



Research into Integrated Crime Prevention Strategies for Rail Station Environs: Preliminary Findings

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1 Introduction

Public transport throughout the world is a venue for crime and anti-social behaviour. The spaces in and around railway stations are places where people gather, especially young people, for casual social interaction or 'hanging out' (National Crime Prevention, 1999). Frequently the behaviour of the groups of young people is loud, possibly 'anti-social', but not strictly illegal (Delaney, Prodigalidad, & Sanders, 2002). This behaviour is sometimes perceived as threatening to others and has the effect of deterring some people (including other young people) from using the rail system. A primary objective of this research was to improve community perceptions of safety in rail environs through establishing local synergistic, integrated and collaborative relationships between agencies with interests in rail security, youth work and community safety.

The purposes of this research project are to:

- Develop a transferable model of interagency collaboration that can be used to reduce conflict in station environs.
- Identify and test strategies and interventions to reduce conflict between young people, and other people in the transport system; including the travelling public and PTA security staff. The primary focus is the development of strategies and interventions derived from improved interagency collaboration between Public Transport Authority (PTA) security staff and relevant local government agencies, community agencies and non-government youth workers.

An expectation of this research project is that positive changes will be sustainable after the research is completed.

This research project was funded by the Office of Crime Prevention in partnership with the Public Transport Authority of Western Australia and four local governments, the City of Armadale, the City of Gosnells, the City of Joondalup and the City of Swan.

The background problem this research addresses is the weakness of single agency responses to youth behaviour. For example, a conventional response by various authorities (the public transport authority, security, police) to groups of young people is to 'move them on' if their behaviour elicits complaints from the public, or is perceived as threatening by the authorities. The PTA has primary responsibility for safety and passenger well-being on station premises and moves non-travelling young people from station precincts. Local authority rangers and security patrols respond to complaints about anti-social behaviour in community public spaces and move on young people who gather in parks. Shopping centres' security personnel respond to noisy behaviour and groups that gather in shopping centres

and eject them from the malls. Police assistance can be called by any of the various security staff. However, unless an offence has been committed, police can take no action.

A frequent consequence of this uncoordinated and divided authority is that a small number of young people circulate through a range of public and semi-public spaces, as each security force attempts to move groups of young people out of spaces under their jurisdiction. Uncoordinated responses tend, often at considerable expense, only to move 'problem behaviour' from one location to another, and to give rise to increased youth alienation and anti-social behaviour.

1.1 Research assumptions

We made several initial assumptions about the development of successful coordinated crime prevention strategies in rail environments. First, we assumed that collaborating partner organisations would have divergent perceptions and understanding about what constituted 'anti-social behaviour', its frequency and causes, and we also assumed they would also have divergent opinions about the nature and reality of community perceptions about transport safety (Anning, 2005; Brown, 1998; M & P Henderson and Associates Pty Ltd., 2002). In other words, although partners involved in collaboration *apparently* shared goals such as desire to 'improve community perceptions of safety' and to 'reduce 'anti-social behaviour' in station environs', their understandings of what this entailed would not necessarily be the same at the beginning of the project. Second, we assumed successful crime prevention depends on an accurate and holistic understanding of cultural and environment factors that support or deter crime (Connexions, 2003; Gilling, 1994; Grabosky, 1996; M & P Henderson and Associates Pty Ltd., 2002). An essential part of the research method, therefore was to develop a shared holistic understanding of the nature and causes of problems in their locality, and how actions of different organisations could positively influence the cultural and environmental factors. Third, we assumed that important crime prevention opportunities are missed when individual organisations and agencies in welfare, planning and transport make decisions without understanding how their decisions positively or negatively affect the operational goals and methods of other organisations (Connexions, 2003; Grabosky, 1996; M & P Henderson and Associates Pty Ltd., 2002).

1.2 Rationale

The goals of the major funding partner (the WA Office of Crime Prevention) required that this project be developed as action research. Interagency collaboration is central to this project. Interagency collaboration presents many barriers and success is difficult to achieve (Connexions, 2003, pp. 19, 20). For example, successful collaboration between agencies depends upon partner agencies understanding and respecting the different purposes and goals of each agency. In this case, interagency collaboration was made more difficult because the target problem of the research is within their remit of concern of all participants, but not always their central concern. The project involved establishing successful collaborative working between multiple agencies and required a process that must:

- Manage complex social and political interactions between agencies.
- Avoid participants prematurely jumping to solutions and conclusions based on superficial understanding.
- Collect the breadth of knowledge and expertise available from group members about issues, contextual considerations, counter-intuitive factors and potential solutions.

- Support the development, implementation and evaluation of interagency initiatives
- Help participants overcome feelings of hopelessness engendered by addressing problems previously regarded as intransigent from a single agency perspective

The project used the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) as the underlying research process to assist partner organisations to identify issues, to share different perspectives on causes and relationships, and to make visible the complexity of connections between the work of different agencies and organisations. These shared understandings provided a basis from which partner agencies could develop locally relevant interventions. Checkland and Scholes (1990) developed SSM to address practical complex systemic problems in situations where those responsible for management have differing perspectives, information, values, knowledge and skills. SSM was originally devised to help managers gain a more holistic perspective on complex organisational problems and identify better solutions. The goal of this project, to develop an integrated collaborative multi-agency response to young people in rail environments, provides a good example of the type of 'complex system problem' for which the soft systems approach was intended. In this research, SSM was used to help service managers to identify how different goals, values, relationships and organisational structures, positively or negatively interact with the goals and purposes of other organisations. The SSM process was also used to identify positive and negative unintended consequences of interventions by one agency upon the work of others. Finally, in this project SSM facilitated identification of 'counter-intuitive' processes, that is, processes that, in practice, lead to outcomes that do not accord with everyday expectations based upon commonsense assumptions. In this research project, the researchers and participants together used SSM to develop 'rich pictures' of the problem situation. These rich pictures include information about six essential elements: **C**ustomers or clients, **A**ctors (people within the organisation), **T**ransformation processes, **W**orldviews (including values), system **O**wner (people in a position to make changes), and **E**nvironmental constraints. Within SSM, these six elements are referred to by the acronym 'CATWOE'. The CATWOE approach helps ensure all influences within complex problems are acknowledged. In this project, researchers used SSM and CATWOE to:

- Invite participants to share their perceptions;
- Collate this information into a 'rich picture';
- Use the 'rich picture' as the basis for participants to identify collaboratively successful integrated interventions;
- Pilot and evaluate interventions and the interagency collaboration process.

Group facilitation based on social action approaches was used to address the lack of group management techniques in SSM.

Group facilitation has been essential to achieving results in this research project. The project used group facilitation methods derived from social action methods to support inter-agency collaboration, resolve group conflicts, overcome apathy and hopelessness, and to provide a strong foundation for changes to be sustained beyond the duration of the project. These methods address the absence of group management techniques in SSM. The project involves interagency collaboration between disparate agencies with diverse goals, perspectives and operational approaches. We used social action methods to facilitate interagency collaboration and resolve conflict. This requires careful attention to management of interagency relationships and the use of an appropriate research method and perspective

(Connexions, 2003; Grabosky, 1996; M & P Henderson and Associates Pty Ltd., 2002; Province of Groningen, Scottish Executive, 2001; Walters, 1996). We required a process to establish a climate in which the agency partners would gain more understanding of each other's goals and priorities. An important issue is addressing apathy and the sense of institutionalised hopelessness about intransigent problems that has been identified by others as a major impediment to action (Connexions, 2003; Hope & Timmel, 1997). Interagency projects fail if groups confine their activities to meetings where participants either lament the problem while they reinforce their feelings of helplessness, or try to 'shift the blame' to organisations or individuals beyond their remit. An assumption of this research was that some participants might initially see the identified issues as intractable, and would respond by claiming the issues were the responsibility of someone else, or regard them as insoluble, or insoluble without many additional resources. The facilitation process had to be designed to help the groups move beyond this to identify useful actions they could take if they worked together, supported to collaborate successfully across their agency-related differences.

To summarise, in this project we used a combination of soft-systems and social action methods. In undertaking the project, the social action approach proved to be essential to address the four barriers to interagency collaboration we identified as most significant:

- Misunderstandings about the goals, priorities and roles of other agencies
- Miscommunication if issues are oversimplified and presented only from the perspective of each agency's central concerns
- Issues of group dynamics, interagency politics, and difficulties that arise if some agencies dominate discussions or exclude others
- Inaction because of apathy or feelings that nothing worthwhile can be done to positively change the situation, often masked as people vocally to shift the problem to another agency

2 Project plan

The work program for this research project had four stages:

- Problem scoping
- Planning 'pilot' interventions
- Undertaking interventions
- Evaluation and final report

2.1 Problem scoping

During the problem-scoping stage of the project, project staff met with participants from the PTA, local government agencies and community agencies to identify their perceptions of problems and issues, and their causation. During this problem-scoping stage, we identified four high incident locations in different local government areas from the PTA incident statistics and through discussion with PTA management. These four high incident locations

were chosen as focal projects. Problem scoping for each location was undertaken using the following process.

An in-depth semi-structured interview was undertaken with a field-experienced senior PTA security manager. The aim of this interview was to gain understanding of the perspectives of the PTA and its security employees based on direct practical experience of managing the security issues across the four high incident locations. The soft systems CATWOE approach (Checkland & Scholes, 1990; Hutchinson, 1997; Mobach, Werf, & Tromp, 2000) was used to identify in the four locations the PTA's perception of distribution and severity of incidents and issues, appropriate responses, causes of incidents, precipitating factors, environmental and contextual factors, power and control issues, and similarities and differences between security situations.

Four focus groups were undertaken, one in each of the four local government areas, to gain understanding from members of local government agencies, youth workers and other relevant community agencies, their perceptions of issues, incidents, and the causes of issues at each location. Data collection at these focus group meetings was also guided by the CATWOE approach.

2.2 Intervention planning

Problem scoping was followed by an intervention planning stage in which research project staff arranged and facilitated meetings between participants from the PTA, local government agencies, community agencies and youth work managers, and local government and community 'detached youth work' personnel. In these meetings, participants were presented with the distilled 'rich picture' overview of issues identified in the problem-scoping stage. This 'rich picture' provided the basis for discussions identifying possible collaborative multi-agency interventions to address the issues.

A key and essential aspect for success in this project was to negotiate the multiple barriers caused by the natural differences in purpose, priorities, interests and preconceptions of participating agency representatives. This required extensive use of supportive processes helping participants to interact across the barriers of agency self-interest to:

- Share and clarify the goals and priorities of different local organisations involved
- Share perspectives on the issues
- Identify the most pressing issues for change in each locality
- Clarify the parameters for development of a local co-ordinated strategy that both assists youth development and supports community safety
- Identify and plan actions they can take as a group to positive improve the local situation

2.3 Project implementation

The, partner agencies in each location collaborated to develop locally relevant projects that were also in accordance with their existing work priorities. A small amount of seeding money was available in each location to help with non-recurrent expenditure. During the implementation stage, groups met regularly in each of the four locations to review progress,

identify barriers to implementation, and adjust interventions. The initiatives that were developed at each location are described in detail in the next section

2.4 Evaluation

The research project will conclude with an evaluation of the usefulness of the projects in each location. The final report will document the research, describe the findings and make recommendations for future directions.

3 Initiatives and Practical Preventative Outcomes

The first stage of the project, to clarify the goals and roles of partner organisations, was essential to the later success of initiatives. We believe that everyone who took part learnt something from the exchange. The youth and community work agencies were surprised to learn that the transit guards often performed a welfare function to ensure young people were safe. One of the transit guards' frustrations was that they had too few referral options. The PTA staff were reassured that youth work agencies supported the idea that transport should be safe for everyone.

The initiatives developed in each of the four case localities differed. This was because the nature of the issues that were locally identified are different, and because of differing combinations of collaborating partners' organisations in each location. A significant aspect of the initiative planning and implementation processes was that the mix of agencies in the project at each location changed over time as participants identified additional people who should be involved.

3.1 Armadale

In Armadale, the main local government partner was the City of Armadale Community Development Team. Other partners included the Armadale Youth Resource Centre, which is a community managed youth centre, partially funded by the City of Armadale; Drug Arm, a charity that works with drug and alcohol affected young people; and Great Mates (Great M8s), a youth accommodation service. George Svirac, a PTA transit guard manager, was the main PTA representative. Tina Musumeci from the PTA community education section was appointed part way through the project. She has been involved in discussions about education initiatives.

On the Armadale line, the main issues identified by the PTA were graffiti and vandalism, especially by children and young teenagers. During the project, understanding of issues changed to some extent because of a high profile violent incident at Kelmscott station. Both community groups and PTA had previously identified Kelmscott as the station of most concern. Discussions with youth and community agencies, and a local survey of young people undertaken as part of the project, identified that many young people avoided travelling from some stations, and avoided travelling at particular times of day because they did not feel safe. Most young people welcomed train and station security initiatives. They commented positively about help they had received from PTA staff, asked for increased numbers of transit guards, and for increased security measures. Their complaints about PTA staff were minor and mostly involved ticketing issues.

A significant issue that emerged during the research was that youth services in Armadale seem to be relatively under-resourced compared with youth services in other districts even

though there is a relatively high level of service need. This occurs because Armadale has only a small source of commercial rates revenue compared with other districts.

At this time, the group is investigating whether it will be feasible for Drug Arm to provide their service on trains on the Armadale line on Friday or Saturday nights.

During this project, the PTA made a decision to locate security staff permanently at Kelmscott station in the evenings.

3.2 Gosnells

In the Gosnells study, the Safer City Co-ordinator of the City of Gosnells was the main local government partner. Other project participants included City of Gosnells' youth workers, city planners, a representative from Mission Australia and a representative from Community Policing. George Svirac, a PTA transit guard manager, was the main PTA representative with Tina Musumeci from PTA community education.

The problem-scoping component of the research at Gosnells identified seven main issues: graffiti; vandalism; station avoidance; lack of knowledge by young people about the role and powers of transit guards; lack of knowledge by transit guards of local welfare referral services; and lack of knowledge within the community generally, including young people, about rail safety measures. An additional situation-specific problem that was identified was an influential member of the community in Gosnells who had unrealistic expectations about behaviour and was expecting police intervention when young people had not done anything wrong.

At Gosnells, like Armadale, the main issues identified by the PTA were graffiti and vandalism, especially by children and young teenagers. This was confirmed as a citywide problem by the Safer Cities co-ordinator, who referred to statistics kept by the City of Gosnells. The City of Gosnells has processes in place to address the graffiti problem through a youth work urban art program intended to reduce illegal graffiti, and through swift response by graffiti removal teams. The focus group did not think there was anything else that could be done on this issue.

On the issue of station avoidance, it was noted that many young people avoid certain stations, especially Maddington because of perceptions about safety. Several participants observed that Maddington station has no opportunities for passive surveillance. Maddington station is part of the Kenwick renewal project and this observation from the focus group was conveyed to the relevant council planners to be considered in the new Maddington town centre plans.

The group identified that the issue of lack of knowledge of transit guard powers and welfare services for young people could be addressed through a Gosnells 'zip card' which would provide information to young people about local welfare services, their rights and responsibilities when using trains, and transit guard powers. This card could be distributed to young people, and could be used by transit guards as a source of information about local services.

The group identified that the issue of public education about rail safety measures could be addressed through inclusion in community policing public education talks for schoolchildren and for seniors. The problem of the person who has unrealistic expectations was discussed and it was felt that little could be done about this directly.

3.3 Joondalup

In the Joondalup project, the City of Joondalup youth services co-ordinator was the main representative from the City of Joondalup. Other partners included a representative of the Management of Lakeside shopping centre at Joondalup, which is located adjacent to the station; representatives from Joondalup Youth Support Service, a community based youth service; Centrecare, a Catholic welfare service that provides youth support; the YMCA mobile youth service; members of the City of Joondalup detached youth work team; and a representative from the social work team at DCD. George Svirac, a PTA transit guard manager, was the main PTA representative with Tina Musumeci from PTA community education.

From the perspective of the PTA, the main issue at Joondalup was physical conflict between PTA staff and a small minority of young people. The history of this conflict includes some serious assaults. There was also some concern about welfare issues for some young people. Local youth workers confirmed there had been some tensions between young people and rail security staff. They advised that this problem had been aggravated by someone posing as a plainclothes police officer who had been approaching young people in the grounds near the station. Other issues raised by the local youth and community group included the problem that the imminent development of Lakeside shopping centre would significantly change the area around the station and this would affect the social dynamics of relationships between young people, PTA staff and security staff. There was lengthy discussion about how to respond to tensions between young people and rail staff.

At the beginning of the project, Lakeside shopping centre had an experienced and stable security team who were managing difficult situations well. The shopping centre management believed this was because they were able to build positive relationships with young people and be fair and consistent. The issue of staff consistency and continuity was discussed at some length. Station security staff did not have this continuity, because rostering arrangements meant that staff could be placed at any location across the rail system. During the project, the Lakeside shopping centre experienced instability of security staffing and then had similar problems to those experienced by Joondalup station staff.

During the project, to improve interagency collaboration and to help develop integrated responses, staff from youth agencies met informally with the station staff at Joondalup. These informal relationships will be developed to include shopping centre security staff when the shopping centre security team stabilises.

To respond to the welfare issue, the City of Joondalup agreed to update their local youth services 'zip card'. This new card will be distributed to young people and to transit guards.

Shopping centre management gave advance notice to other partners about changes to access likely to change security issues around the station.

3.4 Midland

The main partners at the Midland focus and planning groups were the City of Swan and Corridors College. Corridors College is an alternative education program for young people who do not attend mainstream school. Other partners included Hills Community Group, a community-managed youth and community work service; a staff member from DCD who is also on the management committee of the Midland PCYC; and City of Swan youth workers.

In Midland, the two main issues raised by the PTA were anti-social behaviour by adults in Midland and welfare issues. Anti-social behaviour by adults is outside the brief of this project. Members from youth and community organisations raised five additional issues: problems caused by the fact that some young people had accrued such large fines they had no possibility of ever paying them; how non-payment of fares easily escalated to other charges when young people did not give their personal details to security staff; problems caused because young people travelled from the area to Perth in the evenings because there was nothing to do in Midland; and problems that arose from family violence that meant some young people chose to ride the trains through the night, especially on Fridays and Saturday nights, rather than return home. The issue of identity theft was raised because some young people had complained that other people had used their personal details when apprehended by transit guards and this resulted in the wrong person receiving fines.

The issue of fines was analysed in depth during the intervention-planning meeting. It seemed many young people wrongly believed their fines would be wiped out when they turned 18. This was identified as an issue for community education.

A proportion of young people have accrued such large fines that they have no reasonable prospect of repaying them, and this prevents them from obtaining driving licences. In turn, this reduces their employment options. As a result, some young people drive vehicles while they are unlicensed and accrue further offences. There was discussion about whether there could be some system where, if fines were repaid gradually over a period, and no further offences were committed, there might be some tariff for fine reduction with the possibility that these people could be allowed to apply for licences. There exists a scheme whereby this can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

To address the issue of young people not giving correct details and not wanting to speak to authority figures, youth workers described a scheme trialled in Queensland, whereby young people could choose to carry cards that provided the personal details legally required by rail security staff and police. In addition, the card authorised authorities such as police or transit guards to contact a youth worker to speak on the young person's behalf. It was agreed that this would be trialled if there were young people and youth services who wanted to use this scheme.

During the project, local networks have formed between Corridors College staff, Hills Community staff and the PTA. This has led to the prompt resolution of some individual problems, and improved trust between young people and PTA staff. These networks have emerged as a sustainable initiative and partnerships are being maintained. Some transit guards are now regular volunteers at the PCYC and are helping at special events designed to provide entertainment for young people in Midland so they do not go into Perth.

The issue of young people who try to spend the night on trains to avoid family violence at home was discussed. A suggestion was made that a youth shelter, open on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, would resolve this problem. This is a longer-term project and will be followed through by DCD staff.

The issue of stolen identity was potentially resolved by an agreement that young people who had these concerns could register a password with the police computer that would be checked if anyone used their details. Youth workers would make this scheme known to young people for whom this is a problem.

4 Other initiatives

The PTA has made several operational changes during the project that will help build more positive relationships between community members, youth agencies, and PTA staff, and between young people and transit guards. These operational changes include rostering transit guards on the same line, permanent staff at Kelmscott, and the appointment of fare gate attendants to try to address issues of staff shortage of transit guards. The findings from this project indicate that all these moves will contribute positively to maintenance of positive relationships between young people and PTA staff. These new initiatives by the PTA will also support interagency collaboration between local government and community agencies that can help to reduce conflict and PTA staff.

Informal contacts between community agencies and PTA staff involved in this project have resolved many important issues with individuals. This process has been followed up by changes to organisational systems to respond to problems generically in the longer term, and through community education programs. This active resolution of problems has increased the confidence of community organisations and young people. It is crucial to building a culture of public support for PTA staff so that they become seen as people who maintain public safety and offer help. We strongly recommend community liaison becomes the major part of the role of a senior member of PTA staff.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

The project is not yet finished, but we have learnt several lessons that may be directly relevant to other interagency social-situational crime prevention projects of this type. First, the initial negotiations to identify and build agency partnerships and to agree funding took much longer to complete than we anticipated. In part, this was because of the high turnover of staff in local government community services positions. In part, it occurred because so many parties were involved (OCP, PTA, 4 local governments, and 25 agencies). A future recommendation would be to allow much more time for the preliminary stages of any project where multiple partnerships are involved.

Second, we discovered that prior to this project, agencies typically did not consult with each other about changes that affected the other agencies work unless they were in the same professional line of work. Most commonly, this lack of communication occurred either because they had not considered another agency might have an interest in the problem being addressed or because agencies were unaware of the existence of other agencies. This project has helped several agencies become more aware of how their decisions and operational choices positively or negatively affect the work of other agencies. This has been one of the most valuable outcomes because it has enabled a number of sources of conflict to be addressed. In future all agencies involved in this project are more likely to resolve problems in partnership rather than singly.

Third, from youth workers and community agencies, we found that many of the concerns young people raised with youth workers could be addressed quickly and easily once the transit guard managers were aware of the problem. This increased the confidence young people had in the fairness of the transit guards. It will contribute in the longer term to improved relationships between transit guards, youth services and young people. Some of the transit guards have also become involved voluntarily with youth organisations and this will contribute to improved relationships in the long term. These concrete outcomes of the project are an essential part of the process of winning broad-based public support for the transit guard role.

Fourth, we discovered that one of the intractable problems facing transit guards was that the media, and others who influence public opinion, present transit guards in a way that did not

invoke the same public support as for some other public servants. The formations of relationships with a range of community organisations, and the speedy resolutions of practical problems raised by youth workers and community representatives, will contribute in the longer term to increasing public regard for transit guards and the work that they do.

Fifth, this research project demonstrated it is time-consuming and uses resources to establish and maintain positive collaborative links. Maintenance of collaborative working requires on-going conflict resolution, even when agencies acknowledge that collaboration is mutually beneficial. Interagency collaboration requires commitment of resources to facilitation and coordination in the longer-term. We strongly recommend that provision should be made for this. Collaborative discussion has already commenced about how this will occur at different locations. Local government partners and Corridors College have offered to host future meetings and we recommend that community liaison becomes the major part of the role of a senior member of PTA staff.

Finally, the success of the ongoing projects initiated and resulting from this research depended upon finding people who wanted to try to do something, and who were prepared to accommodate changes in established single-agency practices to do so. We were fortunate that at each location we found in the PTA and youth and community agencies, individuals and groups who wanted to attempt to do something and who were flexible in their approach to problem solving. Results varied between locations, in part because the issues differed, but in part, because the mix of agencies that were active varied between locations.

Recommendations for future interagency work include: that there needs to be sufficient flexibility to allow for different outcomes from different partnerships; that the people involved need to have sufficient seniority to implement changes; that partnerships must focus on what can be achieved by participants not on what other people should do; and that the collaborative partnerships must attract people who are prepared to look for unconventional solutions when conventional approaches have failed.

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