



An Australian Government Initiative



NATIONAL COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMME

CCTV as a crime prevention measure

What is CCTV?

Closed Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV) are used to monitor and record images of what takes place in specific locations in real time. The images collected are sent to a monitor and recorded on video tape or as digital information. The cameras can be fixed or set to scan an area or they can be operated by controllers. Monitors can be watched by controllers or left unmonitored. The recorded information can be stored and/or reviewed by those who have access to the recordings at their convenience.

This Tip Sheet details how CCTV can be used as a part of a community crime prevention strategy. It details the way CCTV works as a crime prevention tool and presents evidence about its effectiveness in certain settings. Examples are also given of its use in Australia.

Prepared in partnership with the Australian Institute of Criminology

How does CCTV work to prevent crime?

CCTV is an environmental crime prevention tool. Commentators have described its possible effects as including:

- providing a surveillance function that may work to deter people from committing crimes in the area in which it is used
- signifying to the public that an area with CCTV is a safe place and the increased use of the space means that crime is less likely to happen as there are more potential witnesses
- the presence of CCTV may act as a prompt to remind people to take other security measures such as locking their car (Welsh & Farrington 2006).

Is CCTV useful as a crime prevention tool?

- Evaluations indicate that CCTV is useful in certain circumstances. A comparison of 22 evaluations showed that 11 found a positive effect (decrease in offences), five an undesirable effect (increase in crime), five found no effect and in one case the evidence was unclear (Welsh & Farrington 2002).
- Evidence from the UK shows that its use may reduce theft of motor vehicles and some other forms of acquisitive crime. There is also evidence that it works best in small enclosed areas (Gill & Spriggs 2005).
- Research suggests that CCTV is most successful in reducing or solving crime when there is an active police interest in:
 - providing surveillance information to inform the setting up of CCTV
 - being involved in monitoring the CCTV
 - using the evidence it can provide.
- There is also evidence that improving street lighting reduces crime. As both street lighting and CCTV appear to separately reduce crime then it has been suggested that combining these elements may have even greater impact on crime reduction in environments like car parks in reducing vehicle crime (Welsh & Farrington 2004).

What is the cost of CCTV?

CCTV has both a set up cost and an ongoing recurrent operating cost. These costs can make it expensive to implement and maintain. Furthermore technology is constantly improving requiring ongoing decision making as to whether the equipment being used will need to be upgraded. There are a wide range of costs associated with CCTV systems, with the most expensive involving many cameras, 24 hour monitoring and 'active' monitoring (IRIS 2005, Wilson & Sutton 2003). Research conducted in 2002 refers to the following examples of annual operational cost for local government CCTV systems – Sydney \$900,000, Melbourne \$400,000, Adelaide \$310,000, Ipswich \$444,000, Fairfield \$340,000, and Toowoomba \$85,000 (Wilson & Sutton 2003).

Where is CCTV used in Australia?

CCTV is used extensively and can be found in many places including in commercial premises, at ATM venues, on public transport, at airports, in central business districts, and shopping malls.

The rate of uptake seems to be accelerating. As most central business districts now have them the most recent and future expansion of CCTV will be in suburban and rural areas. There seems to have been an increase over two years across Australia from 33 to 45 open air camera systems (IRIS 2005, Wilson & Sutton 2003).

In a recent survey of all local councils in Australia (excludes the ACT) nine per cent of local government councils reported that they had a CCTV system. In around 60% of cases the main CCTV was installed within the last six years. A further two per cent of councils reported they were currently considering installing a system (IRIS 2005).

Local government managed schemes have been categorised according to location and use of cameras (ARTD 2001):

- street/park/plaza surveillance
- council facilities (sports facilities, libraries etc)
- council administration buildings only
- portable cameras deployed at problem locations for limited time
- dummy cameras.

With the nine percent of local councils in Australia that have CCTV (IRIS 2005):

- 32% have them in open air shopping malls
- 54% have them in city centres other than malls, and
- 48% have cameras on council property.

It is also common for the public transport system to use CCTV. For example in NSW, in 2001 (ARTD 2001):

- State rail had cameras on over 300 stations, including 5,500 cameras, 19 control centres and more than 100 staff operating the system.
- There was extensive CCTV coverage on public buses, ferry wharves, private buses and many taxis.

Are there guidelines for CCTV?

Australian standards for CCTV are currently under development by Standards Australia and may be available publicly by the second half of 2006. There are British codes of practice www.bsi-global.com/Security/Electronic/BS7958:1999.xalter that contain much of the technical information that needs to be considered and understood when considering whether a CCTV system will work in local situations.

New South Wales has guidelines for CCTV operation in public places. Published in 2000 and endorsed at the national police commissioners' conference in 1999, these guidelines are subject to regular review [www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/cpd/ll_cpd.nsf/vwFiles/cctv.pdf/\\$file/cctv.pdf](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/cpd/ll_cpd.nsf/vwFiles/cctv.pdf/$file/cctv.pdf)

The guidelines outline principles under the following headings:

- Ownership of schemes and accompanying responsibilities
- Community consultation
- Setting clear objectives
- Integrated approaches to crime prevention
- Police involvement in public area CCTV schemes
- Managing and operating schemes
- Evaluation
- Complaints
- Monitoring and auditing

See **Tip Sheet 6** for information on establishing and implementing a CCTV project.

Further reading

- Australian Institute of Criminology 2004. AICrime reduction matters No. 18: Closed circuit television (CCTV) as a crime prevention measure, Canberra, AIC.
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<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/cfi/cfi069.html>
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- IRIS Research Ltd. 2005, *Australian Council's CCTV Survey 2005*, Wollongong, IRIS Research.
- NSW Attorney General's Department 2000. *NSW Government Policy Statement and Guidelines for the Establishment and Implementation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in Public Places*, NSW Attorney General's Department.
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- Welsh, BC & Farrington DP, 2002 Crime prevention effects of closed circuit television: a systematic review, Home Office Study 252, London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.
- Welsh, BC & Farrington DP, 2004. Surveillance for crime prevention in public space: Results and policy choices in Britain and America, *Criminology & Public Policy*; Jul 2004; Criminal Justice Periodicals pg. 497
- Wilson, D and Sutton A 2003. Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 271: Open-street CCTV in Australia, Australian Institute of Criminology 2004.
<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi2/tandi271.html>