

Background paper: Residential break and enter

August 2011



Table of contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	4
Membership of the Working Group.....	4
Understanding residential break and enter.....	4
Break and enter in Australia.....	5
Break and enter in NSW.....	5
Characteristics of residential break and enter	6
Counting the costs.....	10
Literature	11
Target locations.....	11
Prevention: interventions that work.....	12
The way forward	14
Suggested best practice	14
Current CPP projects (residential break and enter).....	15
Future directions	16
References	17

Executive summary

The NSW Department of Justice (DJ) has created a Residential Break and Enter Working Group, made up of stakeholders from across the Government and relevant industries. The objective of this Working Group is to find ways to support current crime prevention strategies, and to recommend new ways of minimising the harm of break and enter. This report was prepared on behalf of the Working Group, and aims to give a background of the crime of residential break and enter, to serve as a basis for Working Group discussions.

Australia has the second highest rate of residential break and enter in the world. Although the number of incidents has dropped by approximately half since 2000, residential break and enter is still the most common serious crime reported in New South Wales, with over 40,000 incidents reported annually. This costs the state at least \$144 million every year, with at least \$41 million being borne by the NSW Government.

One defining characteristic of residential break and enter is that it is a difficult crime to prosecute. Only about 15 per cent of the total reported incidents eventually make it to court, and of the people charged, only 57 per cent are found guilty. This means that it is difficult to get a picture of offenders. However, of offenders that are known, half are between 10 and 19 years old, and almost all are male.

By far the most common time for residential break and enters to occur is on weekday mornings, as this corresponds with occupants not being at home. Offenders tend to spend very little time inside the house, looking for goods with high resale value and ability to be carried easily, such as cash, jewellery, and small electronics like laptops and cameras.

When selecting targets, offenders tend to favour ease of access and getaway, as well as signs of high value goods. For this reason, one of the most effective ways to prevent break and enter is through strengthening access control via the installation of gates, fences, window or door locks, security screens, and alarms. Other effective prevention strategies use the involvement of neighbours as natural surveillance.

Local Government Areas (LGAs) with the highest number of residential break and enters are all metro locations, with most being in the Sydney area, such as Blacktown, Sydney, Parramatta, Campbelltown, and Liverpool. Residents of public housing estates are also disproportionate victims of break and enter, facing more than twice the risk of residents of private dwellings. Concentrating on these areas when implementing strategies is therefore most likely to be successful.

NSW Crime Prevention Programs (CPP) is experimenting with a range of initiatives aimed at preventing residential break and enter. These include assessment of the properties of victims and subsidising security improvements, educating residents on what measures are most effective, reducing the ability of offenders to sell stolen goods, and exploring design issues with the Designing Out Crime Research Centre.

Introduction

Residential break and enter is one of the most common crimes experienced in NSW, with over 40,000 reports made to NSW Police each year. Break and enter is an offence that is a significant problem for households and results in substantial costs to both the community and the NSW Government. Unlike many offences, break and enter has a high reporting rate, with three in four victims reporting the incident to the police.¹

From a government perspective, little is known about what industry-led crime prevention initiatives are in place to address residential break and enter. Therefore, a Working Group for residential break and enter has been convened to inform the development of a NSW Government coordinated approach to break and enter that incorporates law enforcement, building and environmental design, communication and security. It has four main roles:

- explore opportunities to implement strategies to support and encourage law enforcement
- facilitate discussion on the issue of residential break and enter and how different organisations can play a role in reducing this crime
- identify gaps in existing approaches to tackle residential break and enter offences
- provide advice and strategies to better implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

It is anticipated that the Working Group will maximise the level of expertise involved in the development and implementation of NSW break and enter strategies.

This report aims to provide an initial overview of recorded levels of residential break and enter and its costs to households and other sectors. Strategies that have been implemented successfully to reduce the level of residential break and enter in specific locations are also discussed.

Membership of the Working Group

Organisations invited to the Working Group include NSW Police Force; NSW Department of Planning; Local Government and Shires Association; Designing Out Crime Research Centre; Australian Security Industry Association Ltd; Insurance Council of Australia; Hardware Association of NSW; Australian Retailers Association; Urban Development Institute of Australia; Housing Industry Association; Australian Institute of Architects; Planning Institute of Australia; and the Master Locksmiths Association.

Understanding residential break and enter

Residential break and enter (also known as burglary) is defined as ‘the unlawful entry of a structure with the intent to commit an offence, where the entry is either forced or unforced’.² Typically, the level of residential break and enter in Australia is measured by:

- Crime and court statistics – recorded crime statistics relate only to those offences that are reported to the Police as well as the number of offenders apprehended and processed through the criminal justice system.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011, *Crime Victimisation, Australia, 2009–10* (cat 4530.0). Melbourne: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), *Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification* (cat. 1234.0), Melbourne: Australian Bureau of Statistics, p. 48.

- Crime victimisation surveys – the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducts a survey of crime victimisation. It is an annual survey capturing the extent of victimization, whether victims reported these incidents to police, characteristics of victims and characteristics of their most recent incident, and people’s perceptions on social disorder in their local area.

Break and enter in Australia

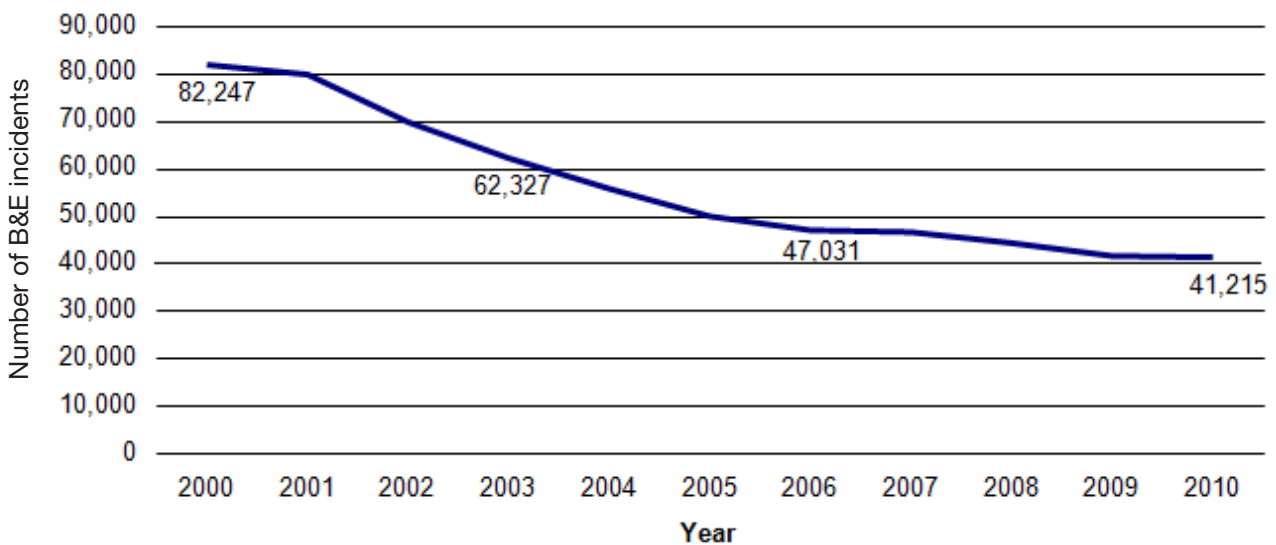
According to the United Nations, Australia has one of the highest global rates of residential break and enter at 763.9 per 100,000 population.³ Australia is second only to New Zealand (965.7 per 100,000), with Belgium, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (rate 501.5 per 100,000) making up the rest of the top five.⁴

In 2009–10, it was estimated that 254,500 (three per cent) Australian households were victims of at least one break-in to their home, garage or shed, with 76 per cent of these incidents being reported to the police.⁵

Break and enter in NSW

NSW has a relatively high rate of break and enter, despite property crime offences (with the exception of steal from retail) over the past two years either falling significantly or remaining stable. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) data show that residential break and enter offences in NSW have fallen by almost 50 per cent over the decade between 2001 and 2010. Despite this, the high volume of offences committed ensures that the crime remains a significant issue for NSW (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Reported incidents for residential break and enter in NSW



Source: Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

In the 12 months to March 2011, NSW recorded 40,832 residential break and enter offences. In the previous year (the 12 months to March 2010), 41,400 residential break and enter offences were recorded across NSW. Overall, while the numbers are slightly decreasing each year, the two-year trend remains stable.

³ United Nations (2010).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), Recorded Crime – Victims, Canberra.

The 10-year drop in residential break and enter is in line with other property offences, which are all currently at record low levels. It is difficult to attribute a decline in break and enter to one specific intervention, however some possible explanations are offered. Heroin consumption is linked to property crime (users often resort to property crime to fund heroin purchases⁶) and in 2001 there was a major reduction in the availability of heroin in NSW (with corresponding increases in its price and reductions in its purity).

The NSW Government also held the NSW Drug Summit in 1999, which resulted in significant funding boosts for drug (specifically heroin) treatment programs, and NSW Attorney General initiatives including the Drug Court and MERIT (Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment⁷) arose out of that funding, leading to more heroin users undergoing treatment after 2001. At a local level, there also may have been an increase in household reporting or police practices may have changed over the past few years resulting in a higher percentage of offenders being apprehended (despite lower rates of offending⁸). The combination of these factors has led to the significant decrease in break and enter incidents, although the volume of offences is still relatively high.

Characteristics of residential break and enter

Points of entry

The most common points of entry are ground floor front and back doors, and windows. Offenders will use any opportunity to gain access to potential targets (including climbing on the roof/through a garage window), but prefer the ground floor windows and doors for their ease of accessibility.

Offender profile

Only a very small number of break and enter offenders are caught and proceeded against in NSW. In 2010, 2,848 charges were brought before NSW Local Courts for these offences, 970 before NSW higher courts and 2,388 before the Children's Court, for a total of 6,206 charges across NSW.⁹ Just over half of those accused in the Local Courts were found guilty of the offence (1,339) with imprisonment the main form of punishment (626 offenders, with an average sentence of 8.9 months¹⁰), followed by bond without supervision (164) and community service orders (137).¹¹ The 961 offenders before the Children's Court who were found guilty were generally sentenced to one of following: bonds (355 offenders), probation orders (258 offenders) or control orders (191 offenders).¹²

⁶ Moffatt, S., Weatherburn, D. & Donnelly, N. (2005). *What Caused the Recent Drop in Property Crime?* NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

⁷ MERIT is a special program based in Local Courts that provides the opportunity for adult defendants with substance abuse problems to work, on a voluntary basis, towards rehabilitation as part of the bail process.

⁸ NSW has seen a drop in offender rates from 49.4 per 100,000 population in 2008-09 to 47.8 per 100,000 population in 2009-10. See Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), *Recorded Crime – Offenders 2009-10*; Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

⁹ BOCSAR (2011), *Latest Criminal Court Report*. Note that the quoted figures include non-residential break and enter (for example, breaking into retail stores or other places of business).

¹⁰ BOCSAR (2011), *Criminal Court Information: Average Length of Imprisonment*.

¹¹ BOCSAR (2011), *Criminal Court Information: Penalties by Offence*.

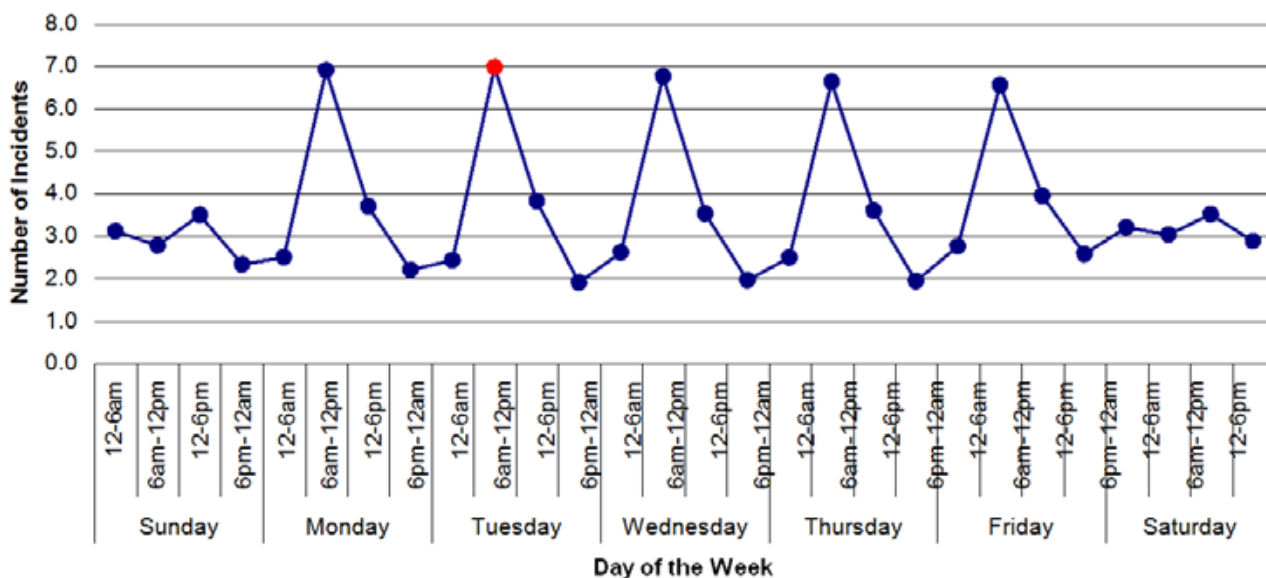
¹² BOCSAR, 2011, *Latest Criminal Court Report*.

BOCSAR data for 2010 shows that 88 per cent of residential break and enter offenders were male.¹³ Forty-one per cent of offenders were aged under 18 years, with 51 per cent of offenders aged between 10 and 19 years.¹⁴

Offence times

The morning hours of a weekday are a common time for dwellings to be left empty as the occupants are generally not at home. In 2010, the hours of 6am to 12pm on a Tuesday morning were most common for NSW break and enter offences, closely followed by 6am–12pm on Monday and Wednesday mornings.¹⁵

Figure 2 NSW residential break and enter incidents 2010 by time and day



Source: Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

Stolen items

Cash remains the most commonly stolen item, being stolen in 22.6 per cent of incidents in 2001 and 31.4 per cent in 2010. It is the only item that retains 100 per cent of its value and does not require on selling. Laptops are the second most commonly stolen item and have experienced a large increase over the past 10 years (in 2010, 26.0 per cent of break and enter incidents involve laptops, as opposed to five per cent in 2001). Jewellery is next at 22.6 per cent, followed by cameras (15.3 per cent) and mobile phones at 14.6 per cent (see Figure 3 for further items).¹⁶

BOCSAR suggests that the reason for the rise in laptop thefts is twofold: there are simply more available to steal (the Federal Governments Digital Education Revolution Program alone has added an additional 130,000 laptops to NSW), and the retail price of laptops has not dropped as dramatically as some other electrical equipment (e.g. DVD players), so they remain very attractive to offenders.¹⁷

¹³ Goh, D. & Moffatt, S. (2011). *NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 2010*. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

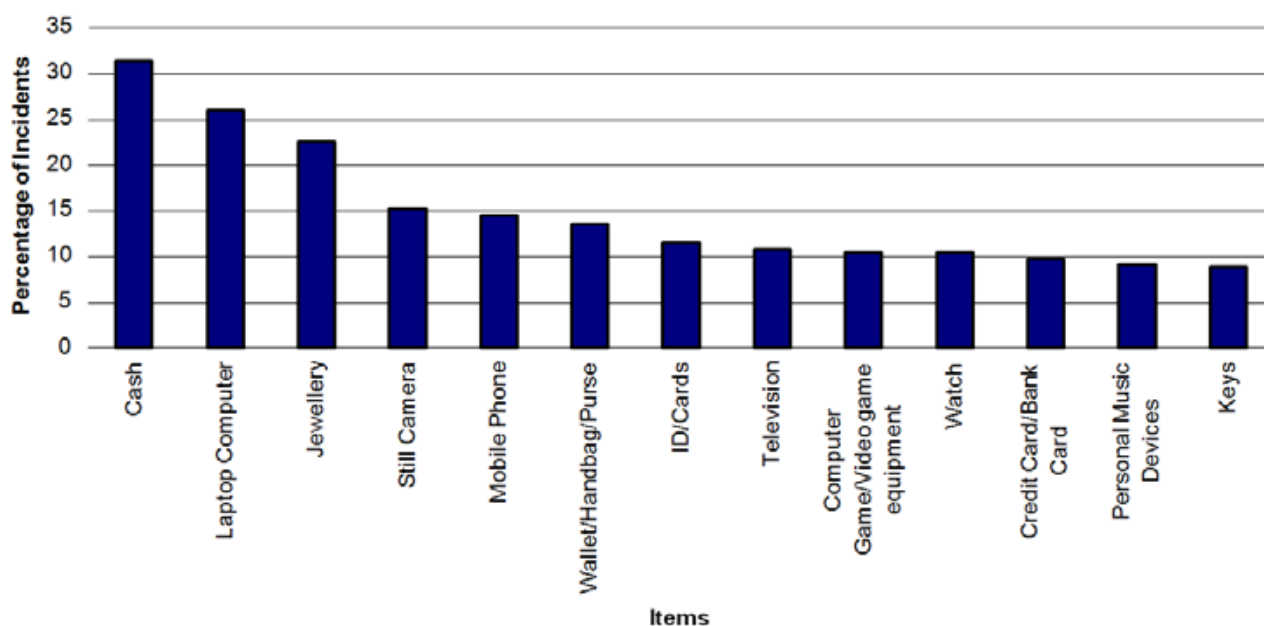
¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Fitzgerald, J. & Poynton, S. (2001) *The Changing Nature of objects stolen in household burglaries*. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Figure 3 NSW break and enter incidents where the named item was recorded as stolen, 2010



Source: Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

Interestingly, the recorded theft rate of jewellery in break and enter incidents has remained relatively stable (up from 21.5 per cent in 2001 to 22.6 per cent in 2010) despite a rapid rise in the price of gold in recent years. As at November 2010, the price of the precious metal hit a record high that made selling jewellery more appealing, and buying it more lucrative. Coinciding with this, in recent years there has been a large increase in outlets offering ‘cash for gold’ at shopping centres and on television. Police have shared anecdotal evidence that there appears to be a rise in the number of theft offences in areas where ‘Gold Kiosks’ are located.

CPP is currently working on a project examining the stolen goods market to identify and develop strategies to reduce the incidence of suspicious metal transactions. The scope of the project includes a consideration of whether there is a relationship between theft of jewellery and the gold market. This is further discussed in later in this report.

Disposal methods

Offenders employ a variety of measures to dispose of stolen goods, including keeping them for personal use, selling/exchanging online, selling to businesses (generally secondhand shops and pawnbrokers) and exchanging goods for illicit drugs.¹⁸

The time taken to dispose of the goods varies according to the type of disposal method used. In Western Australia, trading goods with drug dealers was both the most common and fastest transaction, occurring 5.5 hours after the goods were stolen.¹⁹ Transactions with legitimate businesses (including pawnshops) took the longest at an average of 35.5 hours after the break and enter. NSW research has found that 36 per cent of offenders disposed of the stolen goods within one hour of the break and enter, and 82 per cent disposed of the stolen goods within 24 hours of the break and enter.²⁰

¹⁸ Nelson, D., Collins, L. & Gant, F. (2002) *The Stolen Property Market in the Australian Capital Territory*, Canberra.

¹⁹ Ferrante, A. & Clare, J (2006). *Known Offenders and the Stolen Goods Market in Western Australia: Research Report*, Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia.

²⁰ Stevenson, R., Forsythe, L. and Weatherburn, D. (2001). *The Stolen Goods Market in New South Wales, Australia. An analysis of disposal avenues and tactics*, *British Journal of Criminology*, 41.

Over the past decade, online sellers and auction sites have become popular disposal methods for stolen goods as second-hand shops have had their regulations and bookkeeping practices tightened. Law enforcement acknowledges that these sites are an increasing issue despite larger sites such as eBay having strict no stolen goods policies.²¹ While several offenders have been charged for using online selling sites to dispose of stolen goods,²² the offenders who use these sites are believed to be professional and are therefore more difficult to investigate and apprehend²³ than the offenders of the past who were generally out to trade stolen goods for drugs. No data is available on the time taken to dispose of stolen goods online.

Locations most frequently targeted

Despite a stable 24-month trend in total number of offences across the state, particular LGAs) have experienced marked increases in the number of residential break and enter incidents over the past 24 months. Of note are the percentage increases in Lachlan (78.6 per cent); Kiama (59.4 per cent); Coonamble (44.6 per cent) and Port Macquarie-Hastings (42.1 per cent).

LGAs with a high frequency of incidents include Blacktown, Newcastle, Sydney, Parramatta and Campbelltown. These five LGAs account for 18 per cent of all residential break and enter offences in NSW. The top 10 LGAs (see Table 1 below) account for 31 per cent of all NSW incidents. Attention is not only warranted in those LGAs with a high rate of offending, but also those with a particularly high frequency of offending.

Table 1 NSW LGAs with the 10 highest incidence of residential break and enter April 2010–March 2011

LGA	No. of incidents
Blacktown	2,149
Newcastle	1,362
Sydney	1,318
Parramatta	1,304
Campbelltown	1,274
Liverpool	1,131
Wollongong	1,036
Penrith	1,033
Bankstown	966
Holroyd	833

Given that these 10 locations (out of 143 LGAs) account for over 30 per cent of all residential break and enter offences in NSW it suggests that this crime is concentrated in certain areas and prevention efforts would be best-placed targeting these locations. With the exception of Bankstown and Wollongong, which are slightly below parity, the rate of incidents of break and enter in the above locations are higher than the overall rate for NSW.²⁴

Public housing

²¹ ZDNet Australia (2011), 'Boom in stolen goods online' at <http://m.zdnet.com.au/ebay-seller-charged-over-stolen-goods-139179559.htm>

²² See, for example, News.com.au (2009), 'Ebay Scammers Arrest' at <http://video.news.com.au/1057693050/Ebay-scammers-arrest>

²³ ZDNet Australia, 2011, 'Boom in stolen goods online' at <http://m.zdnet.com.au/ebay-seller-charged-over-stolen-goods-139179559.htm>

²⁴ Goh, D. & Moffatt, S. (2011). *NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 2010*. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

There tend to be higher break and enter rates in areas with high levels of public housing. Unpublished BOCSAR data show that in 2009, the proportion of residential break and enter incidents occurring in housing estates was 11 per cent, despite only 5 per cent of NSW households living in Housing NSW properties.²⁵ In specific sites such as Wagga Wagga, this situation is even more pronounced: in 2010, 29 per cent of break and enter dwelling incidents in the Wagga Wagga local government area occurred in one of the four main public housing estates, while houses in these estates made up approximately five per cent of all households in Wagga Wagga.²⁶

A BOCSAR study in 1997 found that the best explanation for higher rates of crime in public housing estates is that public housing tenants are more at risk of becoming both crime victims and offenders, due to their social and economic disadvantage.²⁷ Housing NSW are addressing this by revitalising communities: public housing areas are being developed as socially mixed income areas and the public housing stock is designed to blend in with surrounding privately-owned housing. One example of this is the Airds-Bradbury development in Sydney, which will house 1,633 private homes, and 699 social housing homes, representing a 70:30 mix of private and social housing.²⁸ Housing NSW has also introduced some of the state's leading architects and building firms into its social housing program to deliver 'modern, innovative and sustainable housing'.²⁹

Limited evaluation research has been conducted on the effects of these design practices and policies on residential break and enter rates. Research conducted by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute on crime in nine public housing estates in 2004 did not find that increasing the tenure mix was associated with a reduction in crime – although the authors concede that the benefit of the interventions may not have been apparent in the narrow timescale of the research.³⁰ DJ anticipates that recent Housing NSW policies may have a positive effect on crime rates, and we look forward to discussing these further with Housing NSW and other interested Working Group members.

Counting the costs

The cost of residential break and enter has been costed at \$2,500 to victims³¹ and at least \$1,000 to the NSW Government. Based on the number of offences that occurred in NSW in 2010, it can be estimated that the cost of this offence exceeded \$144 million, with approximately \$41 million of that being borne by the NSW Government.

²⁵ Unpublished BOCSAR data (2011).

²⁶ Unpublished BOCSAR data (2011).

²⁷ Matka, E. (1997), *Public Housing and Crime in Sydney*. General Report Series, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.

²⁸ NSW Housing (2011), Airds-Bradbury Renewal Project, at <http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Changes+to+Social+Housing/Redevelopment/Airds+Bradbury+Renewal+Project.htm>

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Samuels, R., Judd, B., O'Brien, B & Barton, J. (2004) Linkages Between Housing, Policing and Other Interventions for Crime and Harassment Reduction in Areas with Public Concentrations, AHURI Final Report, No. 73.

³¹ Mayhew, P (2003). 'Counting the Costs of Crime in Australia', *Trends and Issues Paper*, No. 247, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

Literature

Target locations

Interviews with convicted offenders reveal clear targeting preferences. Offenders consider likely occupancy, accessibility and neighbourhood type.³² Brown and Altman suggest that offenders prefer neighbourhoods characterized by unstable and non-cohesive social structures because the anonymity amongst residents implies a lower level of territoriality as residents will be less likely to identify or be suspicious of strangers, and intervene if concerned.³³ Offenders also perceive limited risk of surveillance and apprehension in areas such as these.

Further research revealed that most offenders targeted properties close to home based on issues associated with walking long distances with heavy objects and the advantage of knowing the area in detail.³⁴ This is supported by Wiles and Costello's finding that offenders travel limited distances to commit offences.³⁵

Nee and Meenaghan found that offenders did several checks before selecting a target, based on general upkeep and décor, visible expensive items and type of car.³⁶ Similarly, Hearndon and Magill identified that the single most attractive feature of a potential target was the perceived likelihood of finding high value goods – expensive looking dwellings and cars were positive indicators for offenders that there may be valuable items inside the premises.³⁷ Layout cues are also important; offenders consider the degree of cover, access and getaway routes. Additionally, dwellings that look harder to gain entry to are passed over in favour of 'easier pickings' – homes without security grills, locks and other security mechanisms.

Inside the home, the vast majority (93 per cent) of offenders begin with the master bedroom to locate cash, jewellery and other small valuables by looking inside dressers, bedside tables, under the bed and wardrobes, superficial searches of other rooms and then leaving within minutes.³⁸ These findings are supported by Nee and Meenaghan's research.

³² Johnson, S., Summers, L. & Pease, K. (2009). Offender as forager? A direct test of the boost account of victimization. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 25:181-200.

³³ Brown, B. & Altman, I. (1981). Territoriality and residential crime: a conceptual framework. *Environmental Criminology*, 55-76. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

³⁴ Hearndon, I. and Magill, C. (2004). 'Decision making by dwelling offenders: offenders' perspectives'. Home Office Findings 249, London, Home Office.

³⁵ Wiles, P. & Costello, A. (2000). The road to nowhere: evidence for travelling criminals. *Home Office Research Study No. 207*, London, Home Office.

³⁶ Nee, C. & Meenaghan, A. (2006). Expert decision making in Offenders, *British Journal of Criminology*, 46: 935-949.

³⁷ Hearndon, I. and Magill, C. (2004). 'Decision making by dwelling offenders: offenders' perspectives'. Home Office Findings 249, London, Home Office.

³⁸ Wright, T. & Decker, S. (1994). *Offenders on the job: Streetlife and residential break-in*, Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Revictimisation

Ten to 20 per cent of residential break and enter victims have been previously been victims of break and enter. Households victimised once by a break and enter have been found to be four times as likely to suffer repeat victimisations as those that had not been victimised.³⁹ Repeat victimisation is most likely to occur one to four weeks after the initial break and enter incident.⁴⁰

Prevention: interventions that work

There are a number of interventions that lead to a reduction in residential break and enter when implemented correctly.

Access control

The most successful intervention for residential break and enter is access control. Access control measures attempt to make target enclosures (boundaries, fences, gates, doors and windows) harder to penetrate and discourage potential offenders by increasing the effort associated with committing a break and enter offence. Interventions include the installation of gates, fences, window locks, door locks, security screens, and alarms for residents' homes. Entire blocks can also restrict access by installing interventions such as alley gates.

Access control works best in residential areas where there is an identified lack of security at access points, a high level of concern about break and enter and strong support for preventative measures.

Past studies have seen access control interventions installed in individual homes to prevent and/or reduce residential break and enter. Many projects have seen local authorities upgrade security (including window and door locks) on behalf of residents or provide them with financial assistance to do so themselves.⁴¹ Interventions are more effective when residents are provided with financial assistance to install security devices, or where security devices are installed on their behalf.

Cutting off access to entire neighbourhoods has also been used to reduce rates of break and enter in specific locations. In Bowers, Johnson and Hirschfield's study, break and enter offenders in Liverpool were accessing terraced properties through back alleyways. To address this problem, hardwearing lockable gates were installed to restrict access to local residents and reduce opportunities for offenders to gain access to properties. The result was a 37 per cent reduction in break and enter relative to the comparison area. This method and its desirable findings have been replicated in numerous other studies.⁴²

³⁹ Forrester D et al (1988). The Kirkholt Break and enter Prevention Project, Rochdale, Home Office Crime Prevention Unit Series No.13, HMSO.

⁴⁰ Morgan, F (2003). Paper presented at the Evaluation in Crime and Justice: Trends and Methods Conference convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology in conjunction with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and held in Canberra, 24–25 March 2003.

⁴¹ See Ekblom et al, 1996; Matthews and Trickey, 1994; Forrester et al, 1990; Allatt, 1984; Beedle and Stangier, 1980. DJ is currently conducting a demonstration project in Clarence Valley, NSW in which victims of break and enter are provided with a voucher to purchase security items such as window and door locks.

⁴² See Sturgeon-Adams et al, 2005; Kendrink, 1994.

Access control measures are often supported by other interventions, such as awareness campaigns and natural surveillance. Awareness campaigns are designed to improve awareness of the risk of residential break and enter and prevention measures. Operation Break and enter Countdown which ran in Western Australia in 2005 used a number of interventions including access control and awareness campaigns to achieve a 45 per cent reduction in break and enter in the target area. Benefits were diffused to surrounding areas leading to a 24 per cent reduction in break and enter rates across the Perth Metropolitan area. Awareness campaigns are generally used in conjunction with other interventions; they are not considered effective when used as a sole intervention.

Natural surveillance encourages people who use the area to monitor activity as part of their daily life. It works best in areas where there is a motivated group of residents prepared to monitor their local area. The well-known Kirkholt Break and Enter Prevention Project in 1990 used a combination of access control (residents were offered low cost loans to upgrade security), natural surveillance and diversionary activities for local youth to achieve a 75 per cent reduction in break and enter over three years.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

CPTED falls under a category of crime prevention practice referred to as 'situational crime prevention' which alters the environment to make criminal acts more difficult to execute and less rewarding. The idea behind it is that appropriately designed and managed places attract legitimate users, provide natural surveillance and thereby increase the risk of offenders being challenged or caught.

Samuels determined that design alone cannot prevent or cause crime but it can enhance or diminish opportunity for crime to occur.⁴³ Part of the CPTED approach involves thinking like a criminal when designing out crime in public space (parks, streets, lanes etc) and private space (dwellings). If the risk of an offender being seen, challenged and apprehended is considered and addressed during the planning stage, opportunistic crime in the area can be lessened. NSW Police support the use of CPTED, conducting 'Safer by Design' courses which promote its use to planners, designers, crime prevention officers and other government agencies.

Cocooning

This refers to the practice whereby the neighbours of recent break and enter victims are approached by police and educated on ways to prevent break and enter occurring to both their dwelling and their community. Several studies have demonstrated success: in Rockingham (Western Australia) burglary prevention information was distributed to residents living in areas where break and enter occurred. The aim of the Burglary Prevention Cocooning Project was to encourage residents to be vigilant about their security, to report incidents to the Police, and to actively participate in crime prevention programs such as Neighbourhood Watch. Residents received a letter from the local Police, home security tips checklist and a Neighbourhood Watch newsletter. Since the commencement of the project, there was a significant reduction in residential burglaries from 140 in July 2008 to 53 in July 2009.⁴⁴

⁴³ Samuels, R. (2005). Afterdark Design, Night Animation and Interpersonal Interaction: Towards a Community-Security Paradigm, *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, Special CPTED Issue, Winter Edition.

⁴⁴ City of Rockingham (2011) at <http://www.rockingham.wa.gov.au/City-and-community/Safety-and-security/Neighbourhood-Watch.aspx#BPCP>

The effectiveness of residents restoring informal control through surveillance is also discussed in Downes and Rock (2007), with others concluding that ‘Cocoon watches’ enjoy higher rates of resident participation than Neighbourhood Watch programs, because they are organized after a specific break and enter incident at a nearby resident’s dwelling.⁴⁵

Natural surveillance

Natural surveillance has also been used effectively as a sole intervention to reduce residential break and enter offences. While generally implemented as part of a suite of interventions to reduce break and enter, as in Tilley and Webb’s 1994 study, which used a combination of natural surveillance, access control and awareness campaigns to reduce break and enter by 65 per cent (see also Lindsay and McGillis, 1986). It has also been used successfully by itself (albeit in an older study); Hulin’s (1979) study introduced Neighbourhood Watch in a semi-rural area to achieve a 26 per cent reduction in break and enter (while control cities showed increases of between 10 and 25 per cent).

Property marking

Property marking involves residents recording identifying information on valuable personal belongings, through engraving, dot marking, or some other means. Property marking reduces the perceived rewards associated with a crime by making targets harder to sell, deterring offenders from targeting marked property.

It is generally implemented as part of a suite of interventions. Budz et al’s Lighting Strikes Twice project in Beenleigh, QLD (2001) targeted break and enter victims and used an awareness campaign and property marking to reduce the rate of repeat break and enter victimizations by 16 per cent in the target area.⁴⁶ Property marking has been effective in reducing residential break and enter in several different countries; Australia (Cummings, 2005), the United Kingdom (Forrester et al, 1990) and the United States (Lindsay and McGillis, 1986).

The way forward

Suggested best practice

Break and enter offenders consider their targets in a very rational way, looking at general upkeep of a property, occupancy and accessibility before selecting a target. Any effective strategy will therefore need to address risk factors relating to the target, location and offender (Grabosky 1995). As such, a combination of situational (access control/natural surveillance/CPTED) and social strategies (awareness/education campaigns) is considered the most promising in reducing residential break and enters.

DJ anticipates that a number of Working Group members will enhance discussion on best practice for preventing residential break and enter. In particular, we expect that those members from the policing, housing, planning, architecture, development, insurance and local government sectors will have practical experience in the application of CPTED, access control and awareness campaigns to reduce crime. We encourage all Working Group members to consider any gaps in these approaches and to provide advice based on experience/industry practice in terms of appropriate ways to prevent break and enter.

⁴⁵ Sorensen (2007).

⁴⁶ The project also established that police have a vital role to play in shaping a victim’s decision to improve home security and that this can reduce the risk and incidence of repeat victimisation).

The following section details current Crime Prevention Programs projects that are related to residential break and enter.

Current CPP projects (residential break and enter)

In response to the level of residential break and enter in NSW, Crime Prevention Programs is currently implementing a number of strategies that aim to reduce the incidence of break and enter across NSW. These are detailed further below.

Victims of break and enter: demonstration project

Crime Prevention Programs, in partnership with NSW Police and Clarence Valley and Holroyd Councils, has developed a project to test the effectiveness of two methods of assisting break and enter victims to 'target harden' their homes.

- **Clarence Valley:** in Clarence Valley, break and enter victims will be provided with a range of education materials, including a checklist to assist in identifying potential vulnerabilities in their property. They will also be given a voucher to use towards purchase of security upgrades (including locks and security screens). Council will follow up those residents given vouchers to ascertain if they used the voucher, what items they purchased, and if the items were installed. Clarence Valley has been funded \$50,000 for this project, which commenced 12 April 2011.
- **Holroyd:** in Holroyd, break and enter victims will be provided with a range of education materials and offered an informal assessment of their property. This will be undertaken by attending Police and aims to identify vulnerabilities in the resident's property. Council will examine the audit results and purchase and arrange installation of necessary security upgrades using DJ funding.

Reducing crime in public housing

The Designing Out Crime Research Centre (DOCRC) is an initiative of the Department that conducts research on design to reduce opportunistic crime. Housing NSW has provided the DOCRC with \$100,000 over the next three years to develop solutions to crime problems and increase legitimate use of space on NSW Housing property and surrounds in the Mount Druitt area. This includes strategies to reduce residential break and enter. This project is currently in the developmental stage.

NSW Preventing Crime website

Crime Prevention Programs is currently re-developing the NSW Government Preventing Crime website.⁴⁷ The Home Security section will be updated to dwelling a number of fact sheets and checklists advising people how to best protect their property.

The website will also feature a virtual dwelling which will provide home security advice to those accessing the website. As a client rolls the mouse over certain parts of the dwelling, an information box will appear with security considerations and tips for that particular area. A virtual apartment will be added to the website at a future date.

⁴⁷ Located at <http://crimeprevention.nsw.gov.au>

CPP is currently managing a number of other projects that have a degree of overlap with this topic.

- **Stolen Goods Market:** this project is looking at ways to reduce metal theft (including gold) via legislative changes, regulation of online trade in gold and jewellery, and monitoring of record keeping at Cash For Gold kiosks that are popping up in local shopping centres across NSW.
- **Wagga Wagga:** this project focuses on crime in public housing estates, using CPTED principles to examine how design of public and private space (including parks, lanes and public housing stock) contributes to crime in the area. In particular, CPTED audits of residential property will be conducted by the Department's CPTED unit where the household is a recent victim of break and enter. An awareness campaign will be run in the location and a survey designed to measure residents' fear of crime pre- and post-interventions will be conducted, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the project.
- **Steal from motor vehicle:** a state-wide project to reduce steal from motor vehicle is in development. One of the proposed strategies to reduce the reward of steal from motor vehicle is to establish an online register for GPS and other mobile devices. This would make it more difficult for offenders to on sell stolen goods. There are obvious connections to residential break and enter and the selling of stolen items.
- **Mobile phone theft:** with the introduction of mobile phones with capabilities similar to computers, issues of crime and mobile phones involving both theft of the handset and more recently, 'hacking' into the device while the phone is still in the owner's possession have emerged. The online register discussed above is linked to this project.

Future directions

CPP has a well defined role in terms of coordinating a state government response to residential break and enter. CPP provides and distributes grant funding to local councils for prevention activities and runs demonstration projects across NSW. However, the Department acknowledges the need to work in partnership with industry to maximise expertise in the NSW response to residential break and enter.

A key aim of the Department of Justice in convening the NSW Residential Break and Enter Working Group is to establish an ongoing mechanism for communication with various stakeholders regarding the nature, cost and impact of residential break and enter. The Department has also envisaged that given the diversity of involved organisations (subject to consensus from the Working Group), smaller task-specific working groups would be convened to respond to specific break and enter issues.

References

- Allatt, P. (1984). Residential security: Containment and displacement of break and enter. *The Howard Journal*, 23(2).
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2011). *Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification* (cat. 1234.0), Melbourne: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2011). *Crime Victimization, Australia, 2009-10* (cat 4530.0). Melbourne: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2011). *Recorded Crime-Victims* (cat 4510.0), Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Beedle, S. & Stangier, J. (1980). Evaluation of the home security program. Portland, Ore.: Portland Police Bureau.
- Bennett, T. & Durie, L. (1999). Preventing residential break and enter in Cambridge: From crime audits to targeted strategies. *Police Research Series*, Paper 108. London: Home Office, Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.
- Bowers, K.J., Johnson, S.D. & Hirschfield, A.F.G. (2004). Closing off opportunities for crime: An evaluation of alley-gating. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 10: 285–308
- Brown, B. & Altman, I. (1981). Territoriality and residential crime: a conceptual framework. *Environmental Criminology*, 55-76. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Ekblom P, Law H & Sutton M (1996). *Safer cities and domestic break and enter*. London: Home Office.
- Goh, D. & Moffatt, S. (2011). *NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 2010*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.
- Ferrante, A. & Clare, J (2006). *Known Offenders and the Stolen Goods Market in Western Australia: Research Report*, Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia.
- Fitzgerald, J. & Poynton, S. (2001) *The Changing Nature of objects stolen in dwellinghold offenderies*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.
- Forrester, D., Frenz, S., O'Connell, M. & Pease, K. (1990). *The Kirkholt break and enter prevention project: Phase II*. London: Home Office.
- Hearndon, I. and Magill, C. (2004). 'Decision making by dwelling offenders: offenders' perspectives'. *Home Office Findings 249*, London, Home Office.
- Henderson, M. (2002). *Preventing repeat residential break and enter: A meta-evaluation of two Australian demonstration projects*. Barton, Australia: Commonwealth Attorney-General's Office.
- Hulin, J.O. (1979). 'Community-based Crime Prevention Project', *Crime Prevention Review* 6(3):26-34.
- Johnson, S., Summers, L. & Pease, K. (2009). Offender as forager? A direct test of the boost account of victimization. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 25:181-200.

- Lindsay B & McGillis D 1986. Citywide community crime prevention: An assessment of the Seattle Program. In D. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Community Crime Prevention: Does it work?* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
- Madensen, T. & Skubak, M. (2005). *University Student Crime Prevention Awareness Project Evaluation*. Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, Division of Criminal Justice.
- Matthews, R. & Trickey, J. (1994). *The New Parks Crime Reduction Project*. Leicester, U.K.: Centre for the Study of Public Order, University of Leicester.
- Mayhew, P (2003). 'Counting the Costs of Crime in Australia', *Trends and Issues Paper*, No. 247, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
- Moffatt, S., Weatherburn, D. & Donnelly, N. (2005) 'What caused the recent drop in property crime?', *Crime and Justice Bulletin*, No. 85, February 2005.
- Nee, C. & Meenaghan, A. (2006). Expert decision making in Offenders, *British Journal of Criminology*, 46: 935-949.
- Pennington, R. (1977). *An evaluation of the open garage door break and enter program*. St. Louis, Mo.: St. Louis County Police Department.
- Stevenson, R. & Forsythe, L. (1998), *The Stolen Goods Market in NSW, An Interview Study with Imprisoned Offenders*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.
- Stevenson, R., Forsythe, L. & Weatherburn, D. (2001). The Stolen Goods Market in New South Wales, Australia. An analysis of disposal avenues and tactics, *British Journal of Criminology*, 41:101-118.
- Sturgeon-Adams, L., Adamson, S. and Davidson, D. (2005). *Hartlepool: A Case Study in Break and enter Reduction*. Hull, U.K.: Centre for Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Hull.
- Tilley N & Webb J. (1994). Break and enter Reduction: Findings from Safer Cities Schemes. *Crime Detection and Prevention Series*; Paper 51. London: Home Office, Police Research Group.
- United Nations (2010). *Crime Statistics – Break and enter and Domestic Break and enter*, available at: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/crimedata.html>
- Wiles, P. & Costello, A. (2000). The road to nowhere: evidence for travelling criminals. *Home Office Research Study No. 207*, London, Home Office.
- Wright, T. & Decker, S. (1994). *Offenders on the job: Streetlife and residential break-in*, Boston: Northeastern University Press.