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# An Exploratory Study of Crime Risks and the Planning Process<sup>1</sup>

By Garner Clancey<sup>2</sup>, Daren Fisher and Amanda Rutherford<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) was recognised in New South Wales (NSW) through the adoption of Section 79c Guidelines in April 2001. Since the introduction of the Guidelines there has been little analysis of their impact. Given that the Guidelines are predominantly the responsibility of local government (councils) to administer, we sought to address the existing gap in knowledge by interviewing planning staff from ten Sydney councils. Findings from these semi-structured interviews suggest that there has been an increased focus on CPTED as a consequence of the Guidelines. All councils represented in the sample have formal or informal relationships with their local police and invite police to review and comment on particular development applications. The types of developments reviewed by police, the nature of the feedback provided and the weight given to these police comments/recommendations vary across councils. Most reported that planning staff had received some training in CPTED (although much of this training appears to be historical rather than recent). This article concludes with some suggestions for further research and consideration of the efficacy of current arrangements in NSW.

Key words: crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), development applications, crime risks, consent authorities, police.

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<sup>2</sup>Lecturer and Deputy Director, Sydney Institute of Criminology, Law School Building (F10), Eastern Avenue, Camperdown Campus, The University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia. Email: [garner.clancey@sydney.edu.au](mailto:garner.clancey@sydney.edu.au)

<sup>3</sup> Research Assistants, Sydney Institute of Criminology, Law School Building (F10), Eastern Avenue, Camperdown Campus, The University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.

## Introduction

There is widespread recognition that many countries (including Australia) experienced significant increases in crime in the latter half of last century ([Felson and Cohen, 1980](#); [Garland, 2001](#); [Weatherburn, 2004](#); [Van Dijk, 2007](#)). Governments (and others) responded to this “massive and incontestable social fact” ([Garland, 2001: 90](#)) in diverse ways. New methods to prevent crime emerged during this period in the shadow of (or in addition to) the traditional criminal justice responses. Clarke and colleagues showed the merits of reducing opportunities for crime through diverse interventions directed at very specific crime problems ([Cornish and Clarke, 1986](#); [Clarke, 1980 and 1997](#)). Situational crime prevention emerged (and someone would argue, came to dominate crime prevention discourse) ([von Hirsch et al, 2000](#); [Garland, 2001](#)) during this period.

Resonating with, but emerging from disparate traditions, came a focus on the impact of the built environment on crime. Architects, planners, urban designers, police and others began to acknowledge the potentially criminogenic features of the built environment ([Jacobs, 1961](#); [Newman, 1972](#); [Jeffrey, 1977](#)). Despite the somewhat disparate perspectives, this approach has come to be known as crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). CPTED is defined as “the proper design and effective use of the built environment” which “can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, and an improvement in the quality of life” ([Crowe 2000:46](#)).

In the decades since its initial emergence, CPTED has gained increasing acceptance ([Cozens et al 2005](#); [Minnery and Lim 2005](#); [Atlas 2008](#)). Many police, local authority staff and others now receive CPTED training ([McCamley, 2001](#); [Klepczarek 2002](#); [McDonald and Kitteringham 2004](#); [Cozens et al 2008](#); [Book and Schneider 2010](#)); rating systems for some forms of built environment operate in some jurisdictions to quantify safety and security (for example, the Secured by Design accreditation process in the United Kingdom); and CPTED practitioner professional associations have emerged (for example, the International CPTED Association). Moreover, numerous planning guidelines incorporating CPTED design principles have been adopted in jurisdictions internationally ([Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2004](#); [Scottish Executive Planning Department 2006](#); [New Zealand Ministry of Justice 2005](#)) and across Australia ([Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment 2005](#); [South Australian Department of Transport and Urban 2004](#); [Western Australian Planning Commission 2006](#); [Queensland Government 2007](#)).

## CPTED in NSW

A series of key developments during the 1990s (although a longer history could no doubt be constructed) contributed significantly to the emergence of CPTED in NSW. Specifically, these developments included the development of a community safety management plan by the NSW Police Service (as it was then known); an Industrial Relations Commission Inquiry into the Transport and Delivery of Cash and other Valuables Industry following the killing of cash-in-transit officers and subsequent industrial disputes; and the Sydney Olympics in 2000.

In 1993, the NSW Police Service prepared a community safety management, which contained reference to the ‘Safer by Design’ program ([Klepczarek, 2002](#)). This program involved review of project designs and planning proposals on a voluntary basis. In many respects these informal and voluntary arrangements between police, some councils and built environment professionals laid the

foundations for further developments within the NSW Police Service and the focus on CPTED more broadly.

Then on 18 August 1995 the NSW Minister for Industrial Relations requested that the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW investigate and report on the adequacy of Government regulation of occupational health and safety standards in the cash-in-transit industry following the shooting death of a security guard during a robbery at a suburban shopping centre (Industrial Relations Commission of NSW, 1997: 1-2). Evidence given by the NSW Police Service representative (Sergeant McCamley) to the Inquiry into the Transport and Delivery of Cash and other Valuables Industry recommended “that local councils ... be required to consider crime risk issues during the Development Approval process, and not merely on an ad hoc basis”. In particular, he suggested [amongst other things] that the “following approach be adopted with new shopping centre developments: Project planners/designers promote designs which maximize natural surveillance, access control, territorial reinforcement and activity management” (Industrial Relations Commission of NSW, 1997: 78).

At the conclusion of this reference the Industrial Relations Commission recommended that:

“Section 90 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 should be amended so as to require the consent authority to take into account crime impact or risk including particularly the transport and delivery of cash and valuables in determining development applications” (Industrial Relations Commission of NSW, 1997: 92).

During this period of the mid to late 1990s, significant effort was also being invested in preparing for the Sydney Olympic Games held in 2000. Part of this preparation involved designing and building venues for the Games. CPTED was part of this picture. Superintendent McKinnon (Commander, Olympic Security Command Centre, NSW Police Service) noted the following at a conference some years prior to the Olympic Games: “CPTED principles have to be part of the **initial** brief to all parties concerned in design, construction and provision of services” (1998: 3) (emphasis in the original).

In 2000, the year of the Sydney Olympics, the then Deputy Premier and Minister for the then Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, issued a media release which stated the following:

“The NSW Government is moving to reduce crime by encouraging ‘design safety’ in buildings and public places. We will ensure crime risk is assessed during development applications, hold workshops for council planners and seek changes to the Building Code of Australia. Opportunities for crime can be reduced through thoughtful planning, design and space management” (as cited in Klepczarek, 2002: 4).

This served as the precursor to the introduction of the *Crime prevention and the assessment of development applications: Guidelines under section 79c of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (S79c Guidelines), which occurred in April 2001. These guidelines were intended to “help councils identify crime risk and minimize opportunities for crime through the appropriate assessment of development proposals” (DUAP 2001:1). The guidelines suggest that “*Councils have an obligation to ensure that a development provides safety and security to users and the community*” (emphasis in original) (DUAP 2001:2). Where a development presents a crime risk, the “guidelines can be used to justify:

- Modification of the development to minimize the risk of crime; or

- Refusal of the development on the grounds that crime risk cannot be appropriately minimized” (DUAP 2001:2).

The introduction of these guidelines was also supported by the delivery of the *Safer by Design* course delivered by the NSW Police Service. These courses (originally ten days in duration, but have been reduced to four-days in recent years) covered the following topics: criminology and crime prevention; historical applications of CPTED; identifying crime risk in architectural plans and drawings; lighting, fear and crime; crime risk management and CPTED applications; and councils, planning and design safety (McCamley, 2001).

This partial history of CPTED in NSW reveals the movement from fledgling local, voluntary and informal arrangements to the development of the Guidelines and the systematic provision of training.

Apart from related research undertaken by Clancey et al (2011, 2012a), there has been little analysis of the impact of these Guidelines (and the associated training). Given the concerns raised about aspects of CPTED theory and practice (Rosenbaum et al 1998; Shaftoe 2004; Shaftoe and Read 2005; Schneider and Kitchen 2007; Newburn 2007), it is important that consideration be given to the implementation of CPTED guidelines.

This qualitative research explores the adoption of the NSW Guidelines through semi-structured interviews with council planning staff from ten Sydney councils. As councils are responsible for implementing these Guidelines, the views of council planning staff provide an important insight into the overall uptake of these Guidelines.

## Research Methodology

NSW contains 152 Local Government Areas (LGAs), 43 of which are in the Sydney Metropolitan Region. This study involved a stratified random sample of these 43 Sydney councils, which were broken into three separate council categories according to geography – Sydney Inner, Sydney Outer and Sydney Surrounds. These 43 LGAs contain 63.87% of the total population of NSW (ABS, 2012).

These three council categories were selected due to the volume of development applications that each of these regions receives as well as their geographic proximity. Out of the total of 68,025 development applications that were assessed in NSW between 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011, 35,784 (52.6%) of these applications were assessed in these three regions (NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure, 2012). Out of these 35,784 development applications, 34,433 (96.22%) applications were approved (NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure, 2012).

A stratified random sample was used to reduce opportunities for sampling bias (Kalton, 1983). This sampling process captured the following numbers of councils by category:

- 4 from the 21 Sydney Inner,
- 4 from the 17 Sydney Outer, and
- 2 from the 5 Sydney Surrounds.

General Managers of councils identified through the sampling technique were sent a letter,

Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms and invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. These forms were generally referred to relevant internal staff and delegated council staff notified the research team of their willingness to participate and dates/times for the interviews were negotiated. All councils invited to participate, apart from one, accepted the invitation. One Sydney Inner council declined to participate. A further designated Sydney Inner council was randomly generated and they agreed to this invitation to participate.

The final sample of interviewees included two females and eight males. While all interviewees worked in planning units for their respective councils, they each had different titles as reflected below:

1. Development Assessment Officer
2. Executive Manager, Environmental Services
3. Development Assessment Planner
4. Development Planning Manager
5. Senior Development Assessment Officer
6. Senior Development Assessment Planner
7. Senior Town Planner
8. Development and Assessment Coordinator
9. Planning Manager
10. Principal Town Planner

The semi-structured interview questions focused on council procedures to assess crime risks, relationships with local police and their involvement in identifying crime risks in proposed developments, and training provided to planning staff on CPTED. The face-to-face interviews were all conducted between November 2012 and April 2013, with nine of the ten being conducted by two researchers. Each interview was conducted at a Council building to reduce any inconvenience to the interviewees. The time taken per interview ranged between 23 to 51 minutes, with the average interview taking 34 minutes.

All interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed verbatim. The data gathered from these interviews were then systematically coded and analysed. The responses of the ten respondents were thematically compared to each other in order to discern the nature of any patterns and differences emerging.

## Results

Numerous key findings emerged from the interviews with the ten council planning staff. The findings presented here include the diversity of workloads, size of planning units and perceived crime rates for each of the councils; competing priorities in the development application process and the impact that this has on assessing crime risks; the nature of the development type and the potential crime risks; police and council liaison; training provided to council staff on CPTED and the role of the council Crime Prevention Officer in reviewing development applications.

## Diverse Contexts

A key finding to emerge was the diversity of contexts within which each Council operates. The number of development applications received, the type of developments being proposed in each area and the level of crime were three key contextual variables highlighted by interviewees.

The estimated number of development applications received by each council per annum ranged from 300 to over 700. This volume of work has necessitated different sized planning teams. Seven interviewees estimated the number of planning personnel employed by their council: this ranged from six to 14 planners.

Interviewees also made mention of whether they considered their council to be a high or low crime area. This was reported as impacting upon the relative priority given to crime risks in the overall development assessment process.

“Now [council area] is generally a fairly low crime area, yeah, and there hasn’t been any real particular type of land use that would warrant one” (Interviewee 4).

“That perceived need would change if we were experiencing general criminal behaviour in the street or in particular areas; we don’t have that type of crime here” (Interviewee 9).

The veracity of claims made about high or low crime areas were not interrogated as part of this research. What was considered to be important was the judgement made by the interviewee (i.e. high or low crime area) and the nature of how this impacted on the perceived importance of CPTED. While a number of interviewees suggested that they worked in a low crime area and that this was the basis for giving limited attention to crime risks, there was not a clear correlation between perceptions of high or low crime and associated investment in CPTED. Interviewees from self-identified low crime areas reported various measures to ensure crime risks were considered during the development application process. Further research is required to excavate this important relationship between perceived levels of crime and development of practices to assess and reduce crime risks.

Various other factors, such as council make-up, local politics, and arrangements between council and other planning review bodies were also highlighted as contextual factors impacting upon development assessment and general planning procedures. Moreover, one interviewee highlighted how the cultural backgrounds of local residents impacted on perceptions of crime and a willingness to adopt security measures.

“So with three-quarters of those coming from backgrounds that have elevated security concerns, they come from a culture where your front door leading onto a low fence isn’t how you provide security to your family, so they don’t really accept that as a principle ... We see over the top security based applications. There are some streets you can drive through that just demonstrate the type of fortress mentality that a lot of people have. We have a school that provides security guards to every corner, above bollards, wire fence and barbed wire” (Interviewee 5).

## Competing Priorities

While the crime level in the area was deemed to impact upon the importance placed on CPTED, it was also repeatedly stated that crime risks are just one of many issues that must be considered in the development assessment process.

“... I certainly wouldn't say it's [crime] the priority. I would say it's a consideration and I wouldn't give it probably more emphasis other than saying that it's probably something that I would deal with halfway through the application” (Interviewee 1).

“... sometimes the crime prevention design guidelines are, I wouldn't say ignored but they're given less determinative weight than other things that we're considering at the time” (Interviewee 5).

“To be perfectly honest, the extent of importance of crime prevention would probably be in the mid- to low-range with our applications” (Interviewee 6).

“Planning issues involve everything from parking to streetscape to bulk and scale, floor space ratio, height, noise, amenity, privacy. There's a huge number of issues that we have to consider” (Interviewee 8).

For one interviewee, the relegation of crime prevention as a priority is a concern.

“... planners probably don't give CPTED enough attention, because it's a long list of things that we have to consider (Interviewee 7).

These responses clearly place CPTED and concern for crime risks in the wider planning context and the myriad of other considerations that need to be balanced in reviewing a development application. Despite the existence of the Guidelines, these responses suggest that crime is generally given a low priority when compared to the other planning criteria and considerations. However, it was suggested that particular developments might be given greater attention if they were considered to be associated with crime risks.

“I would have to say it's [crime] one of many. It depends on the development type how we'd prioritise it. Things such as flat buildings [i.e. apartments] I don't think it ranks that highly but 24 hour trading, boarding houses ...” (Interviewee 10).

A further way that crime might be given greater priority and consideration in the development application process is if community members complain or raise concerns about particular developments.

“... it also depends on the submissions that we get and what they raise in it. If there was more community concern about it we would have to take a look at it more closely” (Interviewee 10).

Consequently, while crime risk might be considered to be generally a lower priority than the various other planning priorities and considerations, a particular development might receive added



attention if the development type was considered to elevate the crime risk or if there was sufficient community concern to warrant such attention.

## **Police / Council Liaison**

All respondents identified some form of liaison with the NSW Police Force. Given that police Local Area Command (LAC) boundaries do not align with Local Government Areas (LGAs) across NSW (there are 80 LACs and 152 LGAs at the time of writing in NSW), each interviewee was asked how many LACs that they liaise with. Nine interviewees said that their council only deals with one LAC. One council stated that they liaise with two LACs.

Interviewees described how the relationships between councils and police are at the heart of much of the efforts by councils to consider and address potential crime risks arising from proposed development applications. Key features of these relationships that were explored included whether such arrangements were formalised, what triggered police involvement in reviewing a development application and the nature and type of input provided by police.

### *Memoranda of Understanding*

The S79c Guidelines state that “Councils and local police should identify the types of development which will require a crime risk assessment, and prepare a consultation protocol” (2001: 2).

Interviewees were asked about relationships with local police for the purposes of assessing crime risks.

Eight interviewees identified that they had a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the relevant LAC (or LACs in one instance) while the remaining two suggested that informal arrangements operated whereby development applications were sent to the police for review.

Interviewees were asked to estimate the volume of development applications referred to their respective LAC(s) for review by the police. Interviewees found this a difficult question to answer with any certainty. However, the following are some of the figures suggested by interviewees:

- “I’d really be guessing, and I can only say that I’m aware of in this, say, last 12 month period, I think we’ve had maybe four that I can think of” (Interviewee 2)
- “Look, I’d say maybe one every two months on average, maybe six a year. But that’s a very ballpark figure” (Interviewee 3)
- “Oh there’s only ... a dozen a year” (Interviewee 4)
- “Ballpark would be less than 10” (Interviewee 5)
- “So maybe there’s 10 this year, they probably would have responded to all of them” (Interviewee 7)
- “You could count them on one hand - not many” (Interviewee 9)
- “Between 11 and 18 per annum (Interviewee 10)

Based on responses from the interviewees, the volume of development applications referred to local police is quite modest. Nonetheless, it was this relationship between council and the police that was considered as central to attempts to identify crime risks in the development application process.

Consequently, a number of interview questions sought to explore this relationship and the associated processes.

Interviewees were asked to describe the processes involved in referring development applications to their respective LAC(s). The processes varied across the group of interviewees.

### *Triggers for Referrals*

It was suggested that particular development characteristics trigger when development applications get referred to police. These triggers generally relate to the size and nature of the developments in question.

“So in particular it’s things like transport facilities, new commercial and industrial developments, shopping centres and also things that are, I guess sensitive, so ATMs in particular. Pubs in particular they want to see and service stations. So part of the agreement is a set of prescribed development forms that are mandated to be sent over for their comment. And then on top of that, when we’re looking at an application, if there’s anything we think is sensitive, we liaise with [name of police Crime Prevention Officer] in particular and find out if they want to provide comment” (Interviewee 1).

“Particularly the commercial ones, like the retails and things like that, where they’re quite big developments. And they impact on that sort of interface between the commercial space and the public space” (Interviewee 2).

“For the large scales DAs we have a referral process to the NSW Police” (Interviewee 5)

“As the complexity of the application tends to go up, we refer it off to the local police, the local area command ... So that’s to do with things like brothel applications, 24-hour use applications and the like. And pubs and things like that” (Interviewee 6).

“... so a major development for us might be something like a new hotel, a new major shopping centre, those types of things ... we do have a Memorandum of Understanding with the local police. We refer DAs to them. So it might be one they've picked up out of the list, and more recently that has been the emergence of 24 hour gyms” (Interviewee 7).

General categories like large commercial, industrial, residential and retail developments were mentioned and specific premise types like brothels, licensed venues, tattoo parlours, service stations, backpacker hostels and ATMs were also mentioned by various interviewees.

### *Process of Review and Comment*

Interviewees were asked about the processes adopted when a development application is sent off to police for review. In general the processes adopted were broadly similar. In essence, police provide comments and raise any particular concerns about potential crime risks of proposed developments. Some interviewees highlighted the merits of this process and their satisfaction with the relationships and referral processes with police.

“So that system works well and we welcome comments from the police, especially with people that we don’t know about or developments that we’re not cognisant of issues. So they do have hands on experience in a specific area about the implications of a development which we welcome” (Interviewee 8).

“... it seems to work here with the way that we’ve arranged the referral process with the police” (Interviewee 10).

Interviewees recounted different methods that police use to furnish their comments. Some spoke of receiving comments via email, while others mentioned more formal reports. One issue that arose for more formal responses was compliance with timeframes. Consent authorities have come under increasing pressure in recent years to meet statutory timeframes (see NSW Department of Planning 2007 and Ruming 2011 for commentary about these pressures). The time taken by police to provide their comments was cited as a problem by three interviewees (two of which outlined below).

“It is a little bit tricky because there is only one person and with the yield of development applications we have, quite often we’re chasing the police to get the comment. Comments are great. Getting them out of the police is sometimes a little frustrating ... We’ve had a situation where we’ll be waiting four to maybe even five months to get a response because [name of officer] or the crime prevention officer will be on annual leave and there is no one that can do the job ” (Interviewee 1).

“Timeframe, we give them a 21-day period, because an external referral. Generally they don’t get back to us in that 21-day period” (Interviewee 6).

Not all respondents commented on the delays in police responding to referred development applications.

“It’s been working... the whole time I’ve been here I haven’t had any issues. They’ve been pretty good in getting back to us” (Interviewee 10).

Beyond the timeliness of responses, there was also some discussion of the usefulness of the responses provided by police. Some interviewees suggested that the comments provided by police were often too generic, with little information about the specific proposed development or the submitted architectural plans. Others highlighted that some comments coming from the police are outside of the council’s remit or planning guidelines.

“In terms of their usefulness, I suppose it’s a flaw of any specialised field, that they are very narrowly based on crime prevention principles and elevate that to the highest level in their minds for their referral, which is the same with every referral that we receive, but it means that their comments are taken with a grain of salt and when they’re competing with other interests they’re often of a lesser priority than others” (Interviewee 5).

“I think that some officers, on some occasions, have commented on things beyond the scope of their role if you like ... We can't actually take into account the criminal history of someone, the application, the people that are patrons there or anything. So I think that’s because the police are not town planners, they sometimes ask us to impose a condition, or

ask us to limit something that's actually beyond that scope if that makes sense" (Interviewee 7).

One interviewee suggested that some of these problems might be due to a lack of guidance.

"So I think that there's probably a lack of guidance about what they should be commenting on, so that probably doesn't help them in trying to come to grips with it" (Interviewee 7).

Other interviewees were more positive about the contribution of the police and the utility of the comments that they provide when assessing crime risks of proposed developments.

"... and I don't think that he's [Police Crime Prevention Officer] provided advice that hasn't been able to be taken on board or hasn't been placed into a condition of consent" (Interviewee 9).

"Yes and we have a Crime Prevention Officer – I don't know his exact title but we send things directly to him via email and he responds with either comments or conditions to this Council. If they're conditions and they're reasonably imposed we always do" (Interviewee 5).

Taken together the responses provided by the interviewees suggest that councils do involve police in reviewing generally small numbers of development applications that are considered to pose crime risks due to the nature or management of the proposed development (or redevelopment). The nature of the relationships and practices vary, with some interviewees providing glowing comments, while others expressed concerns about the timeliness and usefulness of the information provided by police. While these findings shed some light on police/council liaison, similar research would ideally be conducted with police Crime Prevention Officers to test the findings arising from interviews with council planning staff.

## **Council Staff and CPTED Training**

Interviewees were asked whether planning and associated staff had completed CPTED training. While responses suggested limits in the capacity of interviewees to comment on the training received by their colleagues, it generally emerged that little training had been undertaken in recent years. Those that were able to comment suggested that more planning staff completed the *Safer by Design* course soon after the Guidelines were introduced in 2001. It was also commonly suggested that new council planning assessment staff would have completed CPTED or related training in their undergraduate university degrees.

"... when the CPTED procedure first started, most of the Planners did the course here. Just before you came in, I just did a run around to see how many had done, and there's obviously been a turnover of staff, and I think very few of my staff have now done it ... Presumably they're ... and I don't know this actually, but through uni courses today it's covered a bit. And probably a lot of them have done ... well, they have done their training more recently" (Interviewee 3).

Some of those interviewees that had completed the training commented on its quality.

“... but the training was really informative and quite interesting to go to. And it’s not really something that I found in the planning principle when I was doing the degree” (Interviewee 2).

While only limited information was provided on the completion of CPTED training by council planning staff, it does appear that generally this training was more frequently completed closer to the commencement of the Guidelines in 2001 and that there is now increased faith placed in undergraduate planning degrees to cover CPTED principles and techniques. It is not known if this faith is misplaced, as there has been no analysis (to our knowledge) of whether undergraduate planning degrees in NSW or Australia cover these concepts.

### **Council Community Safety Officer and Assessment of Crime Risks**

Clancey et al (2012b) conducted research into the work experiences of local government Community Safety Officers (CSOs) in NSW. They found that local government CSOs reported involvement in assessing development applications. One focus group participant in that research stated that they comment “on DAs, particularly contentious DAs, so more the things like of community concern, like licensed premises, boarding houses, brothels, those sort of things ... I also have a role in managing the regulation of the sex service premises” (Clancey et al, 2012b: 246).

Interviewees were asked whether their council employed a CSO (or related title) and whether they participated in reviewing development application assessments. Most interviewees reported that their council did not employ a CSO. For two councils this was contrary to knowledge of the research team.

Three interviewees suggested that some form of internal liaison with a CSO or staff from a Community Services section of council were consulted during the development application process.

“In terms of other mechanisms to review, we have a community services section of council that in particular gets involved with applications for pubs and liquor licence proposals. So even though we are all under the one banner we operate quite independently. So things that get referred for the community service comments tends to be the pubs, the hotels, sometimes ATMs in high-risk areas. But usually our community services section will ask to wait for the police to do their review and then they’ll comment on that” (Interviewee 1).

“... in some cases if there’s like social impact assessments, then our Community Services Officer will have a look at it, specifically our Social Planner. But for the most part, it’s just the DA Officers” (Interviewee 6).

The general uncertainty if a CSO was employed and possible referral mechanisms to these staff where they are employed suggests limited engagement with these specialists. Given the education and experience of local government CSOs highlighted by Clancey et al (2012), there would appear to be benefit in engaging these staff more frequently and more clearly in the review of relevant development applications.

## Conclusion

CPTED has enjoyed growing traction in recent decades. Pioneering work and commentary by Jane Jacobs, Oscar Newman, C. Ray Jeffrey and others brought attention to the potential impact of criminogenic environments. The growing recognition of CPTED in policing, planning and design circles saw training courses, design guidelines and related practices spread in the latter part of the twentieth century.

The uptake of CPTED received additional impetus in NSW through initial work of the (then) NSW Police Service with local councils, the recommendations of the Industrial Relations Commission's Inquiry into the shooting death of a cash-in-transit security guard in 1995 and the use of CPTED principles in planning for the Sydney Olympic Games. These local events, and perhaps aided by the rising crime rates experienced in NSW in the late 1990s, helped galvanise support for CPTED, eventually resulting in the S79c Guidelines released in April 2001.

Since the release of these Guidelines there has been limited analysis and commentary about the impact or effectiveness of CPTED in NSW. To partially address this gap in knowledge we interviewed ten planners from a sample of councils in the Sydney Metropolitan Region. A stratified random sample of the 43 Sydney councils was used to ensure that at least four interviewees were from the 21 Sydney Inner councils, at least four interviewees were from the 17 Sydney Outer councils, and two interviewees were from the five Sydney Surrounds councils. Interviewees were randomly generated and only one (Inner Sydney) council declined the invitation to participate, resulting in the generation of a further council from this region. This small study augments earlier related work by Clancey et al (2011 and 2012a).

Emerging from the face-to-face semi structured interviews with these planning staff were a number of key findings. Perhaps the most obvious of these findings was the diversity of practices operating across the different local government areas in relation to how crime risks are considered. Some of these differences reflect differences in local planning procedures, policies and practices. Others reflect crime profiles (or perceived crime profiles) of the areas in question, cultural considerations relevant to the local population and political dimensions associated with the different arrangements for planning consent and the role of elected officials.

Despite these differences, there were also clear signs that some practices were common across the councils involved in this study. In particular, the engagement of the police in reviewing crime risks posed by development applications was common to all interviewees. While all interviewees reported that their local police participated in some fashion in reviewing development applications, the actual level of involvement appears to be quite modest (in the vicinity of a four to 18 referrals per annum). Irrespective of the level of referrals sent to police, the satisfaction with police involvement varied. There were numerous positive comments made regarding police involvement, while other interviewees highlighted some problems and limitations regarding police involvement in reviewing development applications. These concerns included the timeliness of responses, the inability of councils to action comments and recommendations made by police, and the turnover or leave entitlements of staff responsible for responding to council requests for police input. Such practical challenges raise questions about the implementation of the Guidelines and the need for continued monitoring of procedures to ensure that these relatively minor practical impediments are addressed.

A key feature of the introduction of the S79c Guidelines was the accompanying *Safer by Design* training provided by the NSW Police Force. While interviewees were reluctant to generally speak on behalf of their colleagues as to whether planning staff had completed the *Safer by Design* or some other CPTED training course, interviewees generally suggested that there had been a greater likelihood that planning staff would have received training close to when the Guidelines were introduced in 2001. It was also suggested that it was increasingly expected that newly appointed planning staff would have received training on CPTED in their undergraduate university courses. Whether this can be assumed requires further investigation.

Thus, it generally appears that progress was made when the Guidelines were introduced and the initial *Safer by Design* courses were delivered. While this activity seems to have declined somewhat in recent years, there was a general sense from the interviewees that there are now various mechanisms and procedures through which crime risks (especially associated with venues likely to pose the greatest crime risks) can be identified (and possibly mitigated). Against a backdrop of sustained significant declines in many offence categories in NSW in the last ten or so years (see Moffatt and Goh, 2013), it could be argued that the need to prioritise crime risks in the development application and planning system has diminished and that structures, while imperfect, are in place to capture crime risks posed by proposed developments.

It could equally be argued that there is considerable room for improving the way that CPTED is practiced in NSW, in particular through renewed efforts to provide CPTED training to council planning staff, improvements in guidance given to NSW Police Force Crime Prevention Officers in how they comment on and respond to development applications, and integration of CPTED in planning controls. Given the significant potential ongoing implications and consequences of poorly designed developments (Paulsen, 2013), there is merit in considering and minimising potential crime risks. Whether such action is taken will say much about the ongoing importance placed on CPTED in NSW and speak to the continuity (or otherwise) of the 'preventive turn' (Hughes, 2007).

Further research could seek to build on this study by gauging the views of police (especially the NSW Police Force Crime Prevention Officers) and built environment professionals (including architects, urban designers and planners). It would also be beneficial for research to monitor the impact of proposed planning reforms and a review of the CPTED content that is (or is not) included in relevant tertiary undergraduate and postgraduate courses to be undertaken. A fuller picture of how CPTED operates in NSW would emerge from research of this nature and help guide future policy development in this area.

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