



Telethon Institute for Child Health
Dr Louisa Alessandri Memorial Oration

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Youth Crime Prevention

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Chief Justice of Western Australia

Telethon Institute for Child Health Research
Subiaco
Western Australia



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Ms Debbie Karasinski (Chief Executive Officer, Senses Foundation)

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to have been invited to give the Dr Louisa Alessandri Memorial Oration.

Dr Alessandri was born in 1963 and died in 1997. She was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy at an early age. However, this provided little handicap to her as she progressed through her academic career, gaining a Bachelor of Science with Honours in Microbiology and a PhD in Medicine from the University of Western Australia. It was her ability and not her disability that was her defining force.



Dr Alessandri loved children and the focus of her research career was to improve conditions for them and for their families. Her PhD looked at the risk factors associated with foetal deaths (stillbirths) before the onset of labour. She became involved in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) research and made many friends and colleagues within the international community of SIDS researchers and members.

Dr Alessandri was also committed to those with disabilities and served as Chair of the Western Australian Advisory Council for disability Services and as a Board member of the Disability Services Commission.

I would like to speak to you today about a topic that is in keeping with Dr Alessandri's love of children and her desire to improve conditions for them and for their families. Underlying her research was a genuine concern for humanity and the attainment of equity and justice for all people. In line with this idea, I would like to speak about ways that we can prevent our children from becoming involved in crime.

I would like to begin by stating some facts about the current state of juvenile crime in Western Australia. The work of the Children's Court sheds light on this.

The numbers of individuals and offences dealt with by the Children's Court has declined substantially since 1990. This has been largely due to the introduction of the formal cautioning system introduced in 1991 and referrals



to juvenile justice teams introduced by legislation in 1995. These two schemes are secondary crime prevention programs which take children out of the criminal justice system and essentially give them a second chance. I will speak more about these two schemes and their effectiveness later.

The latest statistics regarding juvenile crime and the Children's Court are for the year 2001, but they are still very helpful. In 2001, 3,742 distinct juveniles were dealt with by the Children's Court. This was a decrease of 6.4% on 2000 figures. Almost one fifth of juvenile offenders were female and 37% were Aborigines. A total of 16,300 offences were dealt with by the Court, at an average of 4.4 charges per person. The number of offences charged per person has risen steadily since the mid-1990s, from 3.6 in 1995 to 4.4 in 2001.

Almost one sixth of juveniles appearing before the Children's Court in 2001 were 14 years old or younger and almost one half of juveniles were 16 years old or younger. Those aged 17 years made up the largest age group (37.4%). The mean age of juveniles dealt with by the Children's Court was 16.2 years, which was similar to that in 2000. However, Aborigines were generally younger than non-Aborigines appearing before the Court. The mean age of Aborigines was 15.6 years as compared to 16.5 years for non-Aborigines. The mean age of females was 16.4 years and of males was 16.2 years.

As in previous years, the most frequent offences with which juveniles in the Children's Court were charged in 2001 were burglary and theft offences (35.9%), followed by driving and motor vehicle offences (23.4%), offences against the person (mostly assault and robbery) (20.6%), good order offences



(mostly breach of court orders and resisting police) (8.7%), damage offences (4.2%), drug offences (mostly use or possession offences) (3.2%) and sundry other offences (2.2%).

In 2001, there was some variation between offences committed by males and females. For example, 31.3% of females were charged with burglary and theft offences compared with 37.1% of males. 11.9% of females were charged with good order offences compared with 7.9% of males.

More significant variations are noted in offences committed by Aborigines and non-Aborigines. For example, 50% of Aborigines were charged with burglary and theft offences, compared with 30.9% of non-Aborigines. 24% of Aborigines were charged with offences against the person, compared with 20.6% of non-Aborigines.

With respect to court outcomes and penalties, the Children's Court in 2001 convicted 2,830 juveniles (75.6%). It is important to note that when dealing with youth, imprisonment and harsher penalties need to be given as a last resort. It has been found that the more involvement a child has in the criminal justice system, the more they are likely to engage in further criminal behaviour. This is due to the stigmatisation that comes from involvement in the criminal justice system, the tendency for children to feel branded as criminals and subsequently conduct themselves accordingly. Alternative sentencing options are preferable and more effective. They work to prevent engagement in future crime, rather than to perpetuate criminal conduct in youth.



Almost a quarter of juvenile offenders were referred by the Court to juvenile justice teams. Non-custodial sentences were the most common penalties imposed, accounting for 43.2% of all sanctions in 2001. Fines constituted more than a quarter of penalties imposed on juveniles and dismissals accounted for 16.1%. However, since the early nineties, the proportion of juveniles placed in custody has increased, from 4.1 % in 1991 to 13.9% in 2001.

Penalties varied considerably depending on the sex and Indigenous status of the juvenile. Females were more likely than males to be dealt with by way of dismissal and very much less likely to be placed in custody. With respect to males, Aborigines were more likely than non-Aborigines to be placed in custody (24.7% compared with 10.7%) but less likely to be fined (9.2% compared with 33.5%). For females, Aborigines were more likely than non-Aborigines to receive a non-custodial order (51.9% compared to 38.9%).

There were 16,300 charges for offences finalised by the Children's Court in 2001. This was a decrease of 2.7% on 2000 figures. One in six offences was committed by a female and four in five offences were committed by a male. In 50.3% of cases, the offences were committed by Aborigines, and in 45.9% of cases, by non-Aborigines. However, in 3.8% of cases, ethnicity was not recorded.

More than half of finalised charges were dealt with in Perth. The remaining charges were dealt with by courts in regional areas (11.6% Central, 7.2%



Couth West, 7.3% Kimberley, 5.2% Pilbara, 6.7% South Eastern, 6.2% Great Southern and 3.9% Midlands).

As with distinct persons, the most frequent types of offences charged were burglary and theft offences, followed by the other offences in the same order as that which I mentioned in respect of distinct persons. Almost four fifths of finalised charges resulted in conviction by the Court. A further 19% of charges were referred to juvenile justice teams.

The penalty profile for all charges is rather different from that found for distinct persons, with many more offences being dealt with by means of custodial or non-custodial penalties. For example, while 13.9% of distinct persons were placed in detention, 20.6% of offences received a custodial outcome. This indicates that a small group of offenders committed many offences which resulted in the application of the severest penalty available to the Court. Although a significant proportion of charges for offences against the person and burglary and theft offences received custodial sentences, non-custodial penalties were the most common sanction for most offence types.

In 2001, the Western Australian juvenile incarceration rate was 43.5 per 100,000 juvenile persons. This was higher than all other States except Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory and 1.5 times higher than the national rate. Western Australia also had one of the highest rates of Aboriginal juvenile detention (589 per 100,000 compared with 9 per 100,000 for non-Aboriginal juveniles).



In 2001, there were 2,299 referrals from the police and 1,299 referral “appearances” from the Children’s Court to Juvenile Justice Teams. Juveniles referred by the police tended to be younger than those referred by the Court. 39.1% of juveniles referred by the police were aged 10 to 14 years while 22.5 % of juveniles referred by the Court fell into that age group.

Based on court records, the most common offences for which juveniles were referred to teams were burglary and theft offences, (50.9%), motor vehicle/driving offences (16.6%) good order offences (9.6%), offences against the person (8.9%) damage offences (5.5%) and drug offences (4.6%).

The above statistics and information give an overview of the nature and extent of juvenile crime in Western Australia. This information is useful when considering the concept of crime prevention. For example, information as to the types of offences most commonly committed by youth can aid in the development of appropriate crime prevention programs.

Despite rhetoric to the contrary, it should always be remembered that the overwhelming majority of violent crimes are committed by adults and not by juveniles. In the four major states of Australia, only about 12.7 per cent of all assaults and robberies (the two most frequent violent crimes) are committed by juveniles. The view that violent crime by juveniles is increasing sharply is not supported by recent research data.

On the other hand, rates of property crime by juveniles have increased dramatically in recent years. It has to be realised, however, that most young people “grow out” of crime and do not offend as adults. Thus, criminal justice



processing of juveniles can backfire on the community, propelling young people into a life of crime.

When we are dealing with youth, we need to move away from the incarceration approach to crime to an approach where we devise new ways of dealing with criminal behaviour, based on principles such as community crime prevention.

There are many different types of crime prevention programs. In the study of criminology, approaches to crime prevention have been usefully divided into four types, following distinctions made by Farrington (eg Farrington 1996). The four types of crime prevention are criminal justice prevention, situational prevention, community prevention and developmental prevention.

Criminal justice prevention refers to traditional deterrence, incapacitation and rehabilitation strategies operated by law enforcement and the criminal justice system: (Farrington 1996: 18). Examples include the issuing of cautions, fines, making arrests, the imposition of sentences and incarceration.

Situational prevention “compromises opportunity reducing measures that are directed at highly specific forms of crime, involve the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in a systematic and permanent way, and make crime more difficult and risky, or less rewarding and excusable as judged by a wide range of offenders”: (Clarke 1997: 4). Interventions of this kind include changes in the physical environment such as increasing lighting, using locks and immobilizers on cars. They also include changes in



the ‘psychological’ environment, such as rule setting or strengthening moral condemnation in order to undercut the ‘moral neutralisation’ techniques resorted to by juvenile offenders: (Clarke and Homel, 117). The emphasis is entirely on the environment, not on modifying the dispositions of offenders.

Community prevention “refers to interventions designed to change the social conditions or institutions that influence offending”. The idea is that by changing the community, one may change the behaviour of the youth within that community. The emphasis is on political action at the local level to empower residents, provide opportunities to young people, strengthen social infrastructure, and promote social justice. Interventions of this kind include changes in specific organisations or places, such as the way schools or housing estates are organised and managed. One example is the development and introduction of school programs designed to change teachers’ and children’s views of what constitutes bullying.

Developmental prevention “refers to interventions designed to inhibit the development of criminal potential in individuals”. It refers to interventions aiming to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors that are hypothesised to have a significant effect on an individual’s adjustment at later points of development.

In addition to the division of crime prevention schemes into these four types, crime prevention has also been divided into primary and secondary types.



Primary prevention is concerned with preventing young people from committing crime in the first instance. Primary prevention strategies are those which are not connected to the court system and can prevent young people from entering the juvenile justice system. Examples include Local Offender Programs, Police Department Youth Initiatives, and Parent Skills Training. It could be said that from the four types of crime prevention that I previously mentioned, situational prevention, community prevention and developmental prevention fall into the category of primary prevention.

Secondary prevention is concerned to ensure that young people who have already been dealt with in the juvenile justice system do not come back again. Secondary prevention strategies are programs aimed at young people in the formal police and Children's Court system. Examples include the issuing of cautions and other diversionary schemes, truancy patrols and legal services. From the four types of crime prevention, criminal justice prevention falls into this category of secondary prevention.

The distinction between primary and secondary strategies is useful as it affects decisions we make about which young people are targeted, what government agencies or community groups should be involved and to what extent. For example, in primary prevention programs, it is important not to stigmatise young people, thereby contributing to their marginalisation. We must be wary of early interventions which inadvertently may label individuals as potential delinquents. Therefore, it is important that these programs do not become appendages of the formal juvenile justice system. This has implications for the bureaucratic placement of programs, staff selection, and program



management. The challenge becomes one of developing a social justice strategy which does not, in our efforts to meet special needs, end up isolating young people. On the other hand, in secondary prevention programs, we would be concerned to connect young people to mainstream activities, to integrate them and to break down their marginalisation and stigma.

With the issue of law and order high on the political agenda today, there has become something of an obsession with using the police, the courts and the prison system to deal with youth crime. It would be foolish to assume that we do not need police, courts or prisons or that they do not serve some deterrent effect. However, there is evidence that further expenditure on the criminal justice system alone will not reduce the youth offending rate. The approach that only harsh and uncompromising punishment will reform offenders and deter others from committing crimes is especially damaging when we consider juvenile offenders. The legislation dealing with young offenders under the age of 18 recognises this by providing that imprisonment or detention should be imposed only as a last resort and for as short a time as possible. This is a reflection of the need to minimise the level of contact that a young person has with the formal system and to limit the amount of juveniles who are institutionalised. This in itself is a prevention strategy in that it recognises that the more contact and the more intensive a young person's experience of the juvenile justice system, the more likely he or she is to re-offend. Where youth are involved, alternative and more positive approaches to dealing with crime are more effective and appropriate. Crime prevention programs are examples of such alternative and positive approaches to dealing with crime. Instead of relying on incarceration to prevent youth from engaging in further crime,



secondary crime prevention programs are preferable. There are many of these secondary crime prevention programs in use today in Western Australia.

Juvenile Justice teams are a type of preventive program. They are a new way to handle young people who have committed minor offences, or who are in the early stages of offending. The teams make sure that young people take responsibility for their actions and divert young people from the Courts. Young people are sent to the teams by the police or by the Children's Court. To be accepted by the Juvenile Justice Teams, the young person must agree that they have done something wrong and must be prepared to make amends. The Team help the young person to devise an action plan. If the young person follows the plan, the matter will be dismissed by the Court with the young person receiving no conviction and no official record. It should be noted that the program does not let young people off the hook. If the young person chooses not to follow the action plan that he or she and the team have devised, the young person returns to the Court to be dealt with formally.

The work of the juvenile justice teams involve input from the young offender, their parents and the victim of the crime. A notion underlying the scheme is that responsible citizenship grows in the family. The scheme asserts that even when a young person comes into contact with the justice system, parents still have the primary responsibility for their child and they way that they grow up. The Teams also have support from a juvenile justice staff member, police officer, cultural and ethnic group representative and sometimes an education officer. The teams talk to parents about ways that they can stop their child from sliding into crime and identify the help they may need.



This system is preventative, as it involves the child's family and addresses the reasons why the child offended. It also diverts the child away from the Courts and prevents the child from being stigmatised and branded a criminal by allowing the child the opportunity to learn from his or her mistake and avoid a criminal conviction and record.

Another secondary crime prevention program that exists in Western Australia is the formal police caution scheme introduced in 1991 allows police to issue cautions to youth for minor offences such as street drinking, disorderly conduct and some minor traffic infringements. These youth are not charged and should drop out of crime statistics.

The Youth Legal Service provides a range of legal services to youth which are essential to ensure basic human rights are protected and that youth can defend wrongful charges. For young people to believe that they have a stake in society they must perceive and experience a just juvenile justice system. Legal services are also preventative because they can alert young people to laws and the consequences of breaking the law.

Secondary crime prevention is an important part of crime prevention when we are considering youth. The opportunity of having a second chance is vital to offenders who are of such a young age and have their whole lives ahead of them.



However, secondary crime prevention alone is not sufficient to effectively prevent youth becoming engaged in crime. There needs to be a focus on primary crime prevention. That includes the three types of prevention that I mentioned before – situational, community and developmental prevention.

In 1990 it was estimated that approximately \$500 million was spent annually across the country in the administration of juvenile justice – that is, on police, courts and juvenile corrections. The total private security industry budget spent on preventing juvenile crime was about \$230 million while the direct costs of juvenile crime itself were \$600 million. Altogether, an expenditure of \$1.35 billion was devoted to dealing with juvenile crime. However, when the effectiveness of many of the traditional methods of handling delinquency were surveyed (such as police, institutionalisation, and counselling), there was little evidence that they were significant in preventing delinquency. The greatest hope of preventing juvenile offending is in strategies outside the criminal justice system. Strategies which appear to be effective include, pre-school and school-focussed programs that improve the quality of education offered to young persons in low income areas, parent-effectiveness programs, job training and placement schemes, particular sporting and recreational initiatives and opportunity reduction schemes employing environmental design, management, target reduction and other situational measures. These programs may not deal directly with the macro-economic issues of poverty and similar issues. However, they do deal with the effects of these problems and all of them are elements of crime prevention programs. There is at least empirical evidence supporting the measures suggested.



The Western Australian government is currently dealing with the issue of youth crime. It has made a controversial proposal that a curfew for unsupervised young people be imposed in Northbridge. This proposal has been the subject of much public debate in the last few weeks.

It has been reported that the number of juveniles going to the city suburb of Northbridge has doubled in the past two years. A report by the WA Police Juvenile Aid Group showed that police picked up 454 juveniles from Northbridge streets between January and March this year. The Report said more than 400 of them were Aboriginal youth and most were aged between 12 and 16, the youngest being a 6 year old girl.

According to Mission Australia spokesman Damian Karmelich, the 2001 figures show that 80% of crime in the Northbridge area is actually committed by adults. If this is correct, a crackdown on youth crime in the area will not reduce the overall crime rate greatly.

It has been said that a curfew will not be of great use. Police already have the power to apprehend unsupervised children. For many years, police have been doing so under Section 138B of the *Child Welfare Act 1947* if the children were found to be at risk of harm or were engaging in anti-social behaviour. Since 1999, such children have been referred to On-Track. On-Track is a part of Mission Australia, and children stay at the On-Track headquarters until arrangements can be made to get them home or to an alternative safe place.



I have concerns about the imposition of a curfew. Any new policy dealing with youth crime prevention should address underlying social issues and reasons why young people flock to Northbridge. As pointed out by a member of the Nyoongar Street Patrol who regularly patrol Northbridge in relation to unsupervised Aboriginal youth, the government also needs to look at why young people are not staying at home. Family issues need to be looked at. Indeed, Perth Lord Mayor Peter Nattrass has said, as reported in the West Australian recently, that he supports a curfew if it was implemented with other strategies, including extra police and efforts to address the family issues at the root of the problems. Thus, a curfew on its own may simply be a bandaid solution as it does not confront the root of the problem of youth crime.

It has been found that some of the reasons that young people engage in juvenile crime include family conflict and dysfunction, unemployment and poverty. Some children feel safer in the city and Northbridge than in homes where there is family violence or drug and alcohol issues. According to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Perth Nyoongar chairman Gordon Cole, around 50 percent of Aboriginal children are leaving school after 14 years of age. A poor standard of education is one of the major reasons that young Aboriginal people are at a loose end, falling into the poverty trap and into crime. Mr Cole said there was little funding available for Aboriginal school-based traineeships, which had helped increase school retention rates. I believe that addressing issues such as family dynamics, drug and alcohol abuse, education, employment is the way to effectively prevent youth crime.



Also placed high on the list of reasons for why young people become engaged in crime was boredom and thrill-seeking. In a recent article in the *West Australian*, Nyoongar girls aged between 14 and 17 were interviewed. When asked why they come to Northbridge, they said, “We just come out here to go out and do something”. Meeting boys was one of the main reasons for coming all the way to Northbridge from their suburban homes. Like many teenagers, they were desperate for more activities. “Hip-hops” were a favourite and they said that they should be held every weekend. Currently, they are held only once every school holidays. Most pertinently, a 15 year old girl said, “If they want us to stop coming in [to Northbridge], they better find something for us to do”.

These sort of responses suggest that part of the problem of youth crime lies with service providers. The presence of youth crime and of young people in Northbridge suggest that existing youth services are not meeting the needs of young people in the city. There is a lack of places of leisure resort for young people in Perth. Young people need to be provided with places to meet and interact and pass their time. Leisure activities need to be provided also. These places of leisure resort should be located in the suburbs so that young people will not be attracted to nightclub and adult areas such as Northbridge.

I believe that a curfew alone, targets youth. However, instead of merely targeting youth, we should be investing in our youth. A focus must be put on situational, community and in particular, developmental forms of crime prevention.



It is important that an “early intervention” approach to crime prevention is adopted. Research shows that focusing on prevention and early intervention is more effective in the long term than responses that may resolve only immediate crises. Early intervention involves intervening at critical points in a young person’s development and attempting to ensure that they are given the maximum opportunity to lead productive and law abiding lives.

Only in recent years has much of the scientifically persuasive evidence emerged that interventions early in life can have long term impacts on crime and other social problems such as substance abuse. In Australia there is little tradition of long term scientific evaluation of early interventions designed to prevent crime. This is not to claim that there are no services in Australia that aim to improve the lives of young people and their families and neighbourhoods, nor that early intervention to prevent later problems is not a well established objective of many programs. However, few of these programs have crime prevention as an explicit objective. Few are explicitly developmental and few are adequately evaluated in terms of short or long term impacts on young people, their families and communities.

Developmental prevention involves intervention early in developmental pathways that lead to crime. It emphasises investment in “child friendly” institutions and communities, and the manipulation of multiple risk and protective factors at crucial transition points, such as around birth, the preschool years, the transition from primary to high school, and the transition from high school to higher education or the workforce.



Intervention at an early age is a cost effective preventive strategy. Some configurations of risk at an early age have multiple consequences later in life. Families with babies and preschoolers that are at risk of poverty, relationship breakdown and abusive or inept parenting styles are more likely to produce teenagers at risk of criminality and substance abuse.

Crime prevention aims to alter both risk and protective factors. It aims to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors.

Risk factors have been identified mainly from longitudinal studies and include genetic and biological characteristics of the child, family characteristics, stressful life events and community or cultural factors.

It is also important to identify and increase protective factors and mechanisms that are likely to inhibit the development of antisocial behaviour and divert children to the pathways that lead towards positive outcomes. Preventive action cannot be solely directed toward the reduction of risk especially when risk factors are difficult to modify. A wide range of protective factors has been proposed on the basis of longitudinal studies. These include factors specific to the child, such as social competence, problem solving skills, optimism and an easy temperament. Family factors such as supportive caring parents, and family harmony are also protective factors. A positive school climate, a prosocial peer group are also examples of protective factors. Effective developmental crime prevention programs attempt to increase these protective factors and reduce any risk factors that are present.



A good example of developmental crime prevention in our State is the *Investing in our Youth* program. It is funded by Safer WA which is a project of the Office of Crime Prevention of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and by the National Crime Prevention Program which is a Commonwealth initiative. The *Investing in our Youth* program works towards a healthy and safe community environment for all young people to develop their full potential by building strong relationships and valued participation within our communities.

Investing In Our Youth is a group of people that have come together as a Community Board and who are actively involved with our youth or have an interest in creating a better future for young people. *Investing In Our Youth* is an inter-agency prevention and early intervention initiative. It aims to establish a community wide research and planning process to promote collaborative and strategic use of resources to assist the community to support the healthy development of children and young people. The project is based in the Shires of Harvey, Dardanup and Capel and the City of Bunbury in regional Western Australia.

The program operates under a model called "Communities That Care" (CTC). The CTC approach has been developed by Professors Hawkins and Catalano of the Social Development Research Group, University of Washington, Seattle, USA. The concepts of risk and protective factors are central to the CTC approach. CTC have identified 19 risk factors that may exist in a young persons life in the four areas of community, school, family, and the individual. CTC also identifies protective factors such as having positive relationships



and rewards for good behaviour that will help young people avoid problem behaviours.

CTC use the Social Development Strategy to guide communities toward a vision of positive futures for young people. The Social Development Strategy aims to establish clear standards specific to the community and applicable to the different developmental stages of young people. It requires communities to examine role models set by the adult community. Communities are challenged to identify and promote clear standards for healthy beliefs considered acceptable to the community within the context of cultural frameworks and broader issues that impact on the community.

The CTC approach offers a framework which communities can use to organise resources and information to develop a picture of the risk and protective factors operative in the community and to facilitate collaborative planning to reach consensus on prioritising interventions.

Another example of a preventative program that has been recently been evaluated is the *Action Plan to Address the Cycle of Aboriginal Offending at Geraldton*. Estill & Associates, in conjunction with the Institute of Regional Development at the University of Western Australia was commissioned by the Department of Justice to evaluate the program. It was found that although some changes needed to be made to the program, it was generally quite successful. It resulted in improvements in the relationship between the Aboriginal community and agencies, a downward trend in Aboriginal juvenile arrests and a rising number of cautions for both Aboriginal and non-



Aboriginal juveniles. The general health of juveniles also improved. The rates of hospitalisation due to alcohol decreased and hospitalisation for middle ear disease was virtually eradicated for young Aboriginal men and women.

It is recommended that there be a mix of various preventative approaches. Criminal justice approaches emphasise deterrence and incapacitation, with the visible presence of police being a critical element. Situational approaches attempt to manipulate the immediate physical or social environment in order to reduce the opportunities for offending. Community approaches focus on larger environments such as neighbourhoods or schools and seek to address some of the social and organisational factors linked to crime. Developmental approaches emphasise intervening early in pathways that lead to antisocial or offending behaviour.

The notion of mixing approaches does not necessarily mean that all programs or all agencies need to put several kinds of prevention in place. What is called for is that several approaches be co-ordinated. In attempts to create more “child friendly” environments, there are many key players. It is important to coordinate policies and decisions made at the State and national level in areas that might initially appear somewhat removed from the prevention of crime, such as media or employment policies. Such policies should be valued more, and should be more adequately supported. There should be a greater societal commitment to supporting children and families and to creating a more child friendly environment.



It is not good enough to simply advocate crime prevention measures as an alternative to the traditional law and order approaches to deal with youth offending. Nor is it especially useful to argue that our traditional agencies – the police, the courts and juvenile institutions – stand on the opposite side of the fence to crime prevention philosophies. We have to bring the criminal justice agencies under the prevention umbrella. But in respect of all types of crime prevention, as we think about the development of delinquency prevention strategies and policies we need to ensure that all are aimed at improving legitimate life chances and opportunities for the youth of today. Indeed, these were the aims of Dr Louisa Alessandri's work. Dr Alessandri's work with children and her achievements serve as inspiration in all areas dealing with children, including the ever present and important matter of youth crime prevention.

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