

The changing nature of youth offending and our strategic approach

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The changing profile of youth offending

- Victorian children are underrepresented as offenders and the number who offending continues to reduce
- However a small group is rapidly escalating into serious crime at young ages
- Increase in loosely associated individuals coming together for the purpose of offending, in contrast to organised 'gangs' with stable membership
- Young people over-represented as offenders for robbery, burglary, theft, sexual and transport offences
- Vehicle and other property crimes increasingly facilitated by violence
- Public order issues at city events - Moomba 2016 riots, New Year's Eve and White Night
- Youth Justice facility riots

Emerging features

- Social media as an enabler
- Emergence of 'performative' motivation for offending
- Heightened level of risk taking / thrill seeking behaviour
- Use of violence even when victims are cooperating
- Weakened deterrence effect of custody and other penalties
- Predatory recruitment of young people by organised crime groups

Characteristics of young people in Youth Justice facilities

- 66 per cent had a history of both alcohol and drug misuse
- 64 per cent had been subject to a current or previous child protection order
- 63 per cent were victims of abuse, trauma or neglect
- 62 per cent had previously been suspended or expelled from school
- 30 per cent presented with mental health issues

Police interventions across the continuum

- Prevention
 - Community engagement
 - Reporting abuse to Child Protection
 - Referral to services
 - Investigating/prosecuting offenders who perpetrate against children
- Early intervention
 - Cautioning & diversion
 - Referral to programs and services
- Enforcement
 - Charge, summons, bail
 - Remand
 - Prosecution

Our approach

- Operational
 - holding young people to account
 - working with families
- Strategic
 - consulting young people
 - bringing together sectors and government
 - influencing reform
 - capability building in communities

What young people told us

- What a group of 'at risk' young people thought was driving trends in young people's involvement in crime
 - Stress
 - Financial hardship
 - School exclusion
 - Under employment
 - Discrimination
 - Mental illness
 - Difficulty negotiating services like Centrelink
- 'locked out' phenomenon

Chief Commissioner's Youth Summit

- 200 representatives of government, NGOs, community groups, academics, young people, media
- Herald-Sun campaign in lead-up
- Premier committed to consideration of recommendations by Cabinet
- Discussion themes spanned health, human services, education and justice domains

Subsequent developments

- Government's Community Safety Statement commitments
- Transfer of Youth Justice to Corrections
- Review of Youth Justice services (Ogloff-Armytage)

What next?

- 'Locking in' disadvantaged young people to education, training and employment
- Ensuring support services can address vulnerabilities e.g. mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, housing.
- Building community capability