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The “whole of government” approach to crime prevention

A “whole of government” approach to crime prevention is very widespread in Australia. However, it is an approach that is not unique to crime prevention. Rather, it is an example of a more general shift in public administration away from a command and control mode of governance and towards governance through multiple stakeholders working together to deliver integrated solutions to social problems across sectors and tiers of government. In parts of the USA this is known as “networked government” while in the UK the approach is popularly known as “joined-up government”.

This approach requires a high level of policy, program and organisational integration to the point of joint or collective action and shared or mutual responsibility for performance and outcomes. This is a situation that is sometimes referred to as “organisational fusion”.

There is a common emphasis on the “whole of government” approach because the causes of crime are complex and multi-faceted. Successful crime prevention action requires the coordinated effort of many agencies in partnership with community and business groups.

Organising to implement a “whole of government” program has significant practical implications for how normal business is transacted. Many existing processes may need to be changed, or at least adapted. Some important areas can include:

- The need for processes such as pooled budgets;
- Partnership arrangements (e.g. non-government/voluntary sector, private sector, other levels of government such as local government);
- Revisions of relationships between provider and client;
- Co-ordination of service delivery and tendering with partner criteria;
- Integrated planning and triple bottom line analysis (i.e. assessing economic, environmental and social impacts);
- Innovative community consultation, engagement and joint management arrangements;
- Joint databases and customer intake and referral mechanisms; and
- Joint performance measures and indicators.

This means that the adoption of a “whole of government” approach to crime prevention must be thoroughly planned for across of all the program delivery levels. It also means that the policy and program process must be seen as a single integrated system rather than a series of discrete or loosely connected parts. A strong and responsive crime prevention agency is essential to guide this process. Crime prevention cannot implement itself.

Further reading:

Institute of Public Affairs Australia 2002. Working together - integrated governance: final report
http://www.ipaa.org.au/12_pdf/national_research_final.pdf



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