

This government sees a society and an economy where all families young and old are safe and secure so they are able to reach their full potential and prosper.

Mike, (Reid), Your worships - Mayor Kerry, Sir Barry and Jenny, distinguished guests and conference participants, rau rangatira ma - tena katou.

It is a pleasure to be here today to welcome such a diverse range of participants to the Safer Communities Conference 2006.

This conference is the third biennial conference to be hosted by Local Government New Zealand and I am pleased as Minister of both Local Government and Justice that this year's conference is along with Local Government New Zealand co-hosted by the Ministry of Justice, represented by the Crime Prevention Unit. I consider this to be a key event in the crime prevention field. The theme of the conference is aptly: Community Safety: Making it Happen.

I particularly want to welcome the key note speakers: Lyn Provost, Deputy Commissioner New Zealand Police, Dr Mike MacAvoy, Chief Executive, Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand of NZ and Jeremy Wood, Director of the Crime Prevention Unit in the Justice Ministry.

I want to acknowledge the work undertaken by both Local Government New Zealand and the Crime Prevention Unit to ensure the conference will be a success. It's also good to see local authorities and community providers leading workshops where projects which are being implemented successfully in a number of New Zealand communities will be showcased.

The many examples you will have the opportunity to hear about clearly show how the prevention of crime and creating safer communities is a collaborative effort involving us all at a local and national level.

In recent months I have outlined this government's vision for a justice sector and I would like to expand on that theme today.

This government sees a society and an economy where all families young and old are safe and secure so they are able to reach their full potential and prosper.

There are five pillars underpinning the government's objectives in the Justice area. They are:

- making crime prevention work
- putting in place effective sanctions that address crime and criminal offending, and which have the confidence of the public
- improving public access to Justice
- maintaining the integrity of the justice system, and
- modernising legal frameworks.

Government initiatives must, and will, continue to address crime with policy that reduces its occurrence, helps victims, supports those who genuinely want to turn their lives around, and targets repeat offenders and hardened criminals and their activity. These are all critical planks in an effective, long-term policy programme.

Because we need a range of effective and sustained approaches to reduce criminal offending and re-offending and to address our growing prison population, officials from across the state sector, led by the Justice Ministry have been

looking at new and effective intervention options.

Cabinet has considered the outcomes of this work and an announcement on future initiatives will be made tomorrow. So this is a very timely occasion to share my thoughts on how this work will contribute to a reduction in crime, and in turn help build safer communities.

Initiatives will focus on three elements:

- Tilting the balance earlier to prevent crime
- Using alternatives to prison - where this is appropriate
- Adopting smarter use of prison resources

The first two elements are very relevant to you as guardians of safer community outcomes.

### **Tilting the balance**

Early intervention has been shown to work both in New Zealand and overseas. It is clearly the most effective way to achieve long term reductions in crime as the right interventions help to build stronger, healthier families and communities.

### **Alternatives to Imprisonment**

There are a number of promising options such as increasing the use of home detention, restorative justice and strengthening community sentences. These interventions can only be effective if they have the support of local communities, and key opinion leaders in communities help to identify that these options can contribute towards creating a safer and more secure community environment.

As an example, Restorative Justice evaluations have told us that significant numbers of victims of crime value this service. When managed safely, and when the victim has agreed to participate, restorative justice can offer victims of crime a real voice in the criminal justice system.

A victim can sit face to face with an offender and ask the questions they want answers to. Why did you burgle my house? Why did you take my possessions? Do you know the value I placed on these items?

We have also been told that offenders do not consider a restorative justice process a 'soft option'. It may well be the first time that an offender has had to accept full responsibility for their actions and be in a position to apologise to the person they have harmed.

More detail on these initiatives will be announced tomorrow.

The total package of measures shows that responding-to and preventing crime is not just a justice initiative but involves a number of other government agencies. This clearly demonstrates our serious commitment to a whole of government approach to tackling serious social issues.

With the introduction of the Local Government Act 2002, local authorities have a broad mandate to promote the wellbeing of current and future communities. The Community outcomes processes undertaken by local authorities across the country have highlighted the importance that our communities place on safety. The challenge we face together is how to enhance the safety, and perception of safety, in our communities.

With the development of Long Term Council Community Plans (LTCCPs) setting out Councils' contributions to a range of outcomes sought by their communities, there is a renewed opportunity to consider the roles that we can all play, be it in local government, central government or in the community.

This conference presents a great opportunity to share the positive collaborative projects happening across the country, whether at a national or local level, to gather new tools and gain good ideas to face challenges.

The three themes for this conference are Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, reducing alcohol related harm and Community responses to crime prevention and safety. In addition this is the last time the National task force on Community Violence, chaired by Sir Barry Curtis, Mayor of Manukau City will meet and I will be making a special reference to the taskforce's work later.

I have the honour today to be launching the Crime Prevention Unit's, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design inter-active DVD training tool. I can also tell you that a resource to tackle Graffiti, which has been developed by Local Government New Zealand, with support from the Crime Prevention Unit, will be showcased at the Graffiti workshop on Wednesday.

In addition at an event later this evening, the Alcohol Advisory Council will be launching Te Ara Poka Tika - Project Walkthrough, an innovative interagency and community approach to reduce alcohol-related harm and crime, drawing on the traditional and unique role of Maori Wardens.

As part of this Government's Safer Communities initiative, in June 2004 the Justice Ministry published an action plan to reduce community and sexual violence.

A National Task force for Community Violence Reduction, chaired by Sir Barry Curtis was established to provide a supporting role in the development of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines, and the development of resources for tackling alcohol related violence.

Today I want to update you on some of the work achieved to date within the priority areas supported by the task force.

### **Crime Prevention through Environmental Design**

In November 2005 I launched the National Guidelines for Crime Prevention through Environmental design (CPTED) for urban planners, local government, police and others involved in crime prevention. CPTED is a cornerstone of situational crime prevention.

The guidelines were the first initiative in a tool kit designed to help reduce the likelihood of crime by showing how, among other things, better design elements, limiting entrapment zones, and promotion of appropriate activities in public places, promotes a safer and more vibrant community.

Demand for the guidelines has been strong and they have been widely used as a resource at a local level. They have been recognised as being of an international standard by a range of experts both here and overseas.

Crime prevention through making public places safer leads to a range of economic and social benefits. Cities and towns become places in which people enjoy living and accessing services, which obviously is also good for the economy.

For families and communities, public spaces can be used more safely, meaning communities can interact more confidently and positively.

Today I am delighted to introduce the second tool in this toolkit, an interactive training DVD. This product is the result of the combined efforts of the Crime Prevention Unit and a number of local authorities.

The DVD provides live video footage of practical examples of CPTED in action. It is pleasing to see that now the complete tool box is available, delivery of an introductory training module that has to date been offered by the Crime Prevention Unit will be continued, where required, by Local Government New Zealand.

This is a good example of agencies who share common or complimentary objectives working collaboratively.

### **Alcohol Related Violence**

In developing the Safer Communities action plan, research identified a lack of resources and guidance to enable local communities to tackle alcohol related harm and violence. Since that time, a number of partners to the Action Plan on Community and Sexual Violence have taken action to remedy this situation.

A key step in the provision of best practice advice to local areas was the publication of the Alcohol Advisory Council's 'Planning for Alcohol in the Community' toolkit. This resource provides comprehensive guidance for local areas to effectively plan harm reduction activity at a local level.

A number of other guidance resources have been produced to support local implementation of such work. I want to take this opportunity to commend ALAC for the development of the toolkit and their other excellent resources.

In addition, the New Zealand Police have produced their Alcohol Action Plan that outlines the range of police responses to reduce alcohol related offending and victimisation.

Earlier this year the Ministry of Justice's Crime Prevention Unit released some \$370,000 to support local evidence-based projects to reduce alcohol related violence and harm. This funding was contestable and the number and quality of applications demonstrates the importance afforded this issue by many communities.

The key criteria for successfully applying for funding were that:

- authorities identify all alcohol related violence initiatives already in place in their community,
- they show documented evidence of the level of alcohol related violence in their community, and
- they indicate how their response would impact on the problem.

In this way resources could be targeted to areas with clearly identified need.

In addition, the Ministry will continue to work with other national agencies to support local practice. For example, the CPU funds and provides best practice advice to Christchurch to develop responses to alcohol-related violence in the city centre.

This local work usefully demonstrates the overlap between CPTED and alcohol related harm. Christchurch City Council is undertaking a significant re-design of a key part of the city centre using CPTED principles.

Alongside other approaches, this work is expected to significantly reduce alcohol-related harm in the city. Finally, along with other agencies such as ALAC and the Police, the CPU is working with the thirteen authorities funded to develop robust alcohol strategies.

### **Graffiti**

Graffiti vandalism has become a major problem for almost all local authorities across the country. Ugly scrawls deface the landscape of our cities and towns. They can be found on buildings, roads, fences, bridges and signs through out the country and in some places they have even appeared on tress and cliff faces.

As you will be aware the costs to local authorities, infrastructure providers, business and local homeowners is substantial. But the costs can't be measured in monetary terms alone. Research shows that graffiti is often linked with other more destructive crimes. Without graffiti removal an area is likely to attract further property damage and other forms of street crime.

In response to growing concerns from local authorities about the impact of graffiti vandalism on councils, communities and local business, the Ministry of Justice has worked with Local Government New Zealand to develop resources to tackle this problem.

Local Government New Zealand put together a team of local government officers with experience in tackling graffiti. This team has contributed to a Know How Guide for Councils to assist them to develop their own 'beat graffiti strategies'.

No one approach to reducing graffiti will be effective on its own, so the guide aims to compile a range of tools and techniques that Councils can use to manage graffiti vandalism. The tools and techniques have largely been drawn from local best practice, as well as looking at international responses to the problem.

The Guide is being introduced at a one-day graffiti focused workshop being held on Wednesday. I would like to commend those who worked to put this guide together and in particular to acknowledge those practitioners from local government who have given their time and shared their experience to develop an excellent and very practical resource.

The Government remains committed to further building on this work by establishing a national initiative to reduce the cost and incidence of graffiti. This project provides a good foundation for our future work.

### **Concluding Comments**

Achieving long term and sustainable reductions in crime requires an engagement at all levels of society, and the consideration of diverse points of view and experience.

This conference provides an excellent forum for sharing ideas, discussing issues and looking at challenges in the area of crime reduction from both a national and a local level.

I wish you a successful conference, which will help you tackle these problems with even greater effectiveness when you return to your own communities, and I

wish you a rewarding, enjoyable and yes - safe visit to the capital.

But before I finish I am pleased to have one more task.

I referred earlier to the work of the National Task Force on Community Violence. The task force demonstrated very well the benefits of multi agency collaboration in supporting safer communities. In recognition of its contribution, on behalf of the Ministry of Justice, I am pleased to offer a small gift of thanks to members of the task force leadership group.

I would ask the chair of the task force Sir Barry Curtis to come forward and receive this gift on behalf of all task force members, and to say a few words regarding the role of local government in creating safer communities.