



“Looking Back – Looking Beyond – Gang Strategies in the Wider Context”

Organised Crime Strategy

- **Building community resilience and empowerment through engagement**
- **Strengthening collaborative approaches to prevention**
- **Improving the gathering, secure sharing and effective use of information**
- **Ensuring optimal disruption, investigation and prosecution of organised criminal activity**



Getting Public Acceptance

The public tend to fall into fall into one of two camps – those that favour community engagement, and those that favour enforcement and suppression

Early Days – Maori Urbanisation

- *They shifted from extended to nuclear families (government pepper-potting prevented Maori aggregations), from support networks to relative isolation, from family bonds to bonds with disaffected others, from a secure place in a community to a place that could be hostile to brown faces, from a place where one was a leader to a place where one worked for 'the boss', from a place where community values were internalised to a place where all sanctions came from outside and were enforced by police*

Durie, Hon Eddie Taihakurei, “ The Study of Maori Offending” A paper presented to the NZ Parole Board Conference, 23 July 2007

In the Past

- **The 'J' Teams – Police, Social Welfare, Maori Affairs and a community representative - Late 1960's**
- **In the Community – Struggling with dysfunction. 1970's**
- **Maori and Employment – GELS and MACCESS 1980's**
- **In the Prisons - 1990's - MAP**

The Public Response to Gangs -

Wanganui Drive By Shooting – 5 May 2007

- **Treat them like terrorists**
- **Introduce legislation to make them illegal**
- **Zero Tolerance**

Time Magazine article – 5 July 2007

- **Ron Mark – Gangs tarnishing national reputation – eliminate them**
- **Greg O'Connor – Commission of Inquiry**
- **Kere Woodham – Deny entitlement to benefits**
- **Pita Sharples – Publicity unbalanced**
- **Denis O'Reilly - concerned that pre-emptive action by public officials will create an unhealthy interest by youth in gangs.**
- **Peter Dunne - educating young people and provide realistic alternatives to gang life**
- **Howard Broad, Commissioner of Police - opposed to outlawing gangs, it would drive them underground, and make gangs an attractive proposition**



Gangs exist in our society for both positive and negative reasons. As a democratic society, we allow groups to form, people to associate freely, and to live their lives without undue interference from government. On the negative side, people from very low socio-economic circumstances, with poor education, high unemployment, and common ethnic identity, group together for purposes of security, mutual affirmation, and social cohesion.”

Jarrold Gilbert



Two Schools of Thought

- **Elimination through Enforcement, (the Los Angeles approach) or**
- **Ensuring Public Safety through Gang and Community Engagement (the New York approach)**



Failure of Law Enforcement Strategies

- **Police gang units are often formed for the wrong reasons and perceived as isolated and ineffectual by law enforcement colleagues**
- **Heavy-handed suppression efforts can increase gang cohesion and police-community tensions. They have a poor track record when it comes to reducing crime and violence**
- **“Balanced” gang control strategies have been plagued by replication problems and imbalances between law enforcement and community stakeholders**
- **Minority ethnic communities bear the cost of failed gang enforcement initiatives.**



Positive public safety strategies

- **Expand the use of evidenced-based practice to reduce youth crime**
- **Promote jobs, education, and healthy communities, and lower barriers to the reintegration into society of former gang members**
- **Redirect resources from failed gang enforcement efforts to proven public safety strategies**

Government Involvement in Gang Policy

- **Persuade legislators to allocate more money to proven social programs that target illegal gang behavior and less for large-scale arrest-and-imprison initiatives that often show short-term gains but make gang problems worse**

Green, Judith and Pranis, Keith, Justice Policy Institute, Washington DC, In July 2007, "Gang Wars – the Failure of law Enforcement Strategies and the Need for Effective Public Safety Strategies", July 2007



Best Practises to Address Community Gang Problems

- **Community Mobilization:** Involvement of local citizens, including former gang members- youth, community groups, agencies, and coordination of programs and staff
- **Opportunities Provision:** Development of education, training, and employment programs targeting gang-involved youth
- **Social Intervention:** Involving youth-serving agencies, schools, grassroots groups, faith-based organizations, police, and other juvenile/criminal justice organization
- **Suppression:** Formal and informal social control procedures, including supervision and monitoring of gang-involved youth by juvenile/criminal justice system, community-based agencies, schools, and grassroots groups
- **Organizational Change and Development:** Development and implementation of policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of available and potential resources

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Department of Justice, USA, (OJJDP), "Best Practises to Address Community Gang Problems" (2008)



Lessons from Managing Terrorists

- **Develop a rational, long term strategy**
- **Avoid the temptation to politicize the gang issue, and to offer 'silver bullet' solutions through piecemeal legislation**
- **Don't deal with public fear, by promoting public fear – take a rational long term approach to the issue**
- **Seek to understand issues of causation - and address them**
- **Understand that while some gang members are dangerous criminals, not all members of gang families are criminals, or condone criminal behaviour**
- **Develop a long-term strategy to deal with gangs, which includes both short term and long term goals:**



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Lessons from Managing Terrorists

- **Short Term Goals would include:**
 - **A focus on intelligence gathering;**
 - **Targeting serious criminal activity**
 - **Incarceration of key leaders in criminal activity**
 - **Develop contingency plans for dealing with crisis events**
 - **Targeted prevention activities – reducing recruitment, promoting positive community based programmes in impoverished communities;**



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Lessons from Managing Terrorists

- **Long Term Goals would include:**
 - **Ongoing dialogue to increase trust and reduce tension;**
 - **Deploying reformed gang members in mediating with existing gang leaders, and implementing offender rehabilitation programmes**
 - **Providing support for imprisoned gang members and their families**
- **Lentini, Pete (2008) 'Understanding and combating terrorism: Definitions, origins and strategies', Australian Journal of Political Science, 43:1, 133 — 140**



Creating Criminals in a Market Society – Vivien Stern

- **1. We put on our crime spectacles when looking at certain people. We don't see people who are mentally ill, addicted to drugs, or disempowered.**
- **2. Instead of solving we decide to create more crimes. The presence of gangs in the community, becomes not a social problem, but a crime.**
- **3. We create a nation of criminals to no good effect instead of looking at all the other possibilities.**
- **4. We create new crimes to absorb all the socially annoying or uncomfortable acts that people engage in. This increase in criminalisation affects mostly those at the bottom of society, the poor and the marginalized and the minorities.**