Crime prevention and Police Citizen Youth Clubs: A vision for the future

Dr Cassandra Cross

Senior Lecturer
Queensland University of Technology

Board of Directors
Queensland Police Citizens Youth Welfare Association
Today’s presentation

• Outlines the QLD model of Police Citizens Youth Clubs (PCYC)
• Presents the results of an evaluation which examined the crime prevention and community safety benefits of PCYC
• Summarises the key recommendations of the research
• Outlines current progress on these recommendations
Acknowledgements

• Dr Kelly Richards and Dr Angela Dwyer
• QPCYWA
• Queensland Police Service

• All views expressed in this presentation are my own
History of PCYCs in Australia

• First PCYC was established in NSW in 1937 “to provide suitable places where lads, brought up in industrial areas, could meet, play engage in sport, giving them a chance in life, and preventing them becoming street corner loafers” (William Mackay, NSW Police Commissioner)
  – “Balmain Police Citizens Boys Club”

• Other clubs across Australia were established in response to the large number of young boys whose fathers were serving in WWII, and particularly focused on the many whose fathers did not return
  – West Australia 1941
  – Tasmania 1946
  – Victoria 1947
  – Northern Territory 1952
PCYCs in Queensland

- Founded in 1948 (Lang Park)
- Currently has 54 clubs across QLD including four Indigenous communities
- Every club is managed by a Sergeant (QPS) with some clubs having a Senior Constable to assist
- QPCYWA recently appointed a civilian CEO (previously was managed by a serving police officer)
- Volunteer based organisation
- Majority of clubs are located in low socio-economic areas
Strategic snapshot of QPCYWA

• Vision
  – Building safer, healthier communities through youth development

• Purpose
  – We are a trusted and respected not-for-profit that delivers programs, services and venue to meet community and youth needs across the whole of Queensland.
Life at PCYC

• Each club delivers a wide variety of activities tailored to their local community
• Clubs engage in many of the following:
  – Youth development programs
  – Crime prevention programs
  – Sport and recreation activities (including gyms)
  – Indigenous programs and activities
  – School aged care services
Existing knowledge about the effectiveness of PCYCs

- No prior evaluations of PCYCs as a whole
- A small number of evaluations of individual programs offered by PCYCs (eg Jones et al 2004; RecLink 2005; Zark Consultancy 2011), with positive results
- PCYCs held in high regard
The Evaluation

• The evaluation focused on the link between the activities offered by PCYCs (eg sporting, recreational, welfare) and factors already known to reduce youth crime and promote community safety (eg school engagement)

• It used a qualitative, case study approach
Methodology

• Case study approach
  – Three clubs (urban, regional, Indigenous)
  – QPCYWA state office staff
  – Branch managers at QPCYWA State conference 2013

• Interviews
  – Police
  – Stakeholders

• Focus groups
  – PCYC Management committees
  – Young people
  – Parents

• Various stakeholder groups:
  – Branch managers
  – PCYC staff (State office and clubs)
  – Members of PCYC volunteer Management Committees
  – Members of the QPS
  – Parents of young people involved in the PCYC
  – Members of PCYC Youth Management Teams
  – Other young people at PCYC
  – External stakeholders (government and non-government agencies)
Participant Demographics

• 152 participants
  – Including 39 young people
• 18% identified as Indigenous
10 Evaluation indicators:

1. Building positive relationships among young people, police and communities;
2. Enhancing young people’s engagement with education and employment;
3. Enhancing young people’s family relationships;
4. Reducing the victimisation of young people;
5. Providing sporting, leisure and cultural activities that reduce young people’s free time (i.e., “boredom busting”);
6. Addressing disadvantage among young people;
7. Developing young people’s life skills;
8. Providing young people with a sense of belonging;
9. Building young people’s confidence and self-esteem; and
10. Improving community perceptions of young people.
General consensus on the following indicators:

• Building positive relationships among young people, police and communities;
• Providing sporting, leisure and cultural activities that reduce young people’s free time (i.e. “boredom busting”);
• Addressing disadvantage among young people;
• Developing young people’s life skills;
• Providing young people with a sense of belonging; and
• Improving community perceptions of young people.
Little consensus on the following indicators:

- Enhancing young people’s engagement with education and employment;
- Enhancing young people’s family relationships;
- Reducing the victimisation of young people; and
- Building young people’s confidence and self-esteem.
Key research finding

• In general, crime prevention and community safety were not commonly identified by participants as benefits or outcomes of PCYCs.

• Benefits that could be considered to contribute towards crime prevention and community safety (such as fostering positive relationships between police and young people and addressing socioeconomic disadvantage) were often understood as goals in and of themselves rather than as contributing to crime prevention or community safety.
Key recommendations of the evaluation

• The goals of crime prevention and community safety, and the ways in which PCYCs (and the activities and programs offered by PCYCs) should seek to meet these goals, need to be better articulated by QPCYWA.

• Crime prevention and community safety need to be more effectively understood and communicated within QPCYWA as key organisational goals.

• Crime prevention and community safety need to be more effectively communicated externally (to stakeholders and communities) as key organisational goals.
Moving forward

• A review of QPCYWA in 2016 found that “there is no consistent view across the organisation as to our core purpose and vision, which makes it harder to direct our efforts and investment in a strategic manner”.
  – The evaluation findings mirror this.

• A committee was established to examine the concepts of crime prevention, youth development and community engagement and how these might be understood within QPCYWA.
Understanding crime prevention

• Crime prevention is defined as “...any action or program designed to influence the underlying or contributing factors that increase the risk of crime, antisocial behaviour or victimisation occurring or improve actual or perceived safety”.

• QPCYWA will work in partnership with the QPS, local community and other relevant organisations to prevent and respond to crime and antisocial behaviour.
Premise of crime prevention

1. Crime and antisocial behaviour includes all actions against persons and property (in both online and offline environments) as well as behaviours which are not necessarily criminal, but can still cause harm to other persons (for example, bullying).

2. The main focus on the prevention of crime and antisocial behaviour is targeted at children and young people (aged 25 years and under) however this does not exclude other categories (adults, older persons or families more broadly).

3. The prevention of crime and antisocial behaviour is the shared responsibility of a number of agencies, including but not limited to, the QPCYWA and QPS as well as the local community.
Premise of crime prevention

4. QPCYWA will lead primary and secondary prevention programs within their clubs but will also assist other initiatives led by QPS and other agencies as needed.

5. Tertiary prevention programs will not be mandatory for all QPCYWA clubs, but will be considered depending on the resources available to implement them.

6. Prevention programs will have an explicit goal in seeking to address or modify a particular behaviour/attitude/action identified as criminal or antisocial.
7. Prevention programs will be deliberately structured across a selected time frame, in an attempt to modify or change a particular behaviour/attitude/action identified as criminal or antisocial.

8. Prevention programs will be based on identified needs within the community, determined by the QPCYWA in consultation with the QPS, or other relevant organisations and also can be community driven in nature.

9. There may be some overlap between prevention programs and youth development programs, however for it to be classed as a prevention program, it will need to explicitly focus on an identified criminal or antisocial behaviour.
Conclusion

- PCYCs are a valuable resource to all communities and are currently doing great work across a number of areas
- There is a need to better understand how the current activities contribute to crime prevention and community safety outcomes, and to understand what those concepts mean to the organisation as a whole
- Progress has been made to define these concepts to enable a shared understanding to drive forward the future vision and direction of the QPCYWA
Questions?

Dr Cassandra Cross

cr.ross@qut.edu.au

Full evaluation report is available at:

https://eprints.qut.edu.au/83698/