crime prevention for older Australians.

**Table 4: Best practice in local crime prevention planning for older Australians**

Ownership and leadership	Principles of prevention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonwealth Government interest in planning and program delivery</li> <li>• Guidelines for program development and implementation formulated by the Australian Institute of Criminology</li> <li>• State/territory government program coordination</li> <li>• Local commitment to crime prevention and community safety</li> <li>• Local leadership and involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies based on local information to identify priority problems</li> <li>• Understanding the context of local crime problems</li> <li>• Understanding how what is done is meant to work (the “mechanism”)</li> <li>• Strategies linking solutions to problems</li> <li>• Offering a range of different (“best”) solutions</li> </ul>
Planning	Delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships between state government, local government, police, the corporate sector, older people’s organisations and older people themselves</li> <li>• Public consultation—responding to local concerns to enhance community support</li> <li>• Initiate crime programs within the framework of other services</li> <li>• Build in evaluation plans</li> <li>• Set targets</li> <li>• Prepare progress reports</li> <li>• Realistic and achievable plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminars conducted by local government</li> <li>• Seminars conducted by state and territory police</li> <li>• Program delivery through seniors’ organisations and Neighbourhood Watch</li> <li>• Activities arranged through community organisations to integrate older people into their neighbourhoods</li> <li>• Positive use of the media</li> </ul>

# Conclusion

This report has outlined the relationship between older Australians, crime, crime prevention and fear of crime. A number of important conclusions have been drawn.

The first is that older Australians are a diverse group of people. To treat older Australians as a homogenous group is to risk stereotyping and creating policy outcomes that do not fit with the lived experience.

The second is that the broad pattern of victimisation for personal offences committed against older Australians is consistent with findings throughout Western countries that older people are far less likely to be victims of crime than people in other age groups. However, despite this pattern of decreased risk, there is evidence to suggest that within the population of victimised older people the patterns of victimisation differ in important respects from patterns in younger age groups.

The third is that some older people can be more likely than people in younger age groups to fear crime. The research shows that there is a relationship between anxiety about crime, community involvement and self-confidence. Those older people who are most active and involved, or who are made to feel involved, in their communities are least likely to be anxious about crime. Conversely, the more older people become isolated from others, the more likely they are to lose confidence and trust and to withdraw further.

Both crime and the fear of crime should not simply be seen as problems to be dealt with by policing or crime prevention initiatives. While there is value in promoting awareness and use of crime prevention measures among older people, and in educating the public in general about risks of crime, the limitations of these approaches must be recognised. A holistic approach is needed which recognises the more general anxieties associated with ageing and which seeks to reintegrate older people back into the communities in which they live. The contribution which older people can make to the community should be recognised and valued.



The important challenge for policy as the Australian population ages is to achieve a balance between responses which do protect those older people who are dependent and vulnerable, due to physical or mental frailty, whilst at the same time not ignoring the needs, experiences and potential resources of older people who do not fit into these categories.

The challenge for policy in relation to the protection from victimisation of older people in the community is to target strategies to those contexts in which older people are vulnerable and, for various reasons, have disproportionate fears about crime to the level where it limits their quality of life and results in social isolation.

Healthy ageing is an important goal for all societies experiencing unprecedented population ageing. Feelings of safety and security among older people contribute to healthy ageing. The challenge for Australian society as a whole is therefore to ensure that all older Australians live a safe and confident life not only as part of our communities, but that they also feel safe and secure within those communities.

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# Appendix A

## Questionnaire: Programs that increase the safety and security of older Australians

Please return by 15 December 2001

The purpose of this survey is to find out about programs that increase the safety of older people in Australia (taken as age 50 plus). These programs may have either a crime prevention focus, a personal safety focus, or a community focus.

If you conduct more than one different type of program, please fill out a separate questionnaire for each.

If you conduct more than one program, but they are of the same type, just complete one questionnaire, but please specify how many programs it covers.

Number of programs covered by this response \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the name of the program?

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2. Is the program exclusively directed towards older people, or to the community as a whole, including older people?

- Exclusively older people  
 Community as a whole

3. Give a brief description of the program. **[Please send any material you have on the program]** NB Specific details are asked in Q9

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4. Which agency or organisation is responsible for the delivery of the program?

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5. Are other agencies, working in partnership, involved in the delivery of the program? If so, which agencies?

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6. Does the program **only** involve the distribution of booklets or leaflets?

- Yes
- No

7. When was the program introduced?

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8. Was the program introduced in response to a specific crime problem, just general concern about crime, or for some other reason?

- Specific problem
- General concern
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Are the following activities part of your program? Please **tick** if they are. Only include activities that are **additional** to advice given in information booklets or leaflets.

**Improving physical security**

Advice (e.g. from police or local agencies) on improving home security

- Advice given at a group level
- Security assessment on an individual home basis

Free or subsidised installation of better security hardware (e.g. security doors, window locks, alarm systems)

Fitting of better security hardware

Modifications to areas around home to improve safety (e.g. cutting back bushes, improved lighting)

Other (please describe)

**Improving personal safety**

Provision of personal alarms

Escort services for older people

Advice on personal behaviour

Other (please describe)

**Community building**

Providing community activities for older people

- Exercise classes
- Group outings
- Talks on safety measures

Other (please describe)

**Provision of specific advice on consumer fraud** (apart from any advice in booklets or leaflets)

- Telemarketing
- Door-to-door sales
- Internet/mail/telephone orders
- Home repairs
- Car purchase/repairs
- Financial transactions such as savings, securities and superannuation
- Other (please describe)

10. What is the annual cost of running the program? (Give your best estimate)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

11. Who is involved in the delivery of the program? How many?

- Police ( )
- Other professionals (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Older people ( )
- Volunteers ( )
- Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

12. If volunteers are involved, to what extent are they involved?

- Program mainly relies on volunteers
- Some volunteer help

13. Has this program been evaluated for its effectiveness?

- Yes
- No

14. (a) If the program has been evaluated for its effectiveness, when?

\_\_\_\_\_

(b) Which organisation did the evaluation?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(c) Did the evaluation try to examine:

- Whether crime levels actually fell for older people?
- Older people's **perceptions** of reduced crime levels?

(d) What were the outcomes of the evaluation. [Please send supporting material]

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Please indicate below your name and address:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE DIRECT ENQUIRIES AND RETURN THIS FORM TO:  
(Please return by 15 December 2001)**

**Marianne James  
Australian Institute of Criminology  
GPO Box 2944  
CANBERRA ACT 2611  
Tel (02) 6260 9242, Fax (02) 6260 9201  
Email: Marianne.James@aic.gov.au**

# Appendix B

## Focus Group Questions

1. As you grow older, as you go about your daily life what concerns you most?
  - Health
  - Family
  - Safety and security
  - Financial
  
2. Can you tell us about the area where you live?
  - Is it a good place?
  - Is it a safe and comfortable place?
  - How is it looked after?
  - What is the general appearance of parks, lighting etc?
  - How would you describe the sense of community?
  
3. Are there any problems in your areas? Is there anything that worries you?  
What are the main issues?
  - Housebreaking/burglaries/theft from home
  - Dangerous/noisy driving
  - Louts/youth gangs
  - Illegal drugs
  - Vandalism/graffiti/damage to property
  - Car theft
  - Drunkenness
  - Problems with neighbours/domestic problems
  - Other theft
  - Prowlers/loiterers
  - Other assault
  - Sexual assault

4. Who do you think should be responsible for making the community safe?

- Police
- Local council
- Community organisations
- Residents
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

5. (a) The people we have just talked about (police, local councils, community organisations), how much support do these organisations offer older people?

(b) What sort of support do you think they should be giving?

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6. What programs are presently in place to make older people feel safer and more secure in your area?

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7. What sort of programs would you like to see put into place to make you feel safer and more secure in your area?

- Advice on home security
- Installation of security, e.g. doors, window locks
- Modifications around the home to improve safety
- Provision of personal alarms
- Advice on personal behaviour, e.g. how to carry a handbag
- Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_

8. Are you aware of any social activity programs available in your area?

- Yes
- No

9. If so, what sort of activities?

- Exercise classes
- Group outings
- Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_

10. Do these sorts of activities make you feel better and safer?

Yes

No

11. What are the types of things that make you feel afraid?

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12. Do you think people try to put one over older people (rip them off). Has anybody got any experiences they would like to share?

Over the telephone

At your front door

Over the Internet

While carrying out home repairs

While carrying out car repairs

Financial transactions, such as savings, securities and superannuation

Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you worry about your safety?

High

Medium

Low

14. Do you go out at night? If so, how do you travel?

Walk

By car

By public transport

15. How safe do you feel when you go out at night?

Very safe

Reasonably safe

Not safe at all

16. How does the media portray crime in your area?

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17. Do you think the media has got it right when they describe crime in your area or in other areas?

Yes

No

18. Is there a way they could do it better?

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19. How do researchers and policy-makers portray crime in your area?

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