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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Seniors Task Force has identified a number of factors that undermine the assumption that older people are vulnerable to crime and live in fear. The reality is quite different in Queensland, and in other jurisdictions in Australia and around the World.

Not only are seniors the least likely age group to become victims of crime statistically, they generally contribute to their own safety through their lifestyle. Seniors are more experienced and wiser, they tend to spend more time at home, are less likely to interact with offenders, and don't place themselves in high risk situations like people in other age groups.

However, the consequences of offences against them are likely to be more traumatic. Factors such as limited financial resources, feelings of vulnerability, longer recovery time from physical injury and increased anxiety about crime once they have become a victim, can contribute to the impact of a crime being more significant for older people.

It was for these reasons that the Seniors Task Force was formed in March 2004 to address crime issues related to people aged 65 years and older in Queensland. The Task Force reported to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and was chaired by the Commissioner of Police. It comprised representatives from 17 government agencies and community organisations, and met on 12 occasions throughout 2004 and 2005. To facilitate the examination of crime issues associated with seniors, the Task Force formed three subcommittees to focus on the core issues of Investigation of Crime, Prevention of Crime, and Fear of Crime.

In this context, the Seniors Task Force has based this report on the six outcomes identified in its project plan.

2. LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the project plan for the Seniors Task Force, the terms of reference, objectives and outcomes to be achieved by its members were established. Being achievement focussed, the majority of this report is based on the outcomes of the Task Force as nominated in the project plan. The report contains a number of recommendations, each of which is explained fully in the body of the report. A summary of the recommendations is as follows:

Recommendation 1: That the results of the Safe and Secure Survey be made available to academic and seniors organisations.

Recommendation 2: That, subject to evaluation, Older Peoples Action Program (OPAP) projects be extended to more communities within the State, where appropriate.

Recommendation 3: That agencies be encouraged to consider the steps outlined in the Fear of Crime literature review when developing strategies designed to reduce the fear of crime.

Recommendation 4: That the 'Confident, Safe & Secure' handbook be updated and reprinted on an annual basis.

Recommendation 5: That the QPS, in partnership with Council on the Ageing (COTA) National Seniors, continues to develop and utilise community service announcements.

Recommendation 6: That ongoing research be conducted into intergenerational issues to inform government policy and service delivery.

Recommendation 7: That the Queensland Police Service examines ways to expand the Adopt-A-Cop program into retirement villages and other seniors' facilities.

Recommendation 8: That the Seniors Task Force initiative 'Where's your handbag' be promoted to supermarkets identified as concentrated crime areas for personal theft.

Recommendation 9: That, subject to evaluation, the Queensland Police Service considers expanding the Seniors Liaison Project (North Coast Region) to other regions.

Recommendation 10: That the Queensland Police Service considers expanding the HomeLink program to other regions.

Recommendation 11: That the Queensland Police Service develops an information document that details the services provided for seniors.

Recommendation 12: That the State Government considers funding the expansion of the Seniors Advocacy, Information & Legal Service to major regional centres in Queensland.

Recommendation 13: That, subject to evaluation, the State Government considers extending Social Isolation projects to more communities in Queensland.

Recommendation 14: That the Neighbourhood Watch Program considers introducing Social Isolation projects within individual Neighbourhood Watch areas.

Recommendation 15: That all projects developed by the State Government to prevent crime against seniors and reduce the fear of crime among seniors be properly evaluated using the *Guidelines for Evaluating Community Crime Prevention Projects* developed by the Commonwealth Government.

Recommendation 16: That a position of State Coordinator for Seniors Issues within the QPS be created to overview and coordinate issues relating to seniors safety in Queensland.

Recommendation 17: That the Queensland Police Service coordinates biannual seminars on crime against seniors.

3. INTRODUCTION

The outcomes of the Seniors Task Force are aligned with the strategic direction of the Queensland Government and the Queensland Police Service (QPS). Of the seven Priorities determined by the Government, the QPS focuses on the priority of *Protecting our children and enhancing community safety*.

Within this Government priority, there are four strategic objectives, of which two were relevant to the Task Force: *Implement strategies which contribute to safe communities* and *Address crime and the social and economic causes of crime*.

The QPS Strategic Plan 2004-2008 provides four outputs to support the Queensland Government priorities. Output 1 *Community Safety and Engagement* provides the strategic focus for the work of the Task Force. Within this output, the key priority area of relevance to the Task Force was *Crime Prevention and Community Partnerships* under which two of the seven strategies applied:

- Engage the community and establish partnerships to assist in identifying and addressing the cause of crime and disorder problems that are of concern to the community
- Promote crime prevention strategies

It is within these strategic parameters that the Seniors Task Force offers this report.

Terms of Reference

- The identification of current Queensland Government programs, including those within the Queensland Police Service, designed to reduce crime against seniors or their fear of crime.
- The identification and assessment of such programs in other jurisdictions.
- The identification and assessment of the statistical systems in place for recording crimes against seniors.
- For the purposes of statistical collections, 'seniors' are to be defined as all people primarily over 65 years of age.

- The identification of qualitative and quantitative evaluation criteria for assessing the crime prevention, investigation and fear of crime programs targeted towards seniors.
- The development of best practice strategies for the prevention and investigation of crimes against seniors, and for reducing the fear of crime amongst seniors.
- The monitoring of the effectiveness of these strategies.
- The provision of regular progress reports to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services.

Outcomes

- Improved awareness of crime and fear of crime issues among seniors.
- Understanding of the extent and impact of crime and fear of crime on the senior community.
- Identification and assessment of Queensland Government initiatives targeting crime and fear of crime issues with seniors.
- Identification of initiatives targeting crime and fear of crime issues with seniors in other jurisdictions.
- Development of good practice strategies for seniors on:
 - the prevention of crime
 - the investigation of crime, and
 - reducing the fear of crime.
- The establishment of processes to evaluate and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of crime prevention, investigation and fear of crime programs targeting seniors.

4. BACKGROUND

The Seniors Task Force was formed in early 2004 following an announcement by the Premier, The Honourable Peter Beattie MP, and the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, The Honourable Judy Spence MP, that action would be taken to address crime issues affecting older members of the Queensland community. A spate of personal thefts against senior people in suburban Brisbane had raised concern within Government, and focussed media and community interest on the issue of crime against seniors.

The Seniors Task Force held its inaugural meeting on 11 March 2004 under the chair of the Commissioner of Police, Mr Bob Atkinson. The Task Force comprised representatives from 17 government and community organisations who provided broad and robust examination of crime and its impacts on the senior community of Queensland. The Task Force members and their delegates met on 12 occasions throughout 2004 and 2005.

To facilitate the examination of crime issues associated with seniors, the Task Force formed three subcommittees to focus on the core issues of Investigation of Crime; Prevention of Crime; and Fear of Crime. The establishment of these subcommittees allowed Task Force members to contribute to the particular issue/s that were of interest to them, and enable other government and community representatives to make contributions from their areas of expertise.

The Seniors Task Force comprised:

- Australian Pensioners & Superannuants' League
Ms Yvonne Zardani
- Council on the Ageing (COTA) National Seniors
Mr Bill Benson
- Crime and Misconduct Commission
Ms Susan Johnson (Chair, Fear of Crime subcommittee)
Dr Jennifer Sanderson
Dr Paul Mazerolle (former Chair, Fear of Crime subcommittee)
- Department of Communities
Mr Paul Friedman (Chair, Prevention of Crime subcommittee)
Ms Peta Jervois

- Queensland Health
Mr Mark Odgaard
Ms Jo Root
- Department of Housing
Ms Kay Gaffney
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Mr Mark Pathé
Ms Glenda Newick
- Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland
Mr Nick Xynias
- Happy Seniors Club
Mr Herrick Wong
- Keriba Mabaigal Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Culture and Heritage
Mr Thomas Sebasio
- Local Government Association of Queensland
Ms Desley Renton
- Office of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services
Ms Alison Smith
Ms Fiona Reynolds
- Ministerial Advisory Council for Older Persons
Ms Val French
- Office of Fair Trading
Mr Harold Thornton
Ms Samantha Palmer
- Queensland Police Service
Commissioner Bob Atkinson (Chair, Seniors Task Force)
Inspector Tony Lake (Project Coordinator, Seniors Task Force)
Inspector Graham McIntosh (Chair, Investigation of Crime subcommittee)
Mr Tim Martin (Project Officer, Seniors Task Force)
- Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association
Mr Ian Baldock
- Reconciliation Queensland Inc
Ms Joan Hendriks

The following people served as delegates for members of the Task Force:

- Australian Pensioners & Superannuants' League
Ms Desma Conway

- COTA National Seniors
Ms Pat Ryan
- Crime and Misconduct Commission
Dr Mark Lynch
- Department of Communities
Ms Karen Adams
Dr Jill White
Ms Angela Murchison
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Mr Paul Denny
- Keriba Mabaigal Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Culture and Heritage
Ms Rita Nona
- Office of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services
Ms Angela Bell
Ms Sarah Martin
Ms Leah Lane
- Ministerial Advisory Council for Older Persons
Ms Ilma Ferguson
- Queensland Police Service
Mr Bruce Moy
Dr Ann Scott
Acting Inspector David Stevenson
- Office of Fair Trading
Mr Rene Kienzle

In addition to the above members and delegates, the following people served on the Seniors Task Force subcommittees:

- Adult Guardian
Mr Mark Phillips
- COTA National Seniors
Mr Mark Tucker-Evans
- Crime and Misconduct Commission
Ms Margaret Patane
Ms Lisa Ballard
Ms Jennifer Epps
- Department of Communities
Ms Bree King
Ms Cheryl Hastie

- Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation
Ms Natalie Niethe
- Lifeline Community Care, Queensland
Ms Chris Procopis
Ms Julie Argeros
- Safety House Association of Queensland
Ms Trish Judd

The Seniors Task Force would like to recognise the contribution and support of the following people:

- Queensland Police Service:
Sergeant Virginia Beitz
Ms Mary-Ellen Lane
Ms Sandy Fisher
Ms Gabrielle Lobo
- Elder Abuse Prevention Unit:
Ms Maya Zetlin
Mr Les Jackson

The Seniors Task Force would like to thank the following people for their contribution to this report:

- Ms Emily Coutts, Queensland Police Service
- Ms Kate Wunderlich, Department of Communities

5. OUTCOMES

The Seniors Task Force has based this report on the six outcomes identified in its project plan.

5.1 Improved awareness of crime and fear of crime issues among seniors

THE FEAR OF CRIME

The Fear of Crime Literature Review is attached in full as Appendix A.

In Queensland, as in other states, it is important to know how prevalent the fear of crime is among seniors, and to understand its impact. Only then can effective intervention programs be formulated and public policy shaped.

Fear of crime is frequently investigated, but there is disagreement about its definition, how it should be measured, and its prevalence - particularly among older adults.

The ongoing difficulty in settling on an agreed definition of exactly what fear of crime is centres around the fact that fear is equated with a variety of emotional states, attitudes or perceptions (Warr 2000). In keeping with psychological theories, Warr argues that fear is not a cognitive or behavioural process; rather, 'fear is an emotion, a feeling of alarm or dread caused by an awareness or expectation of danger' (Warr 2000, p. 453). Fear of crime, therefore, is not actually a belief, attitude or evaluation. It is like other commonplace fears, but in this instance the stimulus that elicits the fear is crime. In reality, the term 'fear of crime' is an inaccurate description. Fear generally is seen as an immediate response to a current threat; but fear of crime can occur in the absence of an actual threat. Anxiety, on the other hand, occurs in the absence of any obvious threat; hence the phenomenon 'fear of crime' could be more accurately described as anxiety or worry about crime (Warr 2000).

The fear of crime is an important issue with potentially serious consequences. The consequences of fear are real, measurable, and potentially severe both for the individual and for society. Fearful individuals most often attempt to lessen their concern by constraining their behaviour. They might, for example, avoid going out at night, or do so very sparingly; or they might alter their routine activities to decrease their perceived risk of victimisation. While these constraints are intended to alleviate fear, they frequently increase it (Ferraro 1995). Fear of crime might also lead to

decreased social integration, out-migration, and added security costs (Warr 1985, cited in Ferraro 1995).

There is a widespread belief that older adults are particularly fearful of crime, and their fear may make them captives in their own homes (Clemente & Kleiman 1976, and Cook & Cook 1976, both cited in Ferraro 1995).

This elevated fear creates a victimisation–fear paradox because, although older adults are believed to be more fearful of crime victimisation than members of other age groups, they are statistically less likely to be victimised (Bachman 1992, cited in Ferraro 1995). Across all Western countries, using either official police figures or survey data including unreported crimes, the elderly are consistently found to be less likely to be crime victims (Grabosky 1995) — although their patterns of victimisation for various crimes do differ from those of other age groups (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). It is younger people, and specifically young males, who typically suffer the highest overall rates of victimisation, because there are more risks inherent in their lifestyle and they are less likely to constrain their behaviour to avoid possible victimisation (Ferraro 1995; Grabosky 1995).

Although some previous research has found that the elderly are most fearful of crime (e.g. Clemente & Kleiman 1976, cited in Ferraro 1995), the relationship between fear and age is not consistent. Typically, studies that use better research methods do not show the elderly as being more afraid of crime (Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2002; Ferraro 1995). On the contrary, some recent studies found that it was the younger people who were the most likely age group to be victimised; they were also most likely to report the highest rates of fear, particularly when they were questioned about their fear of violent, personal crimes (Ferraro 1995; Grabosky 1995). From the evidence, it is clearly not the case that the elderly are consistently the most fearful of crime.

In addition, it may be that other factors that co-occur with higher levels of fear are more strongly related to greater fear of crime in the seniors group (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). For example, seniors are more likely to suffer from ill health, live alone, have lower incomes through reliance on government benefits as their main source of income, and suffer from social isolation (Carcach, Graycar & Muscat 2001; Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2002; James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). Each of these risk factors is associated with higher levels of fear of crime (Attorney-General's Department 1998; Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2002; Grabosky 1995), and may be more important than age in explaining fear of crime in seniors (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003).

Indeed, researchers investigating differences in fear levels within the senior's age group have found that living in areas that lack social cohesion and being socially isolated were both major contributors to fear of crime in this age group (James & Graycar 2000). In contrast, seniors who are more involved in their community, and those who have greater self-confidence, are less fearful of crime (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). Therefore it is important to continue investigating differences between seniors, rather than focusing only on comparisons between seniors and other age groups. Age is not a particularly consistent predictor of fear of crime, so high-fear groups are not particularly characterised by age (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). It may be most beneficial to provide interventions for the specific subgroups of seniors who are most fearful of crime.

When seniors are asked questions about their fear of specific crimes, it appears that they are no more fearful of crime than other age groups, although they may be more concerned about specific types of crimes than about others (Ferraro 1995; Government Statistician's Office 1992; Ranzijn, Howells & Wagstaff 2002). Fear of specific crimes does vary in different studies (e.g. Attorney-General's Department 1998; James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003; Ranzijn, Howells & Wagstaff 2002), so it seems that seniors are not consistently fearful of the same types of crimes. This variation is not surprising, as fear of crime for specific crimes differs geographically and by neighbourhood (Ferraro 1995; James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003); also, fears may change over time (Warr 2000).

In summary, there is no consistent evidence that seniors are more fearful of crime than anyone else. Indeed, on the rare occasions when respondents were questioned about their altruistic fear of crime (i.e. their concern for their family members), seniors were found to be more fearful for their grandchildren than for themselves (Attorney-General's Department 1998).

Although seniors are less likely to be victimised and often are not more fearful of crime than other age groups, the physical and economic vulnerabilities associated with ageing appear to make the emotive impact of fear of crime for seniors more acute (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). The elderly feel more vulnerable to victimisation because any loss of economic resources is more serious, their decreasing physical strength makes it less likely that they could fend off an attacker, and the consequences of any injuries they sustain are likely to be more serious (Carcach, Graycar & Muscat 2001; James & Graycar 2000; Muscat, James & Graycar 2002). Therefore, even if seniors report levels of fear that are similar to those of other age

groups, the impact and consequences of their fear might be greater and potentially more debilitating.

The elderly, to a greater extent than other age groups, report that fear adversely affects their quality of life (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). Seniors engage in more constrained behaviour as a method of protecting themselves from crime, so they are more likely to avoid fear-inducing situations; and this makes them particularly vulnerable to increasing levels of withdrawal and social isolation (Ferraro 1995; James & Graycar 2000). The physical and economic vulnerabilities associated with ageing also appear to make the emotive impact of fear of crime for seniors more acute (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). The elderly feel more vulnerable to victimisation because any loss of economic resources is more serious, their decreasing physical strength makes it less likely that they could fend off an attacker, and the consequences of any injuries they sustain are likely to be more serious (Carcach, Graycar & Muscat 2001; James & Graycar 2000; Muscat, James & Graycar 2002). Therefore, even if seniors report levels of fear that are similar to those of other age groups, the impact and consequences of their fear may be greater and potentially more debilitating. In contrast, even when young people are more fearful of crime they are less likely to restrict their behaviour, and most often maintain their socially integrated lifestyle (Ferraro 1995). For young people, fear does not usually appear to result in the negative behavioural changes that are often found among seniors.

Gender

While findings on the relationship between fear of crime and age are inconsistent, there is a consistent relationship with gender (e.g. Ferraro 1995; Government Statistician's Office 1992; James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). Paradoxically, although males are generally more likely to be victims of crime, females are more fearful of possible victimisation (Grabosky 1995). There are several explanations for this paradox.

- Recent evidence has shown that, because of traditional gender roles, males are likely to under-report their actual fear of crime. Consequently, the discrepancy between men's and women's levels of fear may have been overestimated in studies that have not investigated this possibility (Sutton & Farrall 2005).

- Traditional gender roles may also induce lower self-confidence and less perceived autonomy for females than for males, which may in turn lead women to believe they are more vulnerable to victimisation.
- Females may be more fearful of crime because the typical crimes of violence committed against them, such as sexual assault or family violence, frequently involve intimidation and might be particularly fear inducing (Government Statistician's Office 1992).
- Females have more frequent experiences of social incivilities and sexual harassment, which contribute to increased fear (Grabosky 1995). For example, women are more likely to have received harassing, obscene or threatening phone calls, which are strongly associated with being more fearful of crime (Grabosky 1995). Women are also more worried about being pestered or insulted than are men (Chivite-Matthews & Maggs 2002), and they are more fearful of public spaces where they may be subjected to sexual harassment (Government Statistician's Office 1992).

Women take greater precautions against victimisation than men do. As women are more fearful of being home alone, they are more likely to secure their home against intruders. Similarly, women are also more likely to restrict their behaviour to avoid potential danger. They are less likely to go out walking alone at night, as they believe this places them at increased risk of potential victimisation. Women are particularly concerned about attack by strangers, despite the fact that known attackers represent a greater actual risk (Government Statistician's Office 1992).

However, women are not universally more fearful of *all* crimes. They are generally more fearful of *personal* crimes, where there is likely to be face-to-face contact with the perpetrator. This heightened fear is thought to result from women's overarching fear of sexual assault, and particularly of rape (Ferraro 1995). Any crime involving personal contact could potentially also become a sexual assault (Ferraro 1995). Some researchers have suggested, therefore, that women's higher levels of fear for non-sexual crimes also can be largely accounted for by their perceived vulnerability to, and fear of, sexual assault (Attorney-General's Department 1998; Ferraro 1995). Certainly women's common experiences of harassment and social incivilities play an important role in reinforcing this vulnerability to possible victimisation (Attorney-General's Department 1998; Grabosky 1995).

Contributors to fear of crime

Researchers have sought to identify, in addition to the underlying factors discussed above, particular experiences that contribute to people's fear of crime. While previous crime victimisation and features of the physical and social environment are related to fear of crime, two of the most important contributors to fear are exposure to the media and exposure to law and order campaigns.

Members of the public usually have to rely on limited sources of information when they are assessing their risk of crime victimisation. Information from friends, neighbours and community groups are important, as is first-hand experience; but the media — print, radio and television — are believed to provide the most pervasive and important source of crime information for the majority of the public (Attorney-General's Department 1998; Warr 2000). Not surprisingly, the media are interested in reporting the most newsworthy stories, so the focus is often on stories of sensational crimes that have the most serious consequences for the victims (e.g. severe physical injuries, death, loss of life savings). Yet these crimes are newsworthy precisely because they are rare events. Consequently the media tend to provide disproportionately more information about the most violent, less frequent crimes, leading to the belief that these crimes are more common than they really are. Media outlets might be likely to use this sensationalist coverage of crimes as a way of attracting a larger audience, or using crime news as fillers in the absence of other stories (Warr 2000).

Sometimes the media may run campaigns that focus on, and exaggerate the frequency of, particular types of crimes. This type of selective reporting can create the impression of a crime wave. Not surprisingly, many people will now perceive they are at increased risk of being a victim of these types of crimes. This heightens fear, both by distorting people's perceived risk of victimisation and by emphasising the serious consequences of the experience (Warr 2000).

Fear of crime is also increased when the media run campaigns that focus on the victimisation of specific groups, such as the elderly. People then tend to assume that members of this group are at increased risk of victimisation and are very likely to be attacked (Ferraro 1995). Perpetrators see them as easy prey because of their physical inability to stop attacks. Such media campaigns are thought to be responsible for creating the commonly held but inaccurate belief that it is the elderly who are most likely to be victims of crime (Bell, Chessman Architects & Davis 1993; James & Graycar 2000).

Not surprisingly, researchers have found a relationship between greater exposure to media crime reporting and fear of crime. Specifically:

- There is a relationship between high levels of exposure to media crime reporting and an overestimation of the risk of personal victimisation (Grabosky 1995).
- In the United Kingdom, readers of tabloid newspapers have been found to be more fearful of crime than readers of broadsheets. This difference has been attributed to sensationalist news coverage of crime in the tabloid newspapers, in contrast to more factual, less dramatic and less predominant coverage of crime in broadsheet newspapers (Grabosky 1995).
- Research in the United States shows a striking correlation between media reporting and public perceptions of crime and perceived likelihood of victimisation, so that an increase in exposure to crime reporting is mirrored in an increase in the level of fear of crime (Warr 2000).
- Even when individuals report being cynical about sensationalism in media reports, and question the accuracy of these stories, media reports have still been found to increase fear about crime (Attorney-General's Department 1998).

Consequently, media reporting of crime is believed to play a disproportionate role in eliciting fear of crime within the community.

Taken together, this evidence is seen as support for the media distortion hypothesis, which suggests that there is a straightforward relationship between sensationalist media reporting of crime and increases in fear of crime. However, although sensationalism by the media undoubtedly contributes to fear, the media distortion hypothesis is an oversimplification (Chiricos, Padgett & Gertz 2000; Eschholz 1997, and Heath & Gilbert 1996, both cited in Chiricos, Padgett & Gertz 2000). The extent of media influence depends on the type of media. With television reports of local crimes the most likely to engender fear, media influence is greatest when the information presented resonates with the personal experiences and individual characteristics of its recipients. Examples of media reports concerning seniors and crime are contained in Appendix E.

Specifically targeted law and order campaigns may also engender increasing levels of fear of crime in some circumstances (Warr 2000). Just as media organisations sometimes embark on these types of campaigns (e.g. on talkback radio), politicians

often highlight law and order issues within the electorate. Although these campaigns may be mounted because of a genuine desire to address crime and encourage community members to take appropriate protective behaviours to decrease their risk of victimisation, they may have unintended effects. Any concentration on, or magnification of, levels of crime can engender an increase in anxiety or worry in vulnerable groups within the community.

If it is necessary to embark on a law and order campaign, the information provided should not sensationalise the crimes it is highlighting, but must accurately present the actual risk of victimisation for community members. For example, although a case of homicide is horrific, it is extremely unlikely that others in the community will be victims too. Ideally, before embarking on such campaigns, media workers or politicians should weigh up the benefits for community members against the possible psychological and social costs. While these campaigns can have positive benefits, by encouraging people to engage in more protective behaviours to decrease their likelihood of crime victimisation, it is important to ensure that the cost of increasing the fears of a minority of the community is clearly outweighed by the benefits that will accrue to the majority. If the risk of victimisation to community members is such that a campaign is necessary, it should avoid sensationalising crime, present a realistic picture of current crime trends and the actual risk of victimisation, and avoid unnecessarily exacerbating fears (Warr 2000).

SAFE AND SECURE SURVEY

Commissioned at the request of the Seniors Task Force, the Queensland Government, through the Office of Economic and Statistical Research, undertook the "Safe and Secure Survey". For a full copy of the survey and findings, refer to Appendix B (Survey Instrument), Appendix C (Survey Technical Report) and Appendix D (Survey Summary Report).

The survey aimed to assess the level of fear of crime experienced by Queenslanders, particularly amongst seniors. It was an important information-gathering tool, providing a snapshot of how seniors feel about crime.

The Task Force worked with the Crime and Misconduct Commission to adapt the survey from Ferraro (1995), which was the most comprehensive survey of people aged over 65 undertaken in the past 15 years.

The survey was conducted by OESR using the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system with 25 trained interviewers administering the survey (adapted from Ferraro, 1995). The sample parameters were that the respondents must be at least 16 years of age and normally reside in Queensland, achieve equal representation from the 10 Queensland Household Survey regions, and meet specific age criteria. This resulted in a total sample of 1222 respondents, comprising 181 16-24 year olds, 182 25-34 year olds, 190 35-49 year olds, 183 50-64 year olds, and 486 respondents who were aged 65 years or older. Seniors were over sampled to ensure adequate representation amongst the respondents. Completed interviews took an average of 17 minutes.

The overall response rate to the survey was 39.4%, considerably lower than expected because of a large number of refusals. Therefore, the results of the survey must be viewed with some caution, as it is impossible to know whether the views of those who refused to participate in the survey may have differed significantly to those who responded. Had all participants who were contacted completed the survey, the overall results may have been quite different. The low response rate, therefore, suggests that the sample may not be representative of the Queensland population overall.

Fear of crime and frequency of this concern.

Generally, the majority of respondents were not particularly fearful of crime, yet they did differentiate between particular crimes (e.g. respondents were less fearful of being murdered than other crimes) and there were some differences in fear for age and gender groups. Respondents aged 35 to 64 years, for example, were more fearful of having their car stolen than either younger or older respondents.

As in previous methodologically sound research, seniors were not found to be more fearful of crime than other age groups. Indeed, seniors (65+ age group) were significantly less fearful of three particular crimes (being conned or cheated out of their money, having someone break into their home, or being raped or sexually assaulted) than the younger respondents to the survey. Not surprisingly, those in the 16 to 34-year-old age group (who have been shown to be at greater risk of being raped or sexually assaulted than older people) were more fearful and more often concerned about sexual assault than those in the seniors' age group.

Similar to previous research, gender was more consistently related to fear of crime than age, with females being more fearful of particular crimes than males. Females were more fearful of being raped, sexually assaulted or murdered, being attacked with a weapon, being robbed or mugged on the street, having their bag snatched, or having their car stolen. This supports the suggestion that women may be more fearful of any crime that involves personal contact with the perpetrator, as this contact may make them vulnerable to sexual assault or rape¹. While having their car stolen may or may not involve contact with a perpetrator, being without a car (particularly at night) may lead women to perceive that they are at greater risk of sexual assault.

Perceptions of safety

Again, there were no differences between age groups in relation to most of the questions on safety. Seniors were no more concerned about their safety than respondents from the other age groups regarding their feelings of safety during the day (both in, and outside their home), or night (in and outside their home), when approached by someone for food or money, or when walking in the local neighbourhood at night. While seniors were not more concerned about using an automatic teller machine (ATM) than respondents from the other age groups, they were more likely to have never used an ATM, and more likely to either have no credit card or to never give out these details over the Internet.

In contrast, gender was significantly linked to feelings of safety. Similar to other research results, females were more likely to feel unsafe in situations where they were outside at night, including when they were close to home, and when someone asking for food or money approached them on the street. While females generally felt safe in their own home, they did not feel as safe as males. Females also felt less safe when using an ATM.

Perceived risk of victimisation

Respondents generally perceived their risk of victimisation to be low, though this varied by the type of crime. For example, the majority of respondents accurately recognised that they were highly unlikely to be murdered in the coming year. There were also no age differences in perceptions of risk, so that seniors did not believe they were more likely to be a victim of crime in the next 12 months than the respondents from the other age groups.

¹ This issue is further discussed in the Fear of crime literature review in **Appendix A**

In contrast, gender was associated with a perceived risk of future victimisation. Females thought that their risk of being a victim of rape or sexual assault, or of being robbed or mugged, or of having their bag snatched, was greater than the risk reported by males.

Summary of perceptions

Overall there was no evidence that the majority of seniors are particularly fearful of crime or have particular safety concerns that are different from those of other age groups. Yet, as pointed out elsewhere, it is possible that the consequences of seniors' fears may be more serious and more likely to lead to social isolation. Future detailed analyses of the survey data might help to identify these concerns.

These results also clearly support the need to question respondents more clearly about their concerns in relation to specific crimes, rather than about a fear or concern about a generic "crime" category.

As with most previous research, gender was consistently found to be related to differences in fear and concerns about safety, with females more likely than males to report higher levels of fear of some crimes and greater concerns about safety within particular contexts, particularly when outside their home.

Previous victimisation

The majority of respondents had not been a victim of crime (83.8%), nor had a friend or relative who was a victim of crime within the past year (72.3%). There were no age or gender differences in these experiences.

Problems in the neighbourhood (exposure to physical and social incivilities)

Overall, the majority of respondents did not think high levels of physical and social incivilities marked their local neighbourhoods. Most respondents reported that rubbish and litter lying around, neighbourhood dogs running around, inconsiderate or disruptive neighbours, graffiti on footpaths or walls, vacant or unkempt blocks, unsupervised youths, too much noise, people drunk or high on drugs in public, abandoned cars or car parts lying around, and paint sniffing, petrol sniffing (chroming) in public, were not problems in their local neighbourhood.

The only differences identified between age groups were the presence of unsupervised youth and people being drunk or high on drugs in public. For both of these situations, seniors were less likely than younger respondents to see this as a problem in their local neighbourhood.

A gender difference was noted on only one of these situations - females were less likely to view graffiti as a problem in their local neighbourhood than males.

Social support from neighbours

The majority of respondents reported that they could rely on nearby neighbours for help, felt part of their neighbourhood, and would miss at least one of their neighbours if they moved away. There were no age or clear gender differences in perceptions of social support from neighbours, although there was some indication that females were less likely to feel a part of their neighbourhood than males.

Awareness of crimes committed in the neighbourhood, role of strangers as perpetrators of any neighbourhood crimes, and presence of strangers in the neighbourhood

There were no significant age or gender differences in the responses to these three questions.

Activities undertaken to reduce risk of crime

There were no significant age or gender differences in the percentage of respondents who had installed extra locks on windows or doors, bought a dog for security reasons, added outside lighting for security reasons, started carrying something for self-defence, or changed daily activities because of crime.

There were, however, age differences in some of the proactive measures respondents had taken to protect themselves against crime. For example, seniors were more likely to have engraved identification numbers on their possessions and have security doors or grills installed on windows than respondents in the 16 to 34-year-old age group.

In contrast, the youngest respondents (16-34 years) were more likely to have learned more about self-defence than the seniors group. Focusing on self-defence is a realistic reaction to the demonstrated increased risk of assault faced by young people. Seniors do not face the same risk, and they also may not feel as confident in their ability to benefit from learning self-defence strategies. Focusing on preventing perpetrators from gaining entry to their home and making it easier for their possessions to be retrieved if stolen, are probably seen as more realistic crime prevention techniques for seniors.

In relation to gender, when compared with males, there was some indication that females were less likely to keep a weapon in their home for protection, but more likely to avoid unsafe areas during both the day and night because of concerns about crime.

Recreational activities in the last four weeks

When respondents were questioned about whether they had participated in any sporting activity, undertaken any physical activity, gone to a movie, theatre or meals at restaurants, cafes or clubs, or engaged in any other outings or activities, there were no gender differences in their responses. However, the 16 to 34-year-olds were more likely to have gone to a movie, theatre or have meals at restaurants, cafes or clubs than respondents in both the 35 to 64-year-old groups and the seniors group. The younger age groups were also more likely to have participated in a sporting activity than seniors.

Summary

While the majority of survey respondents were not particularly fearful of crime or unduly concerned about their risk of future victimisation, there were some differences by age and gender. Seniors were less fearful of some crimes than other age groups, although they generally had similar safety concerns, but were more likely to take measures to secure their home and possessions from crime.

The majority of seniors reported some level of social participation in the community and there was no indication that social isolation was a problem. Older people reported having similar levels of social support from their neighbours and were just as likely to have engaged in some form of social outing in the last four weeks as respondents from the other age groups. However, it should be remembered when viewing these results, that the low response rate of the survey may have impacted on the outcome of questions regarding social isolation.

In contrast, gender was more consistently related to fear of crime and safety concerns. Compared to men, women were more fearful of particular crimes, worried about these more often, were more likely to feel unsafe in particular situations, avoided unsafe areas both during the day and the night, and thought they were more likely to be a victim of specific crimes in the next 12 months.

Recommendation 1: That the results of the Safe and Secure Survey be made available to academic and seniors organisations.

5.2 Understanding of the extent and impact of crime and fear of crime on the senior community

For the Seniors Task Force to gain an understanding of the extent and impact of crime and fear of crime on the senior community, it was necessary to discuss victimisation and reporting of crime, examine the literature and conduct a survey of the senior population.

Comparing levels of victimisation: Seniors and others

Older adults are less at risk from most crimes than are individuals in younger age groups (James, 1993). Australian Victimization Survey information reports that 20-24 year olds have the highest victimisation rates on the majority of offences, and the over-60s the lowest (Fattah 1993). Younger individuals also experience a higher rate of multiple victimisation than their elderly counterparts (Thomas, 1993).

However, among older Australians, consumer fraud is 2.2 times more prevalent than assault. This contrasts with younger people, among whom fraud is as common as assault (James 1993).

Do older people under-report² and if they do why?

Australian victimisation surveys show that an elderly person will rarely fail to report a crime that occurs against them or their property (Thomas 1993), but James (1992) believes that they might be reluctant to continue with the justice process should a crime occur.

James (1992) argues *"that a lack of knowledge, or fear, of the correct procedures to follow in the event that an elderly person becomes the victim of crime could mean that they may be less likely to persevere with complaints through the criminal justice system (1992, p. 2). She continues... "Many elderly Australians are aware that involvement in the justice process may entail great inconvenience and discomfort. In addition, an elderly victim of crime may be reticent to draw upon available community resources for protection and advice"*.

This is especially true of crime against the person, for example, reporting an act of abuse. An elderly victim might have many fears and insecurities about reporting this

² The term under-reporting in this instance refers to a situation when someone might become the victim of a crime and fails to report this crime to police.

crime, of which the ultimate may be that a complaint directed against a partner or carer may result in placement in an aged-care institution (James 1992).

It must be noted that James provides no empirical evidence for her assertions. However, victimisation surveys do not make the distinction between victimisation by strangers as opposed to victimisation by family and carers, so there is no data to resolve this issue.

Elder Abuse

While older adults experience comparatively low rates of victimisation for burglary, robbery and assault, elder abuse represents a significant risk for some older adults (James, Graycar & Mayhew, 2003). Research on the incidence of elder abuse in Australia estimates a prevalence rate of 3-5% of community dwelling seniors, although these figures are likely to be an underestimate (NSW Taskforce on Abuse of Older People, 1993; Kurrle et al., 1997). Research also suggests that some cultural groups may be more at risk than others. For example, elder abuse against older Indigenous people has been raised as a serious concern. The most common form of abuse reported is financial abuse, with younger people taking advantage of cultural obligations to share or using threats of violence to obtain access to pension payments (Office of the Public Advocate, 2005; Gilbert & Zendowski, 1997).

5.3 Identification and assessment of Queensland Government initiatives targeting crime and fear of crime issues with seniors

The Seniors Task Force has identified that, in Queensland, the departments principally responsible for crime prevention are the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Communities. Both departments have units dedicated to crime prevention and community safety (crime) policy development, program management, and service delivery for seniors and for the Queensland community generally. Other agencies take a leading and supporting partnership role in the prevention of crime against seniors. These agencies include:

- Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development, which provides fraud prevention and consumer advice specifically for seniors;
- Department of Housing through programs such as Community Renewal and Home Assist Secure; and
- Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation that subsidises local governments' situational crime prevention activity through the Security Improvement Program.

Other departments such as Justice and Attorney-General, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Corrective Services also provide crime prevention advice and initiatives that benefit Queensland's seniors.

A number of crime prevention initiatives for seniors are supported by the Queensland Government. These include:

- **Older Peoples Action Program (OPAP)**

This program seeks to increase social participation and reduce older people's fear of crime. Projects run under OPAP enhance the social participation of seniors by addressing fear of crime and increasing their sense of safety and security in their communities. The Department of Communities provides triennial funds to 20 non-government organisations across the State in Cairns, Rockhampton, Maroochydore, Ipswich, Brisbane City, the Gold Coast and Logan City. These organisations employ community safety link advisers to undertake a range of activities designed to increase confidence amongst vulnerable seniors, including:

- the provision of accurate information on crime and crime prevention strategies;
- social and personal development activities that enhance life-skills, participation and confidence in community living;
- referring and linking seniors to services and support available within their local communities;
- community education; and
- network development.

These projects use a community development approach and work in close partnership with local organisations and seniors to enhance social participation and safety.

Recommendation 2: That, subject to evaluation, Older Peoples Action Program (OPAP) projects be extended to more communities within the State, where appropriate.

- **Home Assist Secure**

Home Assist Secure is operated through the Department of Housing. This program aims to remove some of the practical housing related difficulties experienced by older people and people with a disability who wish to remain living in their home. With regard to preventing crime and fear of crime, the program seeks to improve feelings of safety at home and help incorporate home security routines into daily activities. The program operates 41 services across the State. Services include subsidised assistance, information and referrals that help seniors to improve safety and security in their homes through maintenance, modifications and security upgrades for eligible clients.

- **Elder Abuse Prevention Unit (EAPU)**

The Elder Abuse Prevention Unit promotes the right of older people to live free from abuse. The state-wide service is funded by the Department of Communities and operates under the auspices of Lifeline Brisbane. EAPU seeks to enhance the quality of life and safety of older people in Queensland by ensuring that:

- older people are aware of how to prevent elder abuse;
- older people who are abused have access to information and assistance;
- staff in community organisations providing services to older people have the knowledge and skills to assist them; and
- older people and organisations are empowered by having access to decision-making processes.

Types of abuse can include physical, sexual, financial, psychological (emotional), social and neglect (intentional and unintentional). Criminal acts by a stranger, self-neglect, or where abuse occurs within a paid service arrangement, are not generally considered to be within the scope of this service.

The services provided by EAPU are:

- *Helpline:* A state-wide telephone information, support and referral service for anyone experiencing abuse or witnessing the abuse of an older person. Callers may choose to remain anonymous and can call the helpline on 1300 651 192 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday for the cost of a local call from anywhere in Queensland.
- *Community Awareness:* This unit undertakes community education to raise awareness of elder abuse in the general community. Awareness-raising activities include presentations to older people's groups and participation in forums. All presentations include information on preventive strategies that older people can employ to prevent elder abuse occurring in their lives.
- *Staff Training and Education:* This unit undertakes sector development with organisations that provide services to older people to assist staff to recognise elder abuse and understand appropriate interventions. The EAPU also delivers lectures to university and TAFE students.
- *Peer Support Network:* The EAPU provides a statewide Multidisciplinary Peer Support Network to assist, resource and support workers in rural and remote locations to respond to elder abuse. The Peer Support Network

operates via teleconferencing, e-group membership, newsletters and additional written communication.

- **Seniors Enquiry Line (SEL)**

The Seniors Enquiry Line is a telephone information and referral service linking seniors, their families, friends, carers and community workers with information on government and community services throughout the State. SEL is funded by the Department of Communities and operated by Lifeline Brisbane. Information officers at SEL provide a personalised service to callers, putting them in touch with information on a wide range of topics including concessions, independent living, finance, legal issues, health, retirement, transport, social and leisure activities, and education. Providing information to seniors about their legal and financial rights helps to prevent financial crimes against older people. SEL can be contacted on 1300 135 500, weekdays from 9am to 5pm from anywhere in Queensland for the cost of a local telephone call.

- **Informative Publications**

- *Confident Safe and Secure Living in Queensland* – see Section 5.5, p.47.
- *Ageing Myth and Reality* outlines the myths and realities of the ageing process. This resource contains information about rates of crime against seniors. It also highlights the diversity in the senior's population, the active participation of seniors in the community and in the workforce, and the role of many seniors as caregivers. By providing information about age and ageing, the State Government aims to provide seniors with information that dispels myths and clarifies their importance in the community. The booklet also provides information to the wider community about the valuable contributions of seniors to the community. The Government hopes to raise community awareness about the issues that seniors face and, in doing so, prevent elder abuse and other forms of discrimination.
- *Seniors and the Law: Handy Information for Queensland Seniors* is designed to inform older people about common legal issues some may face and provide contacts for information and assistance. It is especially important for advising Queensland seniors about their legal rights. It may assist in preventing elder abuse and financial crimes by allowing seniors to make informed decisions based on their rights.

- *Security for Seniors* is published by the Queensland Police Service, and provides seniors with some basic security information. This brochure aims to increase seniors feeling of confidence in their own security by reducing opportunities for crime.

- *Stop the Scams*, published by Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development, is a fact sheet that alerts seniors to mail fraud. The information assists seniors to recognise when mail fraud has occurred, and informs them about where they can seek help. Through the provision of this information, seniors are better prepared to prevent themselves becoming victims of this type of crime.

- *How to be Consumer Wise (incorporating Agewise)* also is published by the Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development. The publication seeks to inform seniors about a number of consumer related issues that may impact on them. Consumer information about retirement villages, residential aged care, home security and power of attorney is provided. By informing seniors about their legal and financial rights as consumers, the publication assists in the prevention of fraud and other financial crimes.

The Seniors Task Force is confident that there are sufficient facilities, initiatives and networks in the community to support seniors. Some of these resources provide support services to seniors as the target group, whereas others provide the service to a target group that includes seniors.

A number of organisations are providing research and project facilities to determine the extent of circumstances associated with seniors that are causing a deteriorating effect upon their wellbeing. Examples include:

- The School of Social Work and Applied Human Sciences (University of Queensland) received an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant to conduct research on risk factors for financial abuse and the extent and nature of asset management practices associated with the management of older people's assets by family members. Industry partners included the Office for Seniors (Department of Communities), the Office of the Adult Guardian, the Public Trustee and the Guardianship and Administration Tribunal. Following on from this research, the Department of Communities has contributed funds towards a

community demonstration project in Redcliffe that will develop good practice principles and training resources to promote financial literacy and awareness of protective asset management practices.

- The Guardianship and Administration Tribunal has established an Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Network. This network is still in its infancy.

Local Government Example - Townsville Thuringowa Safe Communities Senior Safety Survey

The Townsville Thuringowa Safe Communities group distributed 1500 surveys via seniors groups, mailbox drops and members of volunteer associations as part of its Senior Safety Survey. Some surveys were also distributed at events during Seniors Week in June 2004. People were asked to return the completed surveys using a return-address envelope enclosed with the question sheets. In all, 509 surveys were returned, which was a response rate of approximately 34%.

Overall, people who responded to the survey appeared to be individuals who were relatively well connected within their community. They tended to feel safe within both their immediate neighbourhood and the wider Townsville/Thuringowa environment. Despite this, more than two-thirds of respondents reported being very or somewhat concerned about crime, particularly robbery and assault. Indeed, this concern was such that one-quarter of the sample stated that it contributed to their decision not to go out at night. This is despite only 11% of the sample actually reporting being a victim of a crime against the person (e.g. a bag snatch). One possible intervention arising from this survey may be to educate individuals about the reality of crime statistics and equip them with information and strategies to increase their personal security. This may go some way towards decreasing the concern and anxiety about crime and personal safety evident in the responses.

Community Example - Safety House Association of Queensland

In Queensland, the Safety House program has been operating since 1984 and in Australia since 1979. The aim of the program is to provide "safe houses" and personal safety strategies for members of the community.

The association has changed its core strategy, which was primarily aimed at children, to encompass all community members - particularly seniors. This strategy has been supported by a shift in the promotion and marketing of the program to seniors groups,

a change in educational material to include safety strategies for older people and an awareness campaign aimed at the general community.

The association has embraced the concept of issuing the "Blue Card" to its members as a way of reassuring the community about the integrity of the program. This, combined with a current risk management strategy and Australian Business Excellence Framework review, is designed to give the public confidence in the continuation of this community program.

5.4 Identification of initiatives targeting crime and fear of crime with seniors in other jurisdictions

New South Wales

Crime prevention in New South Wales is principally the responsibility of the Crime Prevention Division (CPD) of the NSW Attorney General's Department³. The CPD has identified programs operated or funded by the NSW Government that aim to prevent crime against older people.

- Preventing Elder Abuse: aims to raise community awareness about elder abuse. The project targets both the general community and people of non-English speaking backgrounds. The campaign is intended both to prevent abuse and to give information on how to get help if it occurs. The project also aims to increase inter-agency cooperation in identifying, assessing and managing elder abuse.
- Personal Safety for Older People: The NSW Police Service has produced a booklet titled *What Can You Do* designed specifically for older people. It provides advice on personal safety and crime prevention measures for seniors. The booklet is available from NSW police stations.

Australian Capital Territory

The Australian Capital Territory Office for Ageing has provided two main services to prevent crime against seniors.

- The Elder Abuse Information Line⁴ provides support, information and referral to services that may assist with abusive situations. This service is available to older people, their family, friends and others who are concerned about elder abuse. This line also assists service providers who work with older people who may be experiencing, or be at risk of abuse. The line operates Monday to Friday during business hours.
- The Community Liaison Advisory Safety Project (CLASP) identifies problems and helps older people reduce safety and security risks in and around their home. One of the outcomes of the project is the *Your Home Safety and Security Handbook*. The handbook contains information on general safety, fire safety and

³ <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd>

⁴ <http://www.ageing.act.gov.au/elderabuse/>

medical safety; it also provides information on security in a variety of situations inside and outside the home.

Victoria

Crime Prevention Victoria⁵, the principal crime prevention agency in that State, funds, supports and recognises a number of crime prevention programs aimed at seniors, including:

- **Project Deadlock:** a state-wide program targeting seniors who have been the victim of burglary, robbery or assault in their homes. The project is designed to lessen the trauma experienced by older adults after a house break-in and to assist elderly victims of property crime by reducing fear, improving awareness of home security, and installing deadlocks provided and installed free of charge by Lockwood. Project Deadlock has been qualitatively evaluated. Feedback from the seniors involved in the project suggests they have a better understanding of home security and a better perception about the risks that face seniors in their community.
- **Rosebud Seniors Citizen's Register:** aims to improve home security, reduce the fear of crime, and provide more social contact for seniors. Commencing in 1995, police at this bay-side community established the initiative inviting seniors to complete an application form and register their details with the local police station. A volunteer then phones the client who is invited to supply further information relevant to their health, doctor, family, and other personal details. The information is entered on the register and a laminated card is sent to the client with their registration number. Volunteers make a visit to the client's home, by appointment, and a security check is made of the home and surroundings. Any need for improved security is discussed. More than 3500 people are registered. No formal evaluation has been conducted, however coordinators claim that many clients now have improved security and are better educated about the risks of crime and violence in their community.
- **Knock, Knock...Who's There:** seeks to inform older people about their level of safety, as well as to provide them with strategies to stay safe. The project aims to address the perceptions of safety that older people have which, the project coordinators state, are often inaccurate. Presentations are held at a variety of

⁵ <http://www.crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/>

venues to which older people are invited to attend. A large number of presentations were held for elderly residents of Maroondah, each having an independent evaluation. The results of evaluations show that there was an overall positive result with all of the objectives being met.

- Victim Prevention and Safety Program for Senior Community Members: aims to provide a comprehensive victim prevention and safety program for senior community members at risk or perceived risk of assault. The program is divided into six 90-minute sessions, which cover personal safety, home safety, Neighbourhood Watch, Crime Stoppers, safety and assertiveness, and personal protection strategies. The program has ongoing evaluation conducted using a pre-program and post-program questionnaire to identify knowledge levels before and after each session. In each session the learning needs, effectiveness of teaching strategies and audio-visual aids, the comfort of the environment, and the organisation of the session, are also evaluated. The program organisers report that the program receives overall positive feedback from all group participants.
- Safe Shop: is designed to provide older adults with an added perception of safety and security. Safe Shop is a concept similar to the "Safety House" program. Shop owners volunteer to adopt the concept and are easily identifiable by a bright sign for those people feeling threatened, ill or just requiring assistance. It is currently operated by local government in the Geelong, Footscray and Dandenong areas. No formal evaluation has been completed to date.
- Safer Living for Older Victorians: aims to improve the confidence of older residents in their homes by educating them about strategies that reduce the likelihood of them becoming a victim of burglary. The program also aims to encourage healthy relationships between older residents and young people in Banyule. Workshops and public forums are held in retirement villages and RSL clubs.
- Home Assessment for Safety and Security (HASS): is aimed at the homes of elderly residents in the rural area of Wangaratta. It targets the crimes of burglary, motor vehicle theft and assault. The HASS program seeks to facilitate the continued independent living of the older population. It does this by improving personal safety and security, as well as reducing fears concerning safety and security. Members of the HASS team carry out home safety and security reviews. Experienced, uniformed members from Victoria Police, the

Country Fire Authority, local government, Ambulance Victoria and the State Emergency Service, resource the HASS team.

Tasmania

The Crime Prevention and Community Safety Council operates the crime prevention programs for the State of Tasmania⁶. The main contribution of the Council in preventing crime against seniors has been the development of a handbook.

- *Safe and Secure Living: Your Personal Handbook*⁷. The handbook is part of the community safety program run by the council. The handbook is aimed at seniors and provides information on home security, security while on holidays, tips on personal safety at home and tips on personal safety away from home. The handbook contains checklists that enable seniors to conduct security audits on their environment.

South Australia

Crime prevention in South Australia is primarily the responsibility of the Crime Prevention Unit within the South Australian Attorney-General's Department⁸. The unit operates and supports a variety of crime prevention programs such as domestic violence prevention, Indigenous crime prevention, school based crime projects and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) programs. No programs run by the unit specifically aim to prevent crime against seniors.

Western Australia

The Office of Crime Prevention in Western Australia is part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet⁹. A number of crime prevention projects have been funded through this office, with only one program directly seeking to prevent crime against seniors - the Senior Citizen Workshop at Carnarvon¹⁰.

⁶ <http://www.police.tas.gov.au/community/cpsc>

⁷ http://www.police.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/2242/Safe-Secure-Living-Handbook.pdf

⁸ <http://www.cpu.sa.gov.au/>

⁹ <http://www.crimeprevention.wa.gov.au/html/index.cfm>

¹⁰ <http://www.crimeprevention.wa.gov.au/html/grantresults.cfm?fund=37>

Northern Territory

A Ministerial Standing Committee on Crime Prevention supports crime prevention in the Northern Territory. The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory is a member of the Committee¹¹. The committee has released *A Framework for Crime Prevention and Community Safety 2004-2009*. In conjunction with this framework, the NT Government has also supplied grants to a number of crime prevention programs, including CPTED projects, recreation halls, school based interventions and night patrols for Indigenous communities.

None of the grants were specifically aimed at preventing crime or the fear of crime among seniors. It should be noted, however, that the framework outlines the key role that Elders play in preventing crime in Indigenous communities.

Commonwealth Government

The Commonwealth Government has produced a handbook on seniors' safety and the web site www.seniors.gov.au contains a considerable amount of information on home safety and security, elder abuse prevention and seniors taking care of themselves.

¹¹ <http://www.nt.gov.au/justice/ocp/graphpages/mincomm.shtml>

¹² M & P Henderson & Associates Pty Ltd, 2005

5.5 Development of good practice strategies for seniors on the prevention of crime, the investigation of crime and reducing the fear of crime.

Strategy 1: Plan and implement initiatives designed to prevent crime against seniors

A review of good practice crime prevention strategies was recently undertaken on behalf of the Department of Communities. The report found that the international standard of good practice in crime prevention and community safety currently consists of five specific features¹²:

1. Shared responsibility among government, business and community sectors;
2. Locally tailored and locally delivered solutions to community crime and disorder issues;
3. Coordination of planning and service delivery relevant to crime prevention within government and across sectors;
4. Evidence based responses and information sharing about what works and what does not work;
5. Government responsibility for capacity building and support of community-led activity.

An analysis of crime prevention programs targeted at seniors shows that Queensland is providing international good practice responses, using accepted crime prevention approaches. It is one of Australia's leading jurisdictions in terms of the number of programs specifically for seniors. The assessment of good practice features for programs in Queensland and other jurisdictions is displayed in Appendix G. The categorisation of crime prevention programs is outlined in Appendix H. The categorisation matrix is based on the crime prevention and the community safety model. The assessment and categorisation have excluded many programs which are aimed at seniors but do not have stated direct or indirect crime (or fear of crime), prevention or community safety goals.

¹² M & P Henderson & Associates Pty Ltd, 2005

Strategy 2: Plan and implement initiatives designed to improve the investigation and response to crime against seniors

The Investigation of Crime subcommittee met to determine the adequacy of legislation, policy and procedures as they relate to seniors associated with crime. A summary of their deliberations is:

- That legislation, policy and procedures relating to the investigation of crime associated with seniors, both as witnesses (complainants) and as offenders, were adequate;
- That the general QPS policy relating to support for “persons with special needs” was adequate for identifying those circumstances where the introduction of support mechanisms during an investigation were necessary in the case of seniors associated with the investigation of crime; and

That, as communication with isolated and/or disadvantaged seniors was challenging, regular communication lines between the police and seniors should be developed and formalised to ensure these community members are not isolated (refer to Recommendations 8, 9 and 13).

Strategy 3: Plan and implement initiatives designed to reduce the fear of crime among seniors

Currently there is no clear systemic approach to addressing fear of crime in Australia. While fear of crime is recognised as a potentially important social problem, there has been little effort to link research on fear of crime with appropriate interventions. As mentioned in Chapter 5 of this report, fear of crime is rarely specifically targeted in intervention programs; rather it is more often an afterthought or an objective within a generalised crime reduction program (Attorney General’s Department 1998).

While there may be some benefit in using crime prevention programs to reduce fear of crime under some circumstances, in other situations crime prevention programs may be inappropriate and are sometimes found to increase fear, rather than alleviating it (Tennyson-Mason 2002). Therefore, interventions need to involve strategies that are specifically designed to address fear of crime rather than following the most common practice that assumes crime prevention strategies will also reduce fear (Attorney General’s Department 1998; James et al. 2003; James & Graycar 2000). In circumstances where it is important to reduce fear of crime, there needs to be made an explicit and evaluated goal of any program (Attorney General’s Department 1998).

Most available programs are typically not evaluated. For example, when the Attorney General's Department (1998) completed an audit of fear reduction programs, they found that virtually no programs evaluated the outcomes of their interventions. Problematically, most of the existent programs were implemented in an ad hoc manner involving no research or evaluation of the success of the program, or simply using client satisfaction as a measure of outcome, rather than measures of improved safety and security (Attorney General's Department 1998; James et al. 2003). Because of the lack of evaluated programs there are limitations to identifying effective interventions, but several authors have argued that it is possible to identify factors that appear to be associated with successful outcomes in reducing fear of crime (Attorney General's Department 1998; Ferraro 1995; James et al. 2003, James and Graycar 2000).

How to design initiatives and strategies to reduce the fear of crime

When developing strategies designed to reduce the fear of crime, the Seniors Task Force recommends the following steps as outlined in the Fear of Crime literature review be considered:

1. Target the sources of anxiety

It is important to develop a clear understanding of the aetiology and distribution of fear of crime in the target groups. Interventions should pay particular attention to people's concerns about public transport, as this is a common source of anxiety, particularly among the elderly, with travelling by train typically the most fear-inducing (Attorney-General's Department 1998). While teenagers and younger people often report the greatest concern about using public transport, seniors often indicate that they do not use public transport at night; but it is not always clear whether this is because of fear of crime or for other reasons, such as a general reluctance to go out at night, or fears about physical frailties (Attorney-General's Department 1998). However, when the Attorney-General's Department questioned seniors about their use of public transport a minority did indicate that they would use public transport if they believed it was safer.

A Queensland Rail Citytrain Customer Security Survey, conducted in Brisbane in 2004, indicates that public transport represents a particular concern for a minority of older citizens. Members of the general public were questioned about their perceptions of safety and security while travelling on the local train network. The survey found that those in the 50-and-over age group were slightly less likely than other age groups to

rate the safety and security of the rail network positively. The number of people in this older age group with positive perceptions of the rail network had steadily declined since the first annual survey in 2002. However, this dissatisfied group still represented only a minority of older respondents, with the vast majority of people in this age group rating the network as at least reasonably safe (63% 'reasonably safe', 19% 'very safe' and 3% 'completely safe'). Clearly there is a need for further research to investigate the reasons for some seniors' reluctance to use public transport, with a view to accurately identifying the contribution of fear of crime and providing appropriate interventions to increase seniors' confidence in travelling on public transport (Attorney-General's Department 1998).

Any analysis of fear of crime also needs to recognise the important role that exposure to low-level harassment and incivilities may play in increasing individuals' fears and leading them to feel unsafe in particular situations (Ferraro 1995).

2. Compare fear with objective risk

The choice of intervention strategy will depend on both the level of fear and the actual likelihood of victimisation. Also, when deciding on particular intervention strategies, it is important to distinguish between measures that are aimed at reducing fear and those that target crime reduction. Whenever fear of crime is high, it is appropriate to make fear reduction an explicit objective of any intervention, rather than assume that crime prevention strategies will decrease fear.

There are three main scenarios to consider:

- Both objective risk of victimisation and fear of crime are high. In this case, both crime prevention and fear reduction programs would be beneficial.
- Objective risk of victimisation is low but fear is high. Here, it would be more appropriate to concentrate on fear of crime interventions. It would be particularly important to educate the public about their actual risk of victimisation, and use confidence-building initiatives to decrease fear (James & Graycar 2000; Tennyson-Mason 2002).
- Fear is low, but the objective risk of victimisation is high. If this was the case, fear reduction interventions would be inappropriate, because they might increase the risk of victimisation for community members who already had a false sense of security. Instead, it would be necessary to educate people about

the risks they faced, and provide them with appropriate crime prevention information to encourage them to adopt protective strategies to decrease their risk of victimisation (Tennyson-Mason 2002).

3. Tailor programs to local needs

Because of regional variations in levels of fear of crime, it is critical that programs are developed with a thorough understanding of the local community and tailored to meet local needs (James & Graycar 2000). To achieve this understanding it is essential to involve and consult with members of the local community, including all key stakeholders, to determine the community's problems and obtain their perspective on possible solutions. This community involvement is crucial, as it may generate community spirit and increase social cohesion, both of which are likely to decrease fear. Localised solutions are most likely to be effective, and they may be more effective if they are implemented under the auspices of local government (James & Graycar 2000; James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003).

4. Use a holistic approach

Fear of crime is a complex phenomenon, with no single cause, so effective interventions need to target the complexity of issues that contribute to it. Single interventions or strategies are unlikely to work. Long-term results require a holistic approach, involving combinations of different strategies that are integrated into mainstream services and linked to other initiatives such as reducing antisocial behaviour, improving social cohesion and regenerating neighbourhoods (James & Graycar 2000; Tennyson-Mason 2002). Initiatives should use the community's social capital, so it is important that seniors are involved in interventions (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). Older people represent an important community resource, and efforts should be made to promote a more positive image of ageing and highlight the value of seniors to the community (James & Graycar 2000).

5. Tidy up the neighbourhood

Because of the important role that physical and social incivilities play in contributing to fear of crime, measures that address these incivilities in the neighbourhood are likely to be beneficial in reducing fear, particularly if they have been suggested by the community itself (Ferraro 1995). For example, simple measures such as cleaning up litter and graffiti can engender a feeling of community order, which will contribute to greater feelings of security. Clean, tidy and orderly areas can raise morale and

contribute to reducing fear. It is also important that careful consideration is given to situating facilities for senior citizens in locations that they see as safe (James & Graycar 2000). However, it is important to sound a note of caution here. While these strategies are likely to contribute to a decline in fear, they should not be seen as a total solution. Efforts to reduce incivilities should be one important component in a comprehensive intervention (Ferraro 1995).

6. Reduce opportunities for victimisation

Opportunities for victimisation to occur can be reduced through careful environmental design, and attention to immediate, visible sources of fear. People are often particularly fearful of areas that provide hiding places for offenders and make it difficult for victims to escape. Prompt action to simpler problems, such as improving lighting or removing shrubbery, may help to instil community confidence. More complex problems that generate fear can then be dealt with over the longer term (Attorney-General's Department 1998).

7. Deal with underlying social problems

Underlying social factors, such as a lack of local cohesion or social isolation, may contribute to fear. With specific regard to seniors, a holistic approach that seeks to reintegrate them into their communities and deal with the anxieties associated with ageing is most likely to be effective (James & Graycar 2000). Seniors who are most active and involved in their communities are less anxious about crime; and those programs that emphasise confident living, incorporate physical activity, and increase self-esteem, independence and social connection are most likely to be effective in reducing fear of crime (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003).

8. Build intergenerational connections

Many seniors report being particularly fearful of young people, so programs that seek to encourage constructive communication and increase interactions between the older and younger members of the community are likely to improve understanding for both age groups and decrease fear of crime (James & Graycar 2000).

9. Provide victim support

The provision of victim support may be particularly important for the elderly, for those who have high fear levels either before or after victimisation, and for those who suffer

from multiple victimisations. Used appropriately, this support can make an important contribution to preventing an increase of fear in victims of crime.

10. Mitigate any fear of crime that media reports may engender

The media play an important role in providing crime information to the public. However, if the reporting is sensationalist or selective, it can lead people to seriously over-estimate their risk of victimisation and result in heightened levels of fear. It is important, therefore, to monitor crime reporting in the mass media, encourage media to portray a more accurate and realistic picture of crime within the community, and use the local media to promote community awareness programs and the availability of local services (James & Graycar 2000). Any intervention should have a specific communication strategy, involving the media in publishing what is being done and celebrating the successes of the program to help build community confidence (Tennyson-Mason 2002).

Information about crime needs to be presented in a manner that discourages community members from adopting a 'helpless victim' mentality. Ideally, crime should be portrayed as controllable, and media reports should empower community members to avoid victimisation (Ranzijn, Howells & Wagstaff 2002). Particular care needs to be taken when reporting on crimes in the local area, as these are potentially the most fear-inducing for the public (Ditton et al. 2004; Warr 2000).

Warr (2000) suggests two methods for providing crime information in a way that may help to avoid increasing fear levels within the community by altering either the public's perceived risk of victimisation or their beliefs about the seriousness of particular crimes.

The first of these is the self-corrective approach, where the mass media are encouraged to present crime information in its proper context, so that it accurately represents the risk to community members. The risk of crime victimisation is presented relative to other aversive life events, and information is given on how factors such as age, gender, racial or ethnic identity, and location affect the chances of victimisation.

The second approach is to use proactive measures to counteract sensationalist crime reporting in the mass media, by providing accurate crime information through alternative channels such as police and civic organisations (e.g. seniors' organisations). For example, accurate information could be provided about the co-

occurrence of crimes and the actions that victims could take, in the event of victimisation, to influence the outcome. Many people believe that certain crimes, such as rape and homicide, are likely to co-occur, and they are often unaware that their actions could influence the outcome of victimisation. It might be beneficial, in this case, to educate the public about the most likely course and consequences of victimisation (Warr 2000).

However, with any intervention that provides crime information it is important to be aware that the actual provision of such information may engender greater fear in some people. For example, Bell, Chessman Architects and Davis (1993) sought to decrease fear of crime in residents of a South Australian retirement village by giving them accurate crime information; but they found after the intervention that slightly more of the residents than before believed the elderly were likely to be targeted by perpetrators. Nevertheless, the information provided in the intervention did increase their confidence in dealing with crime. Before the intervention, 44% of participants thought there were some actions they could take that would discourage intruders; afterwards, 72% believed there was a lot they could do to deter an intruder. So it seems that altering the method of communicating the risk can have unforeseen consequences. It is necessary, therefore, to:

- understand what the public already know about crime, and aspects on which they are misinformed; and counteract misconceptions by giving community members accurate information (James & Graycar 2000; Warr 2000)
- avoid using complex terminology, and instead present information in everyday terms that are relevant to the target audience
- use cross-hazard comparisons to help the public understand their true risk of victimisation
- present information about risks or crimes in such a way that will be understood equally by recipients and by program designers
- be honest about any limitations in the information that is provided, to avoid public mistrust (Warr 2000)
- use seminars, given by trained presenters, to provide any associated publications (e.g. police); simply giving community members a document to

view in their own home may reinforce and increase their pre-existing fears (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003)

- develop constructive ways of using the media to allay fears about crime; use the local press to promote community awareness programs and the availability of local services (James & Graycar 2000)
- pre-test interventions to avoid any unforeseen consequences such as increasing, rather than decreasing, the public's fear of crime (Warr 2000).

11. Meet the needs of specific groups

Some groups are harder to target than others. For example, there may be difficulties in providing information to non English speaking and Indigenous people, and those who are isolated. Particular efforts are necessary to target these groups and provide appropriate interventions to meet their particular needs (James, Graycar & Mayhew 2003). In the case of seniors, those who are involved in their community are the easiest to reach with interventions, but these are not the people who are most likely to suffer from the greatest fear of crime. Community based programs are attended by those who are involved in their communities, and efforts need to be made to organise programs (e.g. social outings) that will reach socially isolated individuals (James & Graycar 2000).

Recommendation 3: That agencies be encouraged to consider the steps outlined in the Fear of Crime literature review when developing strategies designed to reduce the fear of crime.

Initiatives

As a direct result of the formation of the Seniors Task Force, various initiatives designed to prevent crime against seniors have been developed or supported by the Task Force.

The Seniors Task Force took steps to reduce the fear of crime and assist with crime prevention measures through the development and/or promotion of:

- ***Confident, Safe & Secure Living in Queensland – A Handbook on Safety for Seniors***

This 48 page senior's safety handbook contains easy, commonsense advice for seniors on safety when out and about, when at home, how to deal with fraud and elder abuse, and how to protect their home when on holidays. The booklet was based on a publication by the Crime Prevention and Community Safety Council of Tasmania. Since the launch of the Queensland publication in October 2004, more than 40,000 copies have been printed and distributed through the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Communities and the Department of Housing to charity, community and government organisations that support seniors, and to individual members of the community. Demand continues for the handbook and it is being translated into languages other than English. In addition, an audio version of the handbook for sight-impaired people has been produced and placed in Brisbane City Council libraries. Other local authorities are being encouraged to also stock the CD and tape versions.

Recommendation 4: That the 'Confident, Safe & Secure' handbook be updated and reprinted on an annual basis.

- **Justice of the Peace articles**

During the course of Seniors Task Force investigations, it became evident that elder abuse is a key concern amongst the older community and that community agents, such as Justices of the Peace (JPs), are often placed in a position of signing documents for seniors who may be under pressure from family or carers. To assist JPs in the recognition of seniors under duress and what action to take, the Task Force worked in conjunction with the Office of the Adult Guardian and the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit to produce articles on these issues for publication in the Queensland Justices Association magazine and the Justice

Papers bulletin published by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (refer Appendix 'F'). The articles covered such issues as undue influence where seniors may be coerced into making decisions in favour of a family member or some other person. Another issue is the misuse of enduring powers of attorney. The articles also advised JPs on the recognition and types of elder abuse, factors that contribute to elder abuse, what to do and where to go for help and information if some form of abuse was suspected.

- **Community Service Announcements**

Council on the Ageing (COTA) National Seniors and the QPS (in partnership with Neighbourhood Watch) developed a series of community service announcements on crime prevention and safety on community radio stations. Radio 4MBS in Brisbane is most supportive of this strategy, and has a large target listening audience of people aged over 45 years to which to transmit messages on personal safety and property security. This station also is progressing an initiative to broadcast community safety messages and music to target audiences in aged care hostels and hospital facilities in the near future.

Recommendation 5: That the QPS, in partnership with Council on the Ageing (COTA) National Seniors, continues to develop and utilise community service announcements.

- **Support for Regional Services**

The Task Force, through the QPS, supports the valuable work of the Home Assist Secure program and the Victims Counselling and Support Services across Queensland. These two organisations support clientele, including seniors, by providing home security assistance and counselling services at little cost to the disadvantaged senior.

- **APSL Abuse of Older People booklets**

The Australian Pensioners and Superannuants' League (APSL), which was represented on the Task Force, has developed an information package and booklet on the Abuse of Older People. The package and relevant training cover such areas as material abuse (property, finance and other assets), family violence, conflict when there's caring and living together, as well as emotional,

physical and sexual abuse and neglect. This package is supported by the Task Force and is available from APSL.

- **Media Reports**

Issues relating to seniors receive considerable coverage on the news media, particularly incidents where an older community member is the victim of an offence and sustains significant injury or loss. While some people perceive this coverage to be negative, it can help in identifying and locating the offender/s, and reflects society's disgust at older people being victimised.

A sample of media coverage of seniors' crime issues is contained in Appendix E. The articles cover a range of issues including direct reports on crime against seniors and the reaction of seniors who had been victimised, as well as positive articles.

- **OPSO Action Research**

The Older People Speak Out (OPSO) Consultative Research Forum is comprised of people who share a passion for social justice, including academics, business people, professionals and a state-wide network of friends and associates.

The OPSO action research was carried out across the State from 2000-2005. As part of the project, OPSO members consulted with communities to establish their needs and solutions and then work with them and government, as well as business and the media, to put these into effect in a timely fashion. With the formation of the Task Force, OPSO promoted the initiatives of the Task Force and based its safety workshops on the *Confident Safe and Secure* handbook.

While OPSO's primary concerns are the total wellbeing of seniors, their action research is by no means limited to this group. People of all ages, including Year 10, 11 and 12 students, have been consulted individually, in small groups and at community representative "Speakouts". These Speakouts were supported by the Task Force and were an opportunity to promote the work of the Task Force across the State.

While the research is primarily Queensland sourced and the recommendations Queensland focused, they might apply to other Australian States and Territories.

Recommendation 6: That ongoing research be conducted into intergenerational issues to inform government policy and service delivery.

Adopt-A-Cops at Seniors' Facilities

The Adopt-A-Cop program was implemented in 1985 as a means of building a better relationship between the police and children in the school community. The program is designed to permit the volunteer police officer to work with her/his local school in fostering a better relationship between the Police Service and students.

The program has evolved since it commenced and now includes a greater focus on educating students and educational institutions such as TAFE colleges and kindergartens.

As a result of a recommendation of the Task Force, the Adopt-A-Cop program has been formally expanded to include adoptions at retirement villages and other seniors' facilities. The Seniors Task Force facilitated the adoption of a local police officer at Greenleaves (Mt Gravatt) and Ballycara (Redcliffe) retirement villages.

From the publicity generated by these adoptions, and the support of local police and media, retirement communities throughout the State have been encouraged to take part in the program as a way of building closer relationships between older adults and police. The initiative will assist in spreading crime prevention and awareness messages between the Queensland Police Service and older people.

Recommendation 7: That the Queensland Police Service examines ways to expand the Adopt-A-Cop program into retirement villages and other seniors' facilities.

Seniors Crime Project (handbag snatching)

Following a presentation to the Task Force on a research project which examined the theft of personal items in supermarkets, the Queensland Police Service developed a Problem-Oriented and Partnership Policing (POPP) project with Woolworths and Coles retail supermarkets.

The research undertaken by a Queensland police officer showed that approximately one quarter of all personal theft reports from seniors entailed stealing handbags and purses from supermarket trolleys. Even though seniors are less likely to be victims of

crime than other age groups, research shows that a higher portion of older women were victims of handbag snatching than other age groups (Beitz, 2004).

Following discussions amongst the Task Force, the QPS contacted management at Woolworths and Coles about security awareness for personal items, namely handbags and wallets.

As a result, large awareness signs bearing the QPS logo have been strategically placed in supermarkets advising shoppers not to leave their handbags unattended.

Recommendation 8: That the Seniors Task Force initiative 'Where's your handbag' be promoted to supermarkets identified as concentrated crime areas for personal theft.

Seniors Liaison trial – North Coast Region

The QPS North Coast Region Seniors Liaison Project was initiated as a Problem-Oriented and Partnership Policing (POPP) project to reduce the fear of crime and social isolation experienced by some seniors in the community.

Stage One of the project commenced on 1 August 2005 with a six month trial within the Sunshine Coast District. A District Seniors Liaison Officer was appointed to act as a seniors' victim security adviser, a conduit for referrals by police to seniors support agencies (namely Home Assist Secure and Commonwealth Care Link) and a receiving point for referral advice from 'partner' seniors' service agencies. It is also intended that upon receipt of advice from a service provider identifying a person living in fear, the District Seniors Liaison Officer will ensure that a designated Seniors Liaison Officer or Volunteer in Policing for the local area contacts the person and, if considered necessary, visits the senior in an effort to alleviate their concerns.

Stage Two of the project will incorporate referrals to and from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and Queensland Ambulance Service for integration with their respective initiatives *Operation Safehome* (advice of smoke alarms and evacuation planning) and *Older and Wiser* (an injury prevention course to reduce the risk of injury in a residential setting). Other participant organisations include Commonwealth Care Link, Blue Care, Meals on Wheels and RSL Care.

As part of this project's primary strategies, senior victims of break and enter and violence related crimes are contacted by the Seniors Liaison Officer. At this time,

issues associated with fear of crime are discussed and security advice offered. A security audit (facilitated by Home Assist Secure) is also offered. Subsequent to this call, the booklet *Confident, Safe & Secure Living in Queensland* is provided to the senior victim. In the first three months, 40 senior victims of crime were identified and the Seniors Liaison Officer made contact with 26 of them.

An evaluation of the project's process and client service has been conducted. Primary to this interim evaluation was a telephone survey of seniors who received some form of service coordinated through the project. This survey assessed the project's acceptance by targeted seniors, especially in regard to a reduction of fear of crime. Other issues examined included whether home security initiatives were implemented and if protective behaviours training had been undertaken after the advice was received. Seventeen of the project's clients were contacted following the survey, with the results exceeding expectations:

- 100% of respondents who participated received the *Confident, Safe & Secure Living in Queensland* handbook;
- 63% of respondents found the information very helpful with 37% finding the information helpful;
- 73% of respondents indicated they had improved their home security as a result of the advice;
- 73% of respondents indicated their fear of crime had reduced after receiving advice from the Seniors Liaison Officer;
- 81% indicated the service provided by the Seniors Liaison Officer was very helpful, with 19% indicating that it was helpful; and
- 100% of respondents believed the service should be continued.

Recommendation 9: That, subject to evaluation, the Queensland Police Service considers expanding the Seniors Liaison Project (North Coast Region) to other regions.

Queensland Newspapers feature

As a direct result of the Seniors Task Force handbook *Confident Safe and Secure Living in Queensland* raising awareness of crime prevention issues, Queensland Newspapers plan to run a lift-out in The Sunday Mail in 2006. The lift-out will appear in the "Looking Forward" section, which is tailored toward seniors. It is proposed that the Sunday Mail will seek commercial support from advertisers in early 2006. The editorial will be supplied by the QPS and other Task Force related agencies, and The Sunday Mail will focus on seniors' safety leading up to Easter and throughout the year. The size of the feature will depend on advertising support, but it is expected to comprise at least four pages. If this feature is successful, the newspaper will consider another general feature on community safety in a magazine style lift-out later in the year.

Media Coverage – Extra

On 7 March 2005, the Channel Nine *Extra* program broadcast a segment on senior's safety, quoting several sections from the *Confident, Safe & Secure Living in Queensland* handbook and interviewing seniors who had experienced break and enters in their homes. The program also interviewed retirement village residents on security and fear of crime, and gave tips on how to protect handbags from being stolen.

HomeLink Index

With many hours spent trying to locate next of kin for people who have been injured, suffered memory loss or incapacitated in some way, the QPS Metropolitan North and South Eastern Regions initiated a program called 'HomeLink'.

HomeLink was designed as a means to record contact details for elderly people living alone. This quickly expanded to incorporate disabled people and anyone living alone who may, at times, feel vulnerable and isolated. Police and Volunteers In Policing (VIP) enter seniors' confidential details onto the Police Keyholders database and, through agencies such as Centrelink and the Blue Nurses, make contact with people who live alone. Police and VIPs then access this information to make contact with relatives in an emergency and notify the appropriate agencies for assistance. As part of this program, VIPs offer a security audit of the home that includes general information on home security, identifying areas of vulnerability which may attract thieves, engraving personal property, as well as providing information on personal safety and other advice that may benefit the client. People who may have felt vulnerable and isolated have a contact that can offer them assistance and support.

Recommendation 10: That the Queensland Police Service considers expanding the HomeLink program to other regions.

Police and Seniors Document

The Seniors Task Force identified that an information document to outline the services provided by the Queensland Police Service to seniors would be beneficial to the police, other government departments, community organisations and, in particular, senior members of the community.

Recommendation 11: That the Queensland Police Service develops an information document that details the services provided for seniors.

Telemarketing

As an outcome of an issue raised by Seniors Task Force members, the Police Minister encouraged seniors to take steps to avoid being frightened by unwelcome 'hang up' calls from telemarketers. Complaints had been received from seniors about the automated technology that is being used by some telemarketing companies to assess whether a person is at home or not.

The system places a call to a person's house and automatically hangs up if someone answers the phone. The number is then logged for a telemarketer to ring, knowing that someone is home at the time. Unfortunately, this is proving frightening to many seniors, who fear the hang-up calls may instead be prank calls, or a burglar potentially casing their house to check whether it is vacant.

Many older people tend to live on their own, so this type of call is particularly upsetting if they think it is a prank call. For older people, the telephone is their lifeline and often their only link to family and loved ones. Telemarketers who use this automated technology are forcing seniors to avoid answering their phone, or even to go so far as disconnect it in some cases. Seniors could then be missing genuine telephone calls, and being placed at risk if emergency assistance was needed, such as phoning Triple Zero (000).

The Seniors Task Force provides information on the QPS web site to seniors on ways to have their names removed from telemarketer phone lists.

Seniors Advocacy, Information and Legal Service

The Caxton Legal Service receives funding from the Department of Communities to operate the Seniors Advocacy, Information & Legal Service (SAILS) in Brisbane. SAILS aims to assist older people identified as being at risk of harm from domestic or family (non-spousal) violence and other forms of abuse. The service provides a free legal and social work service for people over the age of 60 living in Brisbane, and seeks to promote the independence, wellbeing, protection and care of those people.

Recommendation 12: That the State Government considers funding the expansion of the Seniors Advocacy, Information & Legal Service to major regional centres in Queensland.

Protective Behaviours Strategies for Seniors

The Seniors Task Force established that a consistent and regular approach to the promotion of preventative strategies, such as encouraging safety and security awareness and people's rights and responsibilities towards elderly abuse, was necessary.

Through the QPS Protective Behaviours Strategies for Seniors (PBSS) project, it is envisaged that personal protection strategies will be utilised in a consistent and effective manner, embodying a realistic perspective of crimes against seniors and aim for a reduction in the fear of crime.

An issue of concern is the lack of reported elderly abuse and the apparent lack of awareness of changes to the *Domestic Violence and Family Protection Act* that affect the community. One aim of PBSS is to enhance the awareness of the various forms of elderly abuse and of current legislation that is applicable to each form of abuse, particularly for seniors.

Additionally, PBSS is developing an information package that details the availability of resources within each region across the State. The expected benefit is for seniors to become more aware of their personal safety and security, as well as enhancing their liaison with members of the QPS.

Once finalised, it is anticipated that PBSS will be delivered by police officers to seniors groups across Queensland.

Social Isolation

Social isolation encompasses both social and emotional isolation - that is, both a low level of social participation and the subjective experience of loneliness. There are many individual, social, cultural and environmental factors influencing a person's connection with their community. These factors include:

- relocation;
- being a carer;
- living in a rural or remote area;
- having low social confidence; and
- being from a different cultural and/or linguistic background to most community members.

Although many older people are socially connected, there are some factors that more commonly impact together on older people than other age groups. These factors include:

- leaving the workforce;
- physical disability and ill health;
- loss of relationships; and
- loss of transport options.

The Cross-Government Project to Reduce Social Isolation of Older People managed by the Office for Seniors within the Department of Communities aims to identify leading practice models in the reduction of social isolation of older people in Queensland. All departments involved have identified social isolation of older people (55 years plus) as an important issue. The project provides the opportunity for agencies to work together and pool resources for an improved outcome. Project partners are providing monetary and/or significant 'in kind' support to the project, which will identify innovative, sustainable and evidence-based models to reduce social isolation. It is expected that

these models will also contribute to the reduction of social isolation of other population groups.

The Seniors Task Force also supports organisations like Neighbourhood Watch investigating the possibility of including social isolation projects within individual Neighbourhood Watch areas in an attempt to reduce the fear of crime among seniors who are isolated from the rest of the community.

Recommendation 13: That, subject to evaluation, the State Government considers extending Social Isolation projects to more communities in Queensland.

Recommendation 14: That the Neighbourhood Watch Program considers introducing Social Isolation projects within individual Neighbourhood Watch areas.

5.6 The establishment of processes to evaluate and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of crime prevention, investigation and fear of crime targeting seniors

The Seniors Task Force recommends that any initiatives developed and implemented to prevent crime against seniors, investigate crime and reduce the fear of crime among seniors need to be monitored and evaluated to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness. In order to establish evaluation and monitoring processes, the Seniors Task Force researched current discussions on the subject.

To support the necessity for evaluation, the Task Force drew on the *Crime Prevention Evaluation* report produced for the Queensland Government under the auspices of the Crime Prevention Senior Officers Group and prepared by a working group comprising representatives from central government and a range of line agencies involved in crime prevention.

Guidelines from which knowledge about crime prevention evaluation can be drawn are available from the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department document entitled: *Guidelines for Evaluating Community Crime Prevention Projects* by English, B., Straton, R., & Cummings, R. (2003).

The Task Force established that these guidelines appear to be the only directions of their kind in Australia and fully supports their use. The guidelines are for people managing small, community based crime prevention projects or anyone else involved in crime prevention projects, including staff, participants, community groups and funding agencies.

A full copy of the *Guidelines for Evaluating Community Crime Prevention Projects* can be found in Appendix I.

Recommendation 15: That all projects developed by the State Government to prevent crime against seniors and reduce the fear of crime among seniors be properly evaluated using the *Guidelines for Evaluating Community Crime Prevention Projects* developed by the Commonwealth Government.

6. FUTURE OF THE SENIORS TASK FORCE

Location in Crime Prevention

With the Seniors Task Force concluding officially on 31 December 2005, it was resolved at the final meeting that issues relating to seniors safety within the QPS be coordinated through the Crime Prevention Unit, Operations Support Command. It is recommended that a position of State Coordinator for Seniors Safety Issues be created in the Crime Prevention Unit at an appropriate level to overview and coordinate seniors' safety issues within the QPS across Queensland, similar to those already in existence for matters such as domestic violence and Neighbourhood Watch.

Recommendation 16: That a position of State Coordinator for Seniors Issues within the QPS be created to overview and coordinate issues relating to seniors safety in Queensland.

Seniors Safety Seminar

The Seniors Task Force has endorsed a proposal to conduct two seminars per year on crime against seniors. It is anticipated that the seminars will be held in April and October each year. The seminars will be organised and conducted by the QPS Crime Prevention Unit, Operations Support Command.

Recommendation 17: That the Queensland Police Service coordinates biannual seminars on crime against seniors.

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8. APPENDICES

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