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Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project Evaluation Report

Ashfield and Mid North Coast Local Area Commands

NSW Police Service

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February 2001

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Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project Evaluation Report - Executive Summary

- Research conducted in the United Kingdom has found that improving household security following a burglary can reduce repeat victimisation and contribute to a reduction in overall burglary levels. Using the English *Homesafe Project* as a model, the Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project, funded by the Crime Prevention Division of the NSW Attorney-General's Department, was conducted throughout 1999.
- The Project was conducted in two NSW Police Local Area Commands, Ashfield and the Mid North Coast.
- The aim of the Project was to introduce a number of housebreaking reduction strategies as part of the standard police response to reported break and enter incidents.
- The objectives of the Project were as follows:
 - * Contribute to an overall reduction in the level of residential housebreaking
 - * Reduce repeat victimisation for residential housebreaking
 - * Increase the detection of offenders for housebreaking and property theft-related offences
 - * Improve the quality of the policing response (incl. risk assessment, security advice, victim support, and target hardening)
 - * Increase awareness of home security among residents so that they take responsibility for crime prevention
- A number of related interventions were devised which would help meet the objectives of the Project. They included the:
 - * Conduct of security assessments at all residences broken into in the participating LACs during 1999
 - * Follow-up of security assessments with a victim support package
 - * Informing immediate neighbours of the residences broken into

- * Increasing the fingerprint team attendance rate
- * Target hardening of repeat victims' residences by the provision of locks
- * Conduct of a public education campaign about housebreaking reduction strategies.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of these interventions, including their acceptance by both the police and the victims was undertaken using several different measures. These included the analyses of data on property crime, levels of repeat victimisation, clear-up rates, and fingerprint attendance rates, along with interviews with break and enter victims and police participants.
- Commands immediately bordering the project sites were used as comparison sites. Burwood, Campsie and Marrickville LACs were the comparison sites for Ashfield, and Coffs/Clarence and Manning/Great Lakes the comparison sites for Mid North Coast LAC.
- Analysis of the COPS data revealed that the total number of break and enter incidents reduced between 1998 and 1999 (the intervention year) in both Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs, by 22.1% and 6.9% respectively.
- The number of **residential** break and enters reduced by 28.8% in Ashfield and by 8.9% in the Mid North Coast between 1998 and 1999.
- There was a statewide reduction of 10.0% in the number of residential break and enter incidents reported between 1998 and 1999. Three of the five comparison sites used for the Project also reduced their numbers of residential break and enter incidents, while the others increased.
- There was no apparent displacement to other property crime in either Ashfield or the Mid North Coast.
- Changes between 1998 and 1999 in the repeat victimisation rate for break and enters were estimated from the COPS data. These estimates indicate that the **proportion** of residences in Ashfield with multiple break and enters remained virtually unchanged between the two years, although the **number** of repeat victims decreased by 20. In the Mid North Coast both the **number** and **proportion** of repeat victims remained virtually identical.
- Three sources of data were used to calculate actual repeat victimisation in this Project. The three estimates of the **number** of repeat break and enter victims are very similar, ranging from 56 to 71 in Ashfield LAC, and 70 to 81 in the Mid North Coast. However, the repeat victimisation **rates** range between 5.1% and 18.6% in Ashfield, and 6.2% and 22.4% in the Mid North Coast. Because of biases inherent in the data sources, a point mid way between these estimates of annual repeat victimisation is suggested for the two LACs.
- Data on the number of charges laid for all break and enter and other property-related offences indicates that there was some increase between 1998 and 1999 for both Ashfield (an increase of 16%) and Mid North Coast (an increase of 10%).
- All seven LACs for which break and enter clear-up rates were examined, experienced some increase in their clear-up rates from 1998 to 1999. However, much of this increase could be attributed to a decrease in the number of break and enter incidents reported, rather than large increases in the number cleared-up. Mid North Coast significantly increased its proportion of residential break and enters cleared-up, whereas Ashfield made no significant increase.
- Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs increased between 1998 and 1999 the number of break and enter scenes their fingerprint gatherers attended, and the number of cases where prints were successfully lifted. The proportion of break and enter scenes attended was 32.5% in Mid North Coast and 37.4% in Ashfield, significantly higher than Manning/Great Lakes (25.1%), Campsie (16.3%) and Burwood (30.8%).

- However, Marrickville LAC, which shared a fingerprint team with Ashfield, also attended break and enter scenes at a higher rate than the other LACs (46.3%).
- An audit of security assessments revealed that 70.5% of Ashfield and 73.9% of Mid North Coast break and enters victims had police conduct security assessments of their residences in 1999.
 - An examination of information on residences target-hardened as part of the Project, revealed no evidence that further break and enters were prevented by the provision of locks.
 - Break and enter victims from Ashfield, Mid North Coast and a sample from their comparison sites of Campsie, Coffs/Clarence and Manning/Great Lakes were interviewed one month after their break-in.
 - Significantly more of the Ashfield (92.8%) and Mid North Coast (87.3%) respondents reported that police had conducted security assessments when they attended their break and enter incident than did the comparison site victims. Nearly all respondents in Ashfield (90.3%) and Mid North Coast (92.1%) had also received victim support packages while very few had received them in the comparison sites.
 - Around 90% of respondents in both Ashfield and the Mid North Coast rated the quality of the police response in relation to their break and enter as *good* or *very good*, significantly more than in the comparison sites. Break and enter victims in both project sites were consistently positive about the additional follow-up and information provided as part of the Project.
 - Most break and enter victims were found at follow-up to have already improved their household security and be more security-conscious following their break-in, especially in the metropolitan Commands where 66% to 73% had improved their security. No differences were found between the project and the comparison sites in the rate at which they improved their security following a break-in.
 - A sample of police interviewed at the conclusion of the Project were overwhelmingly positive about the project interventions such as the security assessments, victim follow-up, and fingerprinting. Police considered that many of the benefits from the Project would become evident in the long term.
 - It is recommended that Commands, as part of their standard response to residential break and enter incidents, conduct security assessments, provide additional victim support, and increase the rates of attendance by fingerprint gatherers at break and enter scenes.

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Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project Evaluation Report - Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Residential burglary is one of the most common crimes in Australia and a major issue of concern to the Australian public. *Break and enter - dwelling* was one of the top three most commonly recorded offence categories in NSW, with 77,178 reported incidents in 1999 (Doak 2000). This figure is considered an underestimate as not all break and enters are reported to police: an estimated 74% of break and enter incidents are reported (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999). The 1999 NSW Crime and Safety Survey found that house burglaries are consistently reported to be the major neighbourhood crime concern (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999).

Traditional law enforcement responses to burglary have been largely reactive and respond primarily to single incidents (Stevenson and Forsyth 1998). Clear-up rates are generally very low: only six percent of break and enters were cleared within 90 days of being reported (Doak 2000). It has been suggested that these traditional responses have only marginal impact on overall crime levels (Sparrow, Moore and Kennedy 1995; Stevenson and Forsyth 1998).

Recent police efforts have focussed on more proactive methods of reducing the break and enter incidence (Prenzler and Townsley 1998).

Research into repeat victimisation in the United Kingdom has shown that a small number of victims account for a large proportion of crimes: the 1992 British Crime Survey found that 43% of crime incidents were suffered by less than five percent of victims (Farrell and Pease 1993). Ireland (1997) found, based on his analysis of COPS data from three Sydney patrols, that approximately 20% of total break and enter victimisations over a two year period were multiple.

Projects conducted in the United Kingdom have found that improving household security can reduce repeat victimisation and overall burglary levels (Forrester, Chatterton, Pease and Brown 1988; Tilley 1993). In the English Homesafe Project interventions such as *target hardening* of highly victimised premises and the provision of crime prevention advice to householders were undertaken, and were found to reduce domestic burglary (Webb, 1996). In Australia, Prenzler and Townsley (1998) suggested that strategies such as encouraging target hardening, assisting victims so as to reduce repeat victimisation, promoting Neighbourhood Watch, and marking valuables may be effective in reducing break and enters.

The findings of these studies inspired New South Wales police to apply for funding to determine

whether the same strategies could be used in Australia to reduce housebreaking. The Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project was subsequently established at two NSW Local Area Commands (LACs) which expressed an interest in the Project, Ashfield (metropolitan) and the Mid North Coast (rural).

Around the same time, two other projects focussing on reducing the incidence of residential break and enters were commenced in Queensland and South Australia. The Beenleigh Break and Enter Reduction Project (Queensland) was established as a pilot to evaluate the effectiveness of police using a problem-oriented approach to reduce the number of residential break and enters in the Beenleigh area, with particular emphasis on reducing the risk of repeat victimisation. The South Australian Residential Break and Enter Prevention Project aimed to reduce repeat victimisation and overall rates of residential break and enters in two specific areas by using trained volunteers to deliver a service to victims, including victim support, security advice, target hardening, property marking, and neighbourhood contact. Both of these projects will report on an evaluation of their project interventions in the near future.

1.2 Project funding

Project funding of \$76,870 was granted by the Crime Prevention Division of the NSW Attorney-Generals' Department. Funding was awarded for the purpose of undertaking a number of housebreaking reduction strategies during 1999, and the evaluation of these strategies.

Local councils in the Mid North Coast LAC also contributed funding towards the Safer Towns and Cities Project throughout 1999: \$5,000 from both Kempsey and Hastings Councils.

1.3 Commencement of the Project

An official media launch of the Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project was held at Parliament House on 25 November 1998 by the Minister for Police, the Hon Paul Whelan, and Police Commissioner Peter Ryan.

The Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Program commenced operation at Ashfield Local Area Command on 10 December 1998 and at Mid North Coast LAC on 1 January 1999.

A management committee was established in early 1999 to monitor progress and oversee the management of the Project. Meetings were generally held on a monthly basis for the duration of the Project. The composition of the Management Committee is detailed in Appendix A.

A consultant was employed in early 1999 to assist with the Project's coordination, methodology and evaluation.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Housebreaking Reduction Project was to introduce a number of housebreaking reduction strategies as part of the standard police response to reported break and enter incidents

The objectives of the Project were as follows:

- Contribute to an overall reduction in the level of residential housebreaking
- Reduce repeat victimisation for residential housebreaking
- Increase detection of offenders for housebreaking and property theft-related offences
- Improve the quality of the policing response (including risk assessment, security advice, victim support, and target hardening)
- Increase awareness of home security among residents so that they take responsibility for crime prevention

1.5 Project interventions

A number of interventions were devised which would help meet the objectives of the project, all of which were to be conducted during 1999. Many of these strategies had been used in previous studies such as the Homesafe Project (Webb 1996). The interventions to be included in this project were as follows:

- Conduct of security assessments at all residences broken into in the participating LACs during 1999
- Follow-up of security assessments with a victim support package
- Informing immediate neighbours of the residences broken into (canvas cards)
- Increasing the fingerprint team attendance rate
- Target hardening of repeat victims' residences
- Conduct of a public education campaign about housebreaking reduction strategies

1.6 Description of the Local Area Commands participating in the Project

A brief description of the project sites, Ashfield LAC and Mid North Coast LAC, is provided below. Most of this information has been extracted from the Analysis of the Crime Environment (ACE) Reports produced by the Local Area Commands of the NSW Police Service in February 2000 (Ashfield LAC 2000; Mid North Coast LAC 2000).

Ashfield

The Ashfield Local Area Command (LAC) is a densely populated suburban area approximately 19 square kilometres in size located eight kilometres south-west of the Sydney CBD. The Command is part of the Endeavour Police Region and encompasses the Local Government Area of Ashfield, and parts of Canterbury and Marrickville. It includes the suburbs of Ashbury, Ashfield, Canterbury, Dobroyd Point, Dulwich Hill, Earlwood, Haberfield, Hurlstone Park, Summer Hill, Undercliff and parts of Croydon and Croydon Park. These areas consist of mainly residences, with some light industrial areas and commercial premises.

The population of the command was 74,604 at the time of the 1996 census (ABS Census of Population & Housing 1996). Nearly half the population (45%) was born overseas, and there is a relatively high proportion with non-English-speaking backgrounds. There is a relatively low number of Aborigines residing in the Ashfield LAC: only 0.6% of the Ashfield population identified themselves as Aborigine in the 1996 Census.

Nearly 75% (73.3%) of the population is under 50 years of age, the highest numbers in their thirties. Many of these people travel away from the LAC for work leaving their houses empty during daylight hours.

The majority of Ashfield's break and enters are residential. These mainly occur in corridors along the transport routes such as the railway line and major *through* roads. Ashfield is the suburb with the highest number of break and enters. The COPS data suggests that a higher proportion of home units are broken into than are houses. The likely explanation is that the units are predominantly located along the Ashfield railway line, many of which are short-term rental properties with lower levels of security. Most break and enters occur in daylight hours during the week with most entering by manipulating or forcing the locks of the front or rear door.

Mid North Coast

The Mid North Coast LAC, as its name suggests, is located on the mid north coast of New South Wales, 450 kilometres from Sydney. It encompasses an area of 8,500 square kilometres and includes the local government areas of Hastings, Kempsey and Nambucca. The population of the command was 102,419 at the time of the last census (ABS Census of Population & Housing 1996). However the LAC has recently been experiencing high levels of population growth, particularly in the Hastings LGA.

The LAC has a relatively high proportion of young people. However between the ages of 20 and 30 years the proportion of the population decreases. This decrease is a reflection of the limited tertiary and employment opportunities which results in much of this age group leaving the local area. The area around Port Macquarie is, however, a popular retirement destination, evidenced by 36% of the population being aged 50 years or older.

There is a relatively high overall level of unemployment (18.6% in 1996) in the Command. Most of those employed earn significantly less than the average weekly wage (79% earned less than \$500 per week). There is also a significant proportion of the population that left school at an early age.

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders represent just over 3% of the population of the LAC (3.4% 1996 ABS Census), higher than the state average of 1.2%. The highest proportion is in the Kempsey LGA (6.7%) compared with 1.6% in the Hastings LGA. Local sources suggest that these figures are an underestimate (Mid North Coast ACE Report).

Nearly 9% of the population of the LAC were born overseas (8.7%: ABS Census of Population & Housing 1996)

Most dwellings in the LAC consist of free-standing houses, although there has been a recent increase in the number of apartment buildings, in Port Macquarie in particular.

Although the majority of Mid North Coast's break and enters are residential, the proportion is lower than that in Ashfield LAC. Like Ashfield, most offenders force the lock of a ground floor door or window to gain entry. However approximately one-third enter through an open window or door.

Areas at the highest risk of break and enters were identified to be around the Port Macquarie CBD and South Kempsey. South Kempsey experiences significant problems, particularly in the indigenous public housing areas where there are high levels of unemployment, alcohol and other drug abuse, crime, racial tensions, and other conflicts. The indigenous population is over-represented as both victims and offenders of crime in this area.

Port Macquarie is a popular tourist destination with large seasonal population increases. During the Christmas and holiday periods the population of the LAC is multiplied several fold. Break and enters increase by at least 20% during this period with visitors often being complacent about their security. At other times of the year there is a relatively large number of holiday premises that are left vacant for long periods of time. These often become the target of offenders.

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Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project Evaluation Report - Chapter 2

Project methods

The focus of the Housebreaking Reduction Project was on residential break and enter offences.

Each residential break and enter to which police were called throughout 1999 was included in the Project. Commercial premises, schools, and public buildings were not included in Ashfield LAC, but they were included in the Mid North Coast. Attempted break and enter offences were not included at either site.

2.1 Project interventions

The project interventions, as outlined in Chapter 1, were predominantly conducted by the police attached to Ashfield and Mid North Coast Local Area Commands.

- **Training of police officers**

Prior to the commencement of the Project, a set of training resources for police officers at Ashfield LAC was developed. These included a set of Standard Operating Procedures specifying the aims and objectives of the Project, plus the roles of particular units involved, such as the Community Safety Officer, Intelligence, Volunteers in Policing (VIPs), the fingerprinting officers, and frontline police. Also included was some background information to the Project, and a step by step guide to what was required when police officers visited a break and enter incident. Briefings were given by Inspector Douglas McKenzie and other duty officers in December 1998, at the time of the Project commencement. Every officer was provided with a folder containing canvas leaflets, security assessment forms and a copy of the Standard Operating Procedures. Electronic memos were also sent out at regular intervals updating all police on the Project's progress.

Initial educational instruction about the Project was delivered to Mid North Coast police by the Community Safety Officer, Senior Constable Brett Martin. These briefings predominantly took place at the changeover of shifts at a number of locations including Port Macquarie, Kempsey, Macksville, Nambucca Heads, Laurieton, and Wauchope.

Further feedback and training of operational police officers was provided in August/September 1999 in the Mid North Coast and in Ashfield. The purpose was to update police knowledge of the Project's progress and provide training about changes to the security assessment forms.

- **Security assessment of all residences broken into in the participating LACs during 1999**

As part of the study protocol, security assessments were designed to be conducted on each residential premises at the time of the initial investigations by police. The primary purpose of these assessments was to identify gaps in household security and thereby reduce the likelihood of the dwelling becoming a repeat victim. A secondary aim of conducting these security assessments was to improve the quality of the police response to break and enter victims.

A security assessment form was designed for the Project in late 1998. Police officers commenced using this form from December 1998 (see Appendix B).

Feedback quickly identified that frontline police disliked the design of this form and were not filling it out well enough. The assessment form was therefore redesigned by the Project Team and, after delays with the organisation of the printing, commenced use in September 1999. The new format had an expanded section for the contact details, a greatly simplified assessment section, and included security tips on the reverse side. Three copies of the form were available once completed: one for the police record, one for the victim, and a third for a real estate agent, where applicable. The form was innovative in that it also had sufficient space to allow for the major details of the break and enter incident to be recorded, thereby eliminating the need for the police notebook (see Appendix C). These modifications have proven to be popular with the frontline police and have created a great deal of interest from other commands.

Once completed by the police, a copy of the security assessment form was given to the victim or person reporting the incident. Commencing from August 1999, if the premises was holiday accommodation, a copy of the security assessment information was also forwarded to the real estate agent, with the victim's personal details omitted. The original was forwarded to the Volunteers in Policing (VIPs) at the Ashfield or Port Macquarie police stations.

- **Follow-up of security assessments with a victim support package**

Within seven days of the reported residential break and enter, the victim received a Victim Support Package forwarded from Ashfield or Port Macquarie police stations. The package included a letter from the relevant Commander, a property register, a crime prevention pamphlet (supplied by AGC or NRMA insurance companies), and property identification stickers (see Appendix D). The aim of this strategy was to encourage victims to improve their security as suggested by the police in the security assessment.

Volunteers in Policing (VIPs) were generally responsible for forwarding the victim support packages, once they had received the copies of the security assessment forms completed by the frontline police.

- **Informing immediate neighbours of the residences broken into (canvas cards)**

At the time when police officers attended a break and enter incident and conducted a security assessment, they were also encouraged to deliver canvas cards to the immediate neighbours of the victim, as part of the study protocol. These cards advised them that their neighbours had been recently broken-into, and gave them some brief security advice (see Appendix E).

The aim of distributing these cards was to increase the general awareness of household security, whilst alerting neighbours to this particular break and enter about which they may be able to assist

the police.

- **Increasing the fingerprint team attendance rate**

One of the major objectives of this Project was to attempt to increase the rate at which offenders for housebreaking and other property theft were detected. The major strategy by which this objective was to be achieved was by increasing the rate at which the fingerprint team attended burgled premises in the Commands participating in the Project.

Since early 1998, the Local Area Fingerprint Gatherer (LAFG) program had been offered statewide to train and equip local police in crime scenes fingerprint examination. The probability of identifying fingerprints from crime scenes is considered to be very high: approximately 78% of offenders are recidivists and around 30% of crime scenes examined yield suitable fingerprints. Further, for every 100 crime scenes examined, ten offenders are identified and charged; and, for every accused identified, three additional charges are preferred. Fingerprint evidence therefore leads to good clear-up rates and fits in well with the Commissioner's desire to target repeat offenders as a crime prevention measure. Fingerprint science is one of the most time and cost effective methods of identifying offenders and securing convictions. (*Police Service Weekly*, 2000).

The LAFGs are limited to attending less serious offences, such as break and enters and stealing from motor vehicles, the more serious continuing to be attended to by the Parramatta Fingerprint Section. The LAFGs concentrate on the point of entry in property crime: 80% of prints identified are on glass (e.g. window opening, broken glass, sliding glass door). Most positive identifications are made within a few months of the prints being lifted.

Frontline police attending break and enters would assess whether there was a suitable surface for the gathering of fingerprints. They would then call the fingerprint gatherer who would attend the scene as soon as possible. Any prints lifted were sent to the Parramatta Fingerprint Section for identification, which may take up to six weeks. The LAFG then sends a list of identified perpetrators to the operational police, who then look out for them. Those identified can then be charged with the offence.

In June 1998, Ashfield and Marrickville LACs established their own LAFG team, with one officer from each LAC trained to lift fingerprints. In the Mid North Coast, there were no fingerprint gatherers prior to the Housebreaking Reduction Project: officers travelled from Taree and Coffs Harbour on a priority basis. Following the commencement of the Project, three officers were trained, one at Kempsey and two at Port Macquarie, and a fingerprint kit purchased. These changes allowed for Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs to attempt to increase the rate of fingerprints being collected.

The Housebreaking Reduction Project management ensured that general duties police were educated about the types of surfaces from which fingerprints could be lifted and regularly reminded them of the need to call the fingerprint team to as many break and enters as possible.

- **Target hardening of repeat victims' residences**

Target hardening, or the provision of assistance with security by installing window or door locks, was undertaken in both Commands in an effort to reduce repeat victimisation. Mid North Coast adopted the *hot spot* approach of targeting high risk areas, whereas Ashfield adopted the *hot dot* approach of targeting individual premises that had been repeatedly victimised.

Before the Project's commencement in Mid North Coast LAC, an area of Kempsey had been identified via analysis of the COPS data as a *hot spot* for repeat break-ins. In the first few months

of 1999 each house in an identified street in South Kempsey was then given a security assessment by the Community Safety Officer. Later in 1999 a need for target hardening of another *hot spot* in South Kempsey was identified. Those in need of assistance in improving their security were identified in both of these locations by the Community Safety Officer, who conducted security assessments on each house in the respective streets.

In Ashfield LAC, premises that have been victimised more than once during 1999 were identified via the COPS data. All repeat victims were contacted by telephone either by the Ashfield Community Safety Officer or Tactical Intelligence Officer. The victims were asked how their break-ins had occurred and whether they had made any improvements to their security since their break-ins. Any victims who required further assistance or advice with security were visited by the officer who contacted them. Funds had been allocated from the project budget to purchase locks where a serious need to improve security was identified.

Identification and follow-up were undertaken in Ashfield as follows:

1. In July/August 1999, 22 premises that had been broken into more than once in the first half of 1999 were contacted
2. In January 2000 information on those premises which had been victimised more than once over the entire twelve months was extracted. Contact was made with these additional repeat break and enter victims in a further two stages: January/February and May 2000.

- **Operations targeting property crime**

Operations on property crime *hot spots* were conducted throughout 1999, as part of standard police practice, to reduce property crime, reduce repeat victimisation, and increase the detection of offenders.

Crime Prevention Team operations commenced in May 1998 in Ashfield. The team liaised with the Intelligence Cell to identify new offenders who had moved into the Ashfield area, those recently released from custody, repeat offenders already residing in the area, and *hot spots* surrounding pawn and second hand dealer shops. Four officers were assigned to the operations at any one time.

Mid North Coast LAC also established a Command Response Team in mid 1998. Although this team was set up independently of the Housebreaking Reduction Project they worked on targeting recidivist offenders in particular.

Ashfield Crime Prevention Teams are assigned to target areas based on Intelligence crime maps which are used to identify problem areas. Most operations concentrate on areas around the Ashfield CBD. They may involve targeting people as they leave the train station, carrying housebreaking implements, before they commit a crime. Intelligence reports are recorded on the COPS system.

- **Conduct of a public education campaign about housebreaking reduction strategies**

In order to increase the awareness of home security among residents so that they take responsibility for crime prevention, mailouts were forwarded to the populations in both Commands.

Packages mailed out from both Commands contained similar information: a letter from the relevant Commander, suggestions on how to improve household security, a property register, and Crime Prevention pamphlets from the insurance companies (see Appendix F).

75,000 residents of the Mid North Coast LAC received their packages by distribution through the local papers in April 1999. Packages were distributed to 27,000 households in the Ashfield LAC in late 1999. The suburbs covered included Haberfield, Ashfield, Croydon, Croydon Park, Summer Hill, Hurlstone Park, Canterbury, Ashbury, Earlwood, and Undercliffe. Residential units were included in the mailout, but commercial premises and schools were excluded.

2.2 Project evaluation

The evaluation of the project interventions was undertaken in two ways.

1. An outcome evaluation of how well the interventions met the objectives of the project.
2. A process evaluation of how well the interventions were implemented by the police, and their opinions of the interventions

An outline of how these evaluations were undertaken is as follows:

2.2.1 Outcome evaluation

An outcome evaluation of how well the interventions met the objectives of the Project was undertaken as part of the Project. In the following section, the data sources used in undertaking the evaluation will be discussed.

Two main sources of data were used to evaluate the outcomes of the Housebreaking Reduction Project. The data used were from the NSW Police Service's Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS), and follow-up interviews conducted with break and enter victims as part of this study. A description of how these data were obtained and utilised is as follows.

- **Data on the incidence of break and enters from the COPS system**

Intelligence Supervisors at Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs extracted data on property crime from the COPS system. These data allow changes in the numbers of incidents to be examined.

A number of neighbouring LACs had been chosen at the commencement of the evaluation to be the comparison sites. Burwood, Campsie and Marrickville LACs were compared with Ashfield, and Manning/Great Lakes and Coffs/Clarence LACs were the comparison sites for Mid North Coast. These Commands had been selected because of their proximity to the Project sites and reasonable similarities in their demographic characteristics.

Data on the numbers of break and enters for Ashfield, Mid North Coast and the five control Commands for 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999 were extracted from the *Control Charts* produced by the NSW Police Service. Trends over these four years were examined but emphasis was placed on changes that occurred in the numbers of break and enter incidents between 1998 and 1999 (the intervention year).

Access to the *Analysis of the Crime Environment* Reports produced for each LAC in NSW was granted for Ashfield, Mid North Coast and some of the comparison areas. These reports provide

detailed information on the demographic characteristics of the LACs and descriptions of the characteristics of and activities being undertaken in relation to the major crimes. Some descriptions of the characteristics of the break and enters patterns have been used in this report.

As the reduction of *repeat* victimisation was one of the main objectives of the Housebreaking Reduction Project, a measure of repeat victimisation was attempted for the years 1998 and 1999 for Ashfield and Mid North Coast.

A summary of the methods used to calculate the number of repeat victims for one calendar year is as follows. The data source used was a *person involvement* download from COPS, selected for break and enter incidents only. A sort by *address* (of break and enter incident) allowed for editing of such errors as misspelt street names. Further manipulations resulted in a number of addresses that were listed more than once in the calendar year. All repeat listings of addresses were deleted, where they were non-residential premises, multiple victims (that is, the same address, event number and date but different victims), different unit numbers (from *person address* field), and multiple attempted break and enter incidents. Those left were the premises that had been broken into more than once in the calendar year. Residential garages and sheds were included in the estimates of repeat victimisation.

Additional data extracted from the COPS system were obtained from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research on clear-up rates of break and enter offences by Local Area Command. A *cleared criminal incident is one, which in the view of police, has been satisfactorily cleared by charge or otherwise* (Doak 2000 at page vii). With these data any increase in the detection of housebreaking and property theft-related offenders may be detected.

- **Follow-up interviews with break and enter victims in the Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs**

Follow-up interviews were conducted with residential break and enter victims in each Command one month after their reported incident. The main purposes of conducting these interviews was to obtain feedback from all victims in the Project sites about the quality of the police response to their break and enter incident, ascertain what improvements they had made, if any, to their household security in the month since their break-in, and obtain self-reported information on whether they had been victimised in the previous twelve months or the month since their break-in (see Appendix G for a copy of the questionnaire).

The design of the interview schedule used for these interviews changed three months after the commencement of the study, as the original format had proven to be inadequate. The majority of the information was subsequently collected via closed response items and included greater detail about security changes and victims' break-in histories. Interviewing with the new schedule commenced from the beginning of the March break and enter incidents, and data have been analysed from that point on.

Interviews were conducted by telephone and took about ten minutes to complete. Some training in the administration of the interview schedules was provided to the Ashfield interviewers by the Evaluation Consultant. Telephone discussions about interview practices took place between the Mid North Coast interviewers and the Evaluation Consultant. Specific written instructions were also provided to interviewers in both sites.

Prior to the commencement of the Project it had been envisaged that Volunteers in Policing (VIPs) would conduct all the victim follow-up interviews. However, after the first two months, it became apparent that the VIPs were unable to devote sufficient hours to keep up with the interviewing, and that the response rate was low because they were attempting to conduct all interviews within their working hours at the Police Station. In March, the Management Committee agreed that additional interviewers would be required so victims could be contacted in the evenings when they were

more likely to be at home, and that interviewers be paid from Project funds.

Between March and August 1999, Ashfield's interviews were conducted by the clerical staff at the police station, who were paid from Project funds to work additional hours. By September, it appeared that the clerical staff were also unable to adhere to the interview timetable, so two clerical workers were recruited from outside the Police Service specifically to complete the follow-up interviews in the evenings.

In the Mid North Coast all interviewing was conducted by VIPs who were paid from the Project budget as they were able to work in the evenings as required. Additional problems were experienced in contacting victims over the course of the study because of the high rate of holiday accommodation that was broken into in the Mid North Coast. Those premises were often left unattended, and the break and enter victims, who might have only stayed in the house for a few days, were not responsible for its security. Efforts were made, via the revised security assessment form, to collect the owner's or agent's details to allow for further police follow-up.

- **Interviews with break and enter victims in neighbouring Commands**

The original Project plan was to conduct follow-up interviews with a sample of victims six months after their first break and enter victimisation in 1999. The aim of this interview was to obtain information on any further victimisations. However, the Management Committee agreed to abandon these interviews when it appeared that repeat victimisations were lower than originally anticipated.

Instead, the Management Committee decided to conduct interviews with break and enter victims from commands adjacent to Ashfield and Mid North Coast. The purpose of these interviews was to collect information on repeat victimisation from an additional sample, and to compare the police responses in the Project sites with other commands. This information also allows for some judgement to be made about whether the security advice provided as a Project intervention affected the rate at which people improved their security.

Permission was sought from the Commanders of Campsie, Manning/Great Lakes and Coffs/Clarence LACs to conduct these interviews. Data on break and enter victimisations in these Commands between August and December 1999 were extracted from the COPS system. Included were contact details to enable victims to be telephoned. The target number of interviews for comparison with the Project sites was 200, to be selected by telephoning every second household on the COPS printouts.

Interviews were conducted in the first half of the year 2000 by the same interviewers who conducted the Ashfield and Mid North Coast interviews. Questions were virtually identical to those in the Project site interviews and, as with the Ashfield/Mid North Coast interviews, were conducted as close to one month after the break and enter victimisation as possible. On telephoning, interviewers explained that the sample had been systematically selected from the neighbouring areas to assist the police in assessing whether the interventions in the Ashfield/Mid North Coast areas were making a difference to break and enters. (see Appendix I for a copy of the questionnaire)

Once completed, all interview schedules were sent to a data entry company to be entered into an ASCII file. Some editing was undertaken by the evaluation consultant which resulted in those questionnaires which had been entered incorrectly being deleted. Analyses were performed using *Microsoft Excel* and *Access* software. Results have been presented as frequencies, means, and percentages. Chi-square analyses were conducted to test for differences between proportions responding to individual questions, where relevant, using a chi square function written in *Excel*.

- **Evaluation of the public education campaign about housebreaking reduction**

strategies

In order to properly evaluate the mailouts' effects in increasing the general public's awareness of household security, surveys would have been required before the mailout and followed-up after the information had been delivered. The costs involved in undertaking such an evaluation were considered prohibitive. No formal evaluation of this intervention was therefore undertaken.

However anecdotal reports were received and will be reported in Chapter 3 (see page 41).

2.2.2 Process evaluation

A process evaluation of how well the interventions were implemented by the police, and their opinions of the interventions was undertaken as follows.

- **The extent to which the interventions were implemented by general duties police**

Information was gathered to assess the extent to which the general duties police at each Command followed the protocol of the study in conducting the security assessments. Firstly, the number of security assessments conducted as a proportion of the actual number of residential break and enter offences in Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs was calculated. Police were also asked to describe the situations in which they distributed canvas cards to victims' neighbours, and when they called the fingerprint team to attend a break and enter scene.

- **Fingerprint team attendance rates**

Data on the activities of the LAFGs in Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs and the five comparison areas for these two sites were obtained from the Forensic Services Group of the Parramatta Crime Scene Unit. Data obtained includes the number of break, enter and steal scenes attended, prints lifted and positive identifications for 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 and the first four months of 2000. Comparisons between fingerprint attendances and identification of offenders via fingerprints could then be undertaken for each of the relevant commands.

The *prints lifted* by a fingerprint gatherer can be divided into two groups. The first group are the *traces*, where there are identifiable prints but no one on police file. The second group is the *positive IDs* where a fingerprint is successfully matched with someone either on police file, the victim, or a police officer (An estimated 5.0% of positive IDs are police or a victim.) The number of *positive IDs* will increase over time as more offenders are identified. Every five or six months the Forensic Services Group checks through the *traces* for matches with offenders fingerprinted since the previous check.

Data were also obtained directly from the fingerprint teams at Ashfield and Mid North Coast, so that fingerprint attendances for residential break, enter and steal could be analysed.

- **Target hardening of repeat victims' residences**

Those premises that were *target-hardened* as part of the Project, were followed-up via the COPS data, by examining any subsequent break and enters in 1999. Some further checking of the circumstances surrounding any subsequent break-ins to these dwellings was conducted by the Community Safety Officer in Mid North Coast and the Tactical Intelligence Officer in Ashfield. In this way some evaluation of the *target hardening* strategy could be undertaken.

- **Operations targeting property crime**

Information was sought on the number of operations conducted throughout 1999 in the Project sites which targeted property crime and the results of these operations. Some information is presented for Ashfield LAC which compares the numbers of 1998 operations with 1999. Detailed information was not readily available.

- **Discussions with police about their opinions of the Project interventions**

In November and December 1999, towards the end of the project interventions, a number of discussion sessions and interviews with police were conducted by the evaluation consultant. The purpose of these discussions was to obtain some feedback from the police who were conducting the security assessments and other interventions about their opinions of the project as a whole, and the project interventions in particular.

In Ashfield LAC a series of discussion sessions consisting of three groups of four officers each were held with a sample of general duties police. Discussions were conducted with officers attending a training course who had volunteered to participate sessions.

In Mid North Coast LAC individual interviews were held rather than group discussions. Participants were approached to participate by the Crime Manager.

Interviews were also conducted with the Ashfield and Mid North Coast Crime Managers, Community Safety Officers, Fingerprint Gatherers, and Intelligence Supervisors about their opinions of the strategies used in the Project.

Crime Managers in the comparison areas of Burwood, Campsie and Marrickville, Manning/Great Lakes and Coffs/Clarence were interviewed in late 1999. These interviews focussed on the major operations and crime prevention activities, conducted throughout 1999, that may have impacted on property crime, the patterns of property crime in their LAC, and how break and enters were dealt within their LAC. This information was used in the interpretation of strategies and their impact on property crime in these LACs. However no detailed description of their activities is undertaken in this report.

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most recently updated 11 August 2001

Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project Evaluation Report - Chapter 3 (part 1)

Outcome evaluation

3.1: Was residential housebreaking reduced over the course of the Project?

The first objective of the Project was to reduce residential housebreaking. Break and enter data from the COPS system was the major data source used to measure whether this objective was achieved.

- **Break and enter trends in Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs: 1996 to 1999**

To determine whether there was any reduction in the number of break and enters in the two Commands participating in the Project during 1999 compared with previous years, four years of data were examined.

The total number of break and enters (residential and commercial) decreased in both Ashfield and the Mid North Coast in 1999 compared with 1998.

The total number of break and enters in Ashfield in 1999 was 1,547, which was 438 lower than in 1998. This reduction of 22.1% followed an increase of 10.0% between 1996 and 1997, when the number of break and enters reached 2,033, and a decrease of 2.4% between 1997 and 1998.

The number of break and enters in the Mid North Coast decreased less dramatically, reducing by 6.9% (142) between 1998 and 1999, to a total of 1,904. This reduction, however, followed two years of increases: 10.7% between 1996 and 1997 and 10.8% between 1997 and 1998.

The pattern of break and enters in these two Commands will be discussed in further detail, starting with the Ashfield LAC.

- **Property crime in the Ashfield LAC**

For the twelve months to September 1999, Ashfield LAC was ranked 35th for break and enter offences out of the 80 Commands in New South Wales.

Figures show a consistently lower monthly level of break and enters in Ashfield throughout 1999 compared with the previous years, except for two months - June and October. There was also

generally less monthly variation throughout 1999 than in the previous four years.

Data obtained from the COPS system on break and enters broken down by residential and commercial premises, and actual and attempted incidents was obtained. These data were examined to determine whether the level of residential break and enters reduced in 1999 in comparison to previous years, and to check for displacement from residential break and enters.

During 1999 the **proportion** of break and enters in Ashfield that were identified as residential was 77.6% - 70.3% of which were for actual residential break and enters and 7.2% of which were for attempted residential. Between 1996 and 1998 the proportion of residential break and enters decreased slightly from 85.9% in 1996 to 84.5% in 1998. Between 1998 and 1999 there was a much greater decrease in the proportion of residential break and enters in comparison to the proportion of non-residential break and enters.

Between 1998 and 1999 the **number** of **residential** break and enters decreased by 485 to 1,199, a decrease of 28.8%. The number of non-residential premises broken into moderately increased by 39 (12.7%). These data reveal that the entire decrease in break and enters in Ashfield was accounted for by the reduction in **residential** break and enters.

To check for *displacement* of offending from break and enters to other property crime, the overall pattern of property crime in Ashfield was examined (see Figure 3.4).

In Ashfield between 1998 and 1999, the number of stolen vehicle and stealing incidents reduced by 14.3% and 5.2% respectively, long with the number of break and enters. Robbery incidents increased slightly, but only by 16 reported incidents (5.5%). These data indicate that there has been no displacement from break and enters to other property crime in Ashfield, as all these crime categories reduced in frequency.

- **Property crime in the Mid North Coast LAC**

For the twelve months to September 1999, Mid North Coast LAC was ranked 23rd for break and enter offences out of the 80 Commands in New South Wales.

There was more monthly variability in the pattern of break and enters throughout 1999 in the Mid North Coast, compared with the more consistent monthly reductions in Ashfield.

Data obtained from the COPS system on break and enters broken down by residential and commercial premises, and actual and attempted incidents was also obtained for the Mid North Coast LAC. These data were examined to determine whether the level of residential break and enters reduced in 1999 in comparison to previous years, and to check for displacement from residential break and enters.

In the Mid North Coast the **proportion** of residential break and enters was much lower than in Ashfield: 59.5% of all break and enters in 1999 were residential, 53.2% of which were actual, and 6.3% which were attempted residential. Between 1996 and 1998 the proportion of residential break and enters increased from 47.8% in 1996 to 51.1% in 1997 to 60.7% in 1998. Between 1998 and 1999 this trend was reversed with a slight decrease in the proportion of residential break and enters in comparison to the proportion of commercial break and enters.

The actual **number** of **residential** break and enters decreased by 110, from 1,242 in 1998 to 1,132 in 1999, a decrease of 8.9%. However, unlike Ashfield, the number of non-residential premises broken into also decreased slightly by 4.0% (32 incidents).

To check for *displacement* of offending from break and enters to other property crime, the overall pattern of property crime in Mid North Coast was examined.

In the Mid North Coast, the number of stealing incidents reduced between 1998 and 1999 (by 5.4%), while stolen vehicle and robbery incidents were virtually unchanged. Again there does not appear to have been any displacement from break and enters to other property crime in the Mid North Coast.

- **Summary**

Analysis of the COPS data reveals that the **total** number of break and enter incidents reduced between 1998 and 1999 (the intervention year) in both Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs, by 22.1% and 6.9% respectively.

The number of **residential** break and enters reduced by 28.8% in Ashfield and by 8.9% in the Mid North Coast between 1998 and 1999.

There was no apparent displacement of offending to other property crime in either of the LACs participating in the Project.

- **Comparison of Ashfield with its neighbouring Commands**

In the course of determining whether the reductions in total break and enters experienced in Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs could be attributed to the Project interventions, an examination of the patterns of break and enters in other areas was undertaken. A comparison of the total number of break and enter incidents (residential and commercial) over the last four years in Ashfield with the neighbouring LACs selected as comparison sites

It shows that Ashfield, Campsie, Burwood and Marrickville reported a very similar number of break and enters in 1999, all reporting between 1,538 and 1,585 incidents.

Both Campsie and Marrickville reported similar reductions to Ashfield in the total number of break and enter incidents, reducing by 23.5% (486 incidents) and 25.9% (539 incidents) between 1998 and 1999 respectively. Only Burwood experienced an increase in its number of break and enters between 1998 and 1999, increasing by 13.8% (187 incidents). Endeavour Region, of which these four LACs are a part, reduced its total number of break and enters by 12.2% between 1998 and 1999.

Data obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996) on the population of each LAC allowed break and enter rates per 100,000 population to be calculated.

The rates for Ashfield and its comparison areas are shown below (Table 3.1)

Table 3.1 Break and enter rates per 100,000 population: Ashfield and comparison areas

	Ashfield	Campsie	Marrickville	Burwood
Total population	* 74,604	90,375	51,796	67,988
Total BES 1999	1,547	1,585	1,546	1,538
Rate per 100,000 pop'n	2,073.6	1,753.8	2,984.8	2,262.2
* The most recent data by LAC is based on the 1996 ABS Census				

The above rates reveal that Marrickville, with the smaller population, has in fact a much higher rate

of break and enters than the other three LACs. Campsie has a larger population but a lower break and enter rate.

A comparison of the proportions of **residential only** break and enters in Ashfield with the control sites was also undertaken.

In 1999 in Campsie, Marrickville and Burwood residential break and enters as a proportion of total break and enters was 73.%, 75.0% and 70.4% respectively, slightly below the 77.6% in Ashfield.

Campsie and Marrickville reported greatly reduced numbers of residential break and enters between 1998 and 1999, similar to Ashfield, reducing by 448 (27.9%) and 545 (32.0%) respectively. Conversely, Burwood experienced an increase of 118 (12.2%) in its number of residential break and enters between 1998 and 1999.

The number of non-residential break and enters in Campsie and Marrickville decreased slightly, whilst in Burwood they increased by 76 (20.0%).

- **Comparison of Mid North Coast with its neighbouring Commands**

The total number of break and enter incidents (residential and commercial) over the last four years in Mid North Coast with the neighbouring LACs selected as comparison sites.

In comparing break and enter trends in the Mid North Coast with its neighbouring commands, it can be seen that the number of break and enter incidents was virtually unchanged in Manning/Great Lakes, at 1,262 in 1998 and 1,257 in 1999. Conversely, Coffs/Clarence LAC experienced a larger decrease in its number of reported break and enter incidents, from 2,428 in 1998 to 2,004 in 1999 (-17.5%). Both Coffs/Clarence and the Northern Region overall (-9.6%) experienced greater decreases in break and enter incidents than did the Mid North Coast (-6.9%).

The break and enter rates for Mid North Coast and its comparison areas are shown in the following table (Table 3.2). The table indicates that in 1999 Mid North Coast had the highest break and enter rate of the three listed, Coffs/Clarence the lowest.

Table 3 .2 Break and enter rates per 100,000 population: Mid North Coast and comparison areas

MNC	Coffs/Clarence	Manning/Great Lakes	
Total population	102,419	117,803	70,068
Total BES 1999	1,904	2,004	1,257
Rate per 100,000 pop'n	1,859.0	1,701.1	1,794.0

A comparison of the proportions of **residential only** break and enters in Mid North Coast with the control sites was also undertaken.

In 1999 Manning/Great Lakes and Coffs/Clarence LACs reported similar proportions of residential break and enters to Mid North Coast: 63.0% and 60.6% respectively were residential.

In Manning/Great Lakes LAC the number of residential break and enters increased by 31 (4.1%) between 1998 and 1999, while the non-residential break and enters decreased by 32 (6.4%). In Coffs/Clarence LAC, there was a large decrease in the total number of break and enters between 1998 and 1999 which was fairly evenly distributed between residential (-237 incidents) and non-residential (-187 incidents) premises. Residential break and enters in Coffs/Clarence as a

proportion of total break and enters remained essentially the same: 59.8% in 1998 compared to 60.6% in 1999.

Across the state between 1998 and 1999 there was a reduction of 10.0% in the number of residential and a reduction of 6.6% in the number of non-residential break and enter incidents reported (Doak 2000). In Ashfield LAC there was a greater reduction in the number of residential break and enters (28.8%) than in New South Wales on average, whereas the reduction in the Mid North Coast (8.9%) was just below the state average.

- **Summary**

The above data reveal that although the number of residential break and enters reduced in both Ashfield and the Mid North Coast, they also reduced across the state and in three of the five comparison areas. This suggests that the reductions in break and enters in the project sites may have been part of a wider trend.

3.2: Was repeat victimisation reduced for residential housebreaking over the course of the Project?

- **Estimates of repeat victimisation from the COPS data**

As described in Chapter 2, the number of residences in Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs that were broken into in 1999 and 1998 were extracted from the COPS data. The results for Ashfield were as follows (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Ashfield: number of break and enter victimisations in 1998 and 1999 *

1998		1999	
No. Victimisations	No. Residences	No. Incidents	No. Residences
1 1,522(95.1%)	1,522(90.4%)	1,077(94.9%)	1,077 (89.8%)
2 73	146	52	104
3 4	12	6	18
4 1	4	-	-
Total	1,600	1,684	1,135
	1,199		

* Residential BES only (actual and attempted)

In Ashfield there were 78 residences broken into more than once during 1998, accounting for 162 break and enter incidents. 1,522 residences were broken into once only throughout the year. During 1999, 58 residences were broken into more than once, accounting for 122 break and enter incidents, and 1,077 residences were broken into only once throughout the year. This represents a reduction, between 1999 and 1998, of 20 residences that became repeat victims during one calendar year. However at the same time there was a large reduction in the total number of break and enters which meant that the proportion of repeat victims remained essentially the same (95.1% in 1998 and 94.9% in 1999).

The number of repeat victimisations in the Mid North Coast are shown in the following table (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Mid North Coast: number of break and enter victimisations in 1998 and 1999 *

1998 1999					
No. Victimisations	No. Residences	No. Incidents	No. Residences	No. Incidents	
1	1,084(93.9%)	1,084(87.3%)	990(93.8%)	990	(87.5%)
2	58	116	56	112	
3	8	24	7	21	
4	2	8	1	4	
5	2	10	1	5	
Total	1,154	1,242	1,055	1,132	
* Residential BES only (actual and attempted)					

In the Mid North Coast there were 70 residences broken into more than once during 1998, accounting for 158 break and enter incidents. 1,084 residences were broken into once only throughout the year. During 1999, 65 residences were broken into more than once, accounting for 142 break and enter incidents, and 990 residences were broken into only once throughout the year. This represents a reduction, between 1999 and 1998, of five residences that became repeat victims during one calendar year. There was a reduction in the total number of break and enters over the same period which meant that the proportion of repeat victims remained the same (93.9% in 1998 and 93.8% in 1999).

The period of time between repeat victimisations was calculated using the same data source. The data revealed that nearly 75% of all repeat victimisations occurred within three months of the previous break and enter at both project sites. Around 20% occurred within a week of the previous break and enter.

Table 3.5 Time between repeat victimisations in 1999: Ashfield and Mid North Coast

Time Period - Ashfield %
7 days or less - 19
8 - 31 days - 22
1 - 3 months - 28
more than 3 months - 31
Time Period - MNC %
7 days or less - 21
8 - 31 days - 26
1 - 3 months - 26
more than 3 months - 27

(Those with 3 or more victimisations: time periods between victimisation 1 & 2 then 2 & 3 etc are reported.)

- **Victim reports of previous break and enter victimisations**

In addition to the calculations of repeat victimisation from the COPS data, break and enter victims were asked about repeat victimisations. Multiple sources of data allow the problems with each data source to be balanced and more accurate estimates of repeat victimisation to be calculated.

Police officers, as part of the security assessments of break and enter victims' residences conducted throughout 1999, asked victims whether they had been broken into in the 'last' twelve months. (This twelve month period could relate to a break and enter that had occurred in the previous calendar year.) The responses were as follows (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 Number reporting to police that they had been broken into in the 'last' 12 months

Yes - 56 (14.9%) Ashfield, 81 (22.4%) MNC

No - 319 Ashfield, 281 MNC

Total - 375 Ashfield, 362 MNC

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 27, MNC: 30

A lower proportion of residents in Ashfield (14.9%) reported they had been broken into in the 'last year' than reported repeat victimisations in the Mid North Coast (22.4%).

Those who reported being broken into were asked by the police the number of times this had occurred (Table 3.7).

Table 3.7 Of those who reported to police being broken into in the last 12 months, the number of times they were broken into

Number of previous BES

1 : 21 (51%) Ashfield; 25 (48%) MNC

2 : 12 (29%) Ashfield; 19 (37%) MNC

3 : 7 Ashfield; 3 MNC

4 : - Ashfield; 3 MNC

5 : 1 Ashfield; - MNC

6 : - Ashfield; 1 MNC

7 : - Ashfield; 1 MNC

Total : 41 Ashfield; 52 MNC

Non-respondents: 15 Ashfield; 29 MNC

The vast majority of these respondents had either one or two previous victimisations over the last

year, that is two or three within a twelve month period. Few had greater numbers of victimisations. However there was a large number of victims who were not asked this question.

Further questions about repeat victimisation were asked of break and enter victims during the telephone interviews conducted one month after their latest break-in. These few questions were essentially the same as those asked by the police and served as a reliability check for both the police and the VIP interviewers. The results were as follows (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8 Number reporting to interviewers that they had been broken into in the last 12 months

Yes: 71 (18.6%) Ashfield; 14 (12.1) Ashfield control; 77 (22.4%)MNC;10 (14.1%) MNC control

No: 311 Ashfield; 102 Ashfield control; 267 MNC; 61 MNC control

Total: 382 Ashfield; 116 Ashfield control; 344 MNC; 71 MNC control

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 20, MNC: 48, MNC control: 24. A number of interviewees were not asked this question in the MNC & MNC control interviews.

The proportion of respondents in Ashfield who reported being previously victimised to interviewers was slightly higher than the proportion reported to police at the time of their security assessments. However this variation may partly be explained by the time difference between questioning and differences between interviewers.

Victims were also asked by the interviewers whether they had been broken into since the break-in the subject of the security assessment the previous month (Table 3.9).

Table 3.9 Number broken into in the previous month

Yes: 14 (4.1%) Ashfield; 1 (0.9%) Ashfield control; 21 (9.3%) MNC; 4 (7.7%) MNC control

No: 330 Ashfield; 114 Ashfield control; 205 MNC; 48 MNC control

Total: 344 Ashfield; 115 Ashfield control; 226 MNC; 52 MNC control

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 58, Ashfield control: 1, MNC: 166, MNC control: 43. A large number of interviewees were not asked this question in the Ashfield, MNC & MNC control interviews.

The numbers reporting that they were broken into in the previous month are higher than expected, especially in the Mid North Coast and its comparison areas. This is likely to be explained by the fact that many interviews were conducted more than one month after the victimisation thereby increasing the window for repeat victimisations, and by interviewers inadequately defining the time period of interest.

- **Comparison of data sources on repeat victimisation**

The three sources of information on repeat victimisation for residential housebreaking over a twelve month period discussed above are compared in table 3.10.

Table 3.10 Comparison of Project data sources on repeat victim estimations (1999)

COPS data: 58 Ashfield (5.1%); 70 MNC (6.2%)

Security assessment: 56 Ashfield (14.9%); 81 MNC (22.4%)

Follow-up interview: 71 Ashfield (18.6%); 77 MNC (22.4%)

The three estimates of the **number** of repeat break and enter victims listed above are very similar, ranging from 56 to 71 in Ashfield LAC, and 70 to 81 in the Mid North Coast. However, the repeat victimisation **rates** range between 5.1% and 18.6% in Ashfield, and 6.2% and 22.4% in the Mid North Coast.

As the COPS data are likely to underestimate the number of residences that have been victimised more than once, and the security assessment and interview data are likely to be overestimates, for reasons that will be discussed in Chapter 5, it may be appropriate to choose a mid point. A mid point would result in a repeat victimisation rate for Ashfield LAC of 11.9% and for Mid North Coast, LAC a rate of 14.3%.

- **Multiple repeat victims**

Those premises that were identified via the COPS data as being broken into twice or more **within** the calendar year (1999) were examined more closely for the circumstances surrounding these break-ins.

Of the seven houses that were broken into three times in 1999, all were located in Middleton or Yarravel Streets South Kempsey. Although Aboriginal people form the bulk of the residents in these areas, crimes were committed on both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal victims with no particular pattern. From the information contained on the COPS system, a large proportion of the offences were committed by entering through open or unlocked windows and doors.

One house in Yarravel Street which was broken into five times in 1999 was described by police as having non-Aboriginal residents, and the offences were deemed to be drug-related. The home unit that was broken into four times in 1999 was described as *holiday accommodation* in Port Macquarie. Police considered that these offences had been committed by the son of the victim, as he was believed to have a drug dependency problem and there were no visible signs of forced entry.

In Ashfield LAC six houses were broken into three times in 1999, all of which, but one, were in the suburb of Ashfield. Three of the residents of these houses contacted by police showed little interest in security, with one resident even failing to repair entry points from previous break-ins. Three made some improvements to their household security. One house was considered by police to be a drug dealer's residence with burglars looking for drugs. Repeat break-ins at two neighbouring houses were considered to have been committed by the children living at one of the houses, as entry was always gained through a small bathroom window. Another backed onto the Cooks Reserve which offers easy access to the rear of the dwelling.

- **Summary**

Changes between 1998 and 1999 in the repeat victimisation rate for break and enters were estimated from the COPS data. These estimates indicate that the **proportion** of residences with multiple break and enters remained virtually unchanged between the two years, although the **number** of repeat victims in Ashfield LAC decreased by 20.

Three sources of data were used to calculate actual repeat victimisation. The three estimates of the **number** of repeat break and enter victims are very similar, ranging from 56 to 71 in Ashfield

LAC, and 70 to 81 in the Mid North Coast. However, the repeat victimisation **rates** range between 5.1% and 18.6% in Ashfield, and 6.2% and 22.4% in the Mid North Coast. Because of biases inherent in both data sources a point mid way between these two estimates of annual repeat victimisation is suggested for the two LACs.

The information on multiple repeat victims suggests that many of the houses that were broken into repeatedly were not randomly targeted but already had some association with the police.

3.3: Was there an increase in the detection of offenders for housebreaking and property-theft-related offences over the course of the Project?

- **Charges and clear-up rates**

Data from the COPS system were relied on in determining whether there was an increase in the detection of offenders for housebreaking and other property-related offences over the course of the Project.

Data extracted from the COPS system on the number of charges laid for all break and enter and other property-related offences indicates that there was some increase between 1998 and 1999 for both Ashfield (an increase of 16%) and Mid North Coast (an increase of 10%). Mid North Coast appeared to have increased the number of charges laid at a greater rate than did its comparison areas, whereas Ashfield did not perform as well as its comparison areas. There were higher numbers of charges laid in the rural areas (565 charges during 1999 in Mid North Coast) than in the metropolitan areas (200 charges during 1999 in Ashfield).

Data on clear-up rates supplied by the NSW Police Service to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research were also examined as a method of determining whether the detection of offenders had increased. The 90 day clear-up rates for break and enter - dwelling were analysed by Local Area Command. The rates for the years 1997, 1998 and 1999 for Ashfield, Mid North Coast, and the comparison sites are given below (Table 3.11).

Table 3.11 Ninety day clear-up rates for break and enter - dwelling

LAC	1997	1998	1999	
No.	% cleared	No.	% cleared	
Ashfield	30	1.7	26	1.6
Campsie	38	2.1	25	1.6
Marrickville	42	3.6	45	2.7
Burwood	38	3.7	19	2.0
Mid North Coast	80	9.3	103	9.0
Manning/Great Lakes	55	9.4	59	8.0
Coffs/Clarence	79	9.7	142	11.0
NSW total	5.0	5.1	6.0	

Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research

The above data reveals that a very low rate of residential break and enters are cleared-up within three months. However this clear-up rate is higher in non- metropolitan than in metropolitan areas.

The *NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 1999* further reveal that 70% of those cleared- up within six months are already cleared-up within one month (Doak 2000).

From the above data it can be seen that there was a slight increase between 1998 and 1999 in the **number** of residential break and enters cleared within 90 days in Ashfield, Campsie and Burwood. However all except Marrickville had decreased the number cleared between 1997 and 1998. Chi-square tests reveal that there were significant increases between 1998 and 1999 in the **proportion** of break and enters cleared-up in both Campsie (chi-square = 5.4, df = 1, p = 0.02) and Marrickville (chi- square = 4.2, df = 1, p = 0.04), but not in Ashfield or Burwood. These increases in proportion were due to a decrease in total break and enter offences.

Mid North Coast and Manning/Great Lakes experienced increases in their **numbers** of cleared residential break and enter incidents over the three years from 1997 to 1999. The numbers in Coffs/Clarence fluctuated over the three year period, but the rate steadily increased. Only Mid North Coast significantly increased the **proportion** of break and enters cleared-up between 1998 and 1999 (chi-square = 4.6, df = 1, p = 0.03).

- **Summary**

Data on the number of charges laid for all break and enter and other property-related offences indicates that there was some increase between 1998 and 1999 for both Ashfield (an increase of 16%) and Mid North Coast (an increase of 10%).

All the above LACs experienced some increase in their clear-up rates from 1998 to 1999, but much of this increase could be attributed to a decrease in the number of break and enter incidents reported. Mid North Coast significantly increased its proportion of residential break and enters cleared-up, whereas Ashfield made no significant increase.

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Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project Evaluation Report - Chapter 3 (part 2)

Outcome evaluation

3.4 Did the quality of the policing response (including risk assessment, security advice, victim support, and target hardening) improve over the course of the Project?

Only actual residential break and enters were eligible to be included in the Project in Ashfield and Mid North Coast, and thereby given security assessments by the police, victim support packages, follow-up interviews, and possible attendance by the fingerprint gatherers. The surveys conducted with break and enter victims in Ashfield and the Mid North Coast and a sample of victims from neighbouring Commands one month after their break-in were used to evaluate whether the quality of the police response improved over the course of the Project.

- **Follow-up interview response rates in the Project sites**

As interviews conducted in January and February were not included in any analyses, the response rates for the Ashfield and Mid North Coast interviews were based on the break and enters and security assessments conducted from March to December 1999. The number of interviews and response rates are given below in Table 3.12. (Response rates were not calculated for the comparison sites.)

Table 3.12 Interviews conducted and Project site response rates: March- December 1999

LAC Security Assessments Interviews Interview response rates (%)**BES Security assessments**

Ashfield 670 402 42.4 60.0

MNC 585 392 46.5 67.0

Total study 794

Campsie 116

Coffs 43

Taree 52

Total controls 211

Six hundred and seventy security assessments were conducted on residential premises in Ashfield between March and December 1999, 585 in the Mid North Coast. Of the residences given security assessments, 60% in Ashfield and 67% in Mid North Coast were then followed up by interview.

The numbers of interviews conducted in each Project site were similar: 402 in Ashfield and 392 in Mid North Coast.

One hundred and sixteen interviews were conducted in the Ashfield comparison site of Campsie, whilst 95 comparison site interviews for Mid North Coast were conducted in two Commands. A lower number of comparison site interviews were completed than originally planned.

In Ashfield an audit was undertaken to determine why 40% of those given security assessments were not interviewed one month later. The results are listed below in Table 3.13.

Table 3.13 Audit of those not interviewed in Ashfield**Reason not interviewed - Percentage (%) (n = 190)**

No answer after three calls - 50.0

Wrong phone number/disconnected - 32.6

No English - 5.3

Refused - 3.7

Other - 8.4

As the above table shows, there were a number of problems in establishing contact with people despite telephoning at different hours of the day and evening. A high proportion of victims either gave police wrong telephone numbers, they had already moved residences, or police recorded the numbers incorrectly or illegibly. Some of the interviewers reported that people answering the phone told them they had the wrong number when the interviewers suspected they had the correct number. The actual refusal rate was low.

A similar pattern was found with the Campsie interviews where contact details had been obtained from a COPS printout.

Interviewers in the Mid North Coast and its comparison sites experienced similar problems, plus the difficulties of contacting the owners of holiday accommodation whose details may not have been obtained at the time of the break-in.

- **Comparison between Project sites, and Project and control sites on the quality of the police response**

In evaluating the quality of the police response, interviewees were asked a number of questions about the police interventions, namely the security assessments, the victim support packages, and the fingerprint team, and what they thought of them. The results are given in the following section.

Firstly, interviewees were asked whether they remembered the police conducting a security assessment of their house and giving them some security advice, when they attended in response to their break-in. The results are given in Table 3.14.

Table 3.14 Number in each site who remembered police conducting a security assessment

Yes: 371 (92.8%) Ashfield; 43 (37.1%) Ashfield control; 323 (87.3%) MNC; 57 (69.5%) MNC control

No: 29 Ashfield; 73 Ashfield control; 47 MNC ; 25 MNC control

Total: 400 Ashfield; 116 Ashfield control; 370 MNC; 82 MNC control

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 2, MNC: 22, MNC control:11

Most interviewees from Ashfield and Mid North Coast responded that police had conducted a security assessment of their home.

Significantly higher proportions of respondents in both Ashfield and Mid North Coast reported that police had conducted security assessments than did respondents in the comparison sites. (Ashfield had a significantly higher attendance rate than its comparison site: chi-square = 175.8, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$; Mid North Coast also had a significantly higher attendance rate than its comparison site: chi-square = 15.9, df = 1, $p = 0.0001$).

Those who reported that police had conducted a security assessment were asked how helpful they found the information (Table 3.15).

Table 3.15 Helpfulness of the security advice

Response	Ashfield	Ashfield control	MNC	MNC control
Very unhelpful	6	3	1	
Unhelpful	3	1	5	4
Neither	64	18	38	6
Helpful	225 (61.6%)	17 (39.5%)	188 (60.8%)	21 (44.7%)
Very helpful	67 (18.4%)	7 (16.3%)	75 (24.3%)	15 (31.9%)
Total	365	43	309	47

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 6, MNC: 14, MNC control:10

In all four groups, the people who responded that the police had conducted a security assessment were generally happy with the information.

Significantly more people in Ashfield thought that the security information was *helpful* or *very helpful* than did people in the Ashfield control group (chi-square = 12.9, df = 1, p = 0.0003). However there was no difference in responses between the Mid North Coast and its control group (chi-square = 2.2, df = 1, p = 0.14).

All respondents were asked whether the fingerprint team came to their home (Table 3.16).

Table 3.16 below shows that less than half of all residences were attended by the police. In Ashfield significantly more houses were visited by the fingerprint team than were visited in the control group (chi-square = 11.7, df = 1, p = 0.0006). No differences were found between Mid North Coast and its comparison group (chi-square = 1.5, df = 1, p = 0.22)

Table 3.16 Number who responded that the fingerprint team came to their home

Fingerprints	Ashfield	Ashfield control	MNC	MNC control
Yes	191 (48.1%)	35 (30.2%)	164 (44.4%)	32 (37.2%)
No	206	81	205	54
Total	397	116	369	86

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 5, MNC: 23, MNC control: 9

Interviewees were asked whether they received a Victim Support Package in the mail after their break and enter incident (Table 3.17). In the two project sites interviewees overwhelmingly responded that they had received a package. Very few in the control sites had received packages. The differences were highly significant between Ashfield and its control site (chi-square = 329.0, df = 1, p < 0.0001) and Mid North Coast and its control site (chi-square = 248.7, df = 1, p < 0.0001).

Table 3.17 Number who received a Victim Support Package

Package	Ashfield	Ashfield control	MNC	MNC control
Yes	353 (90.3%)	3 (2.6%)	326 (92.1%)	4 (5.9%)
No	38	113	28	64
Total	391	116	354	68

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 11, MNC: 38, MNC control: 27

Those who reported that they received the Victim Support Packages also responded positively to them. In Ashfield 76.4% found the packages either *helpful* or *very helpful*, and in the Mid North Coast 90.2% found them *helpful* or *very helpful* (Table 3.18).

Table 3.18 For those who received a Victim Support Package, how helpful they found the information

Response Ashfield Ashfield control MNC MNC control

Very unhelpful 8 - 1 1

Unhelpful 5 - 10 -

Neither 69 - 19 -

Helpful 210 (60.5%) 2 196 (64.3%) 1

Very helpful 55 (15.9%) 1 79 (25.9%) 1

Total 347 3 305 3

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 6, MNC: 21, MNC control: 1

The majority of Ashfield and Mid North Coast interviewees who found the package *helpful* or *very helpful* responded that the information was practical and useful. Respondents particularly liked the fridge magnets and stickers provided in the package, and the reminders to engrave or record details of their valuables.

Interviewees were also asked a more general question about the quality of the service provided by the police when they attended their break-in. The results are given in Table 3.19 below.

Table 3.19 Rating of the quality of the service provided by police**Response Ashfield Ashfield control MNC MNC control**

Very poor 7 14 4 4

Poor 5 13 5 4

Neither 31 31 20 10

Good 153 (40.1%) 29 (26.9%) 143 (40.7%) 20 (25.6%)

Very good 186 (48.7%) 21 (19.4%) 179 (51.0%) 40 (51.3%)

Total 382 108 351 78

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 20, Ashfield control: 8, MNC: 41, MNC control: 17

Most respondents praised the quality of the police response, with more than 75% in Ashfield, Mid North Coast and the Mid North Coast control group rating it either *good* or *very good*. Responses were less positive for the Ashfield control group.

Both Project sites were rated higher than were their comparison sites. Significantly more respondents in Ashfield rated the police response as *good* or *very good* than in the Ashfield control group (chi-square = 92.7, df = 1, p < 0.0001) and in Mid North Coast compared to its control group (chi-square = 14.4, df = 1, p = 0.0002).

The majority of the Ashfield and Mid North Coast respondents found the police to be helpful, pleasant and polite. Some Mid North Coast respondents made comments that information they provided to the police was not followed-up. The Ashfield control group interviewees were happier when the police attended quickly, and were less happy when they had to wait for the police and/or

the fingerprint team, or were told to call the *helpline*. Many respondents commented either favourably or unfavourably about the time it took for police to attend the break and enter, thereby identifying the speed of the police response as important in determining their satisfaction.

In commenting about the Project, break and enter victims in Ashfield and Mid North Coast generally liked the additional follow-up and information provided by the police. Many in the comparison sites also appreciated the follow-up provided by the interviewers. A need for greater feedback about the results of the fingerprints lifted and the apprehension of offenders was identified by some victims, particularly for small rural areas.

Those who were the recipients of target-hardening such as additional locks, were very appreciative of the additional service. South Kempsey residents, in particular, were reported to see the police coming back to help with security as positive and impacting on the level of other offences.

Interviews conducted with police participants revealed that police also considered that the quality of the response they provided via the project interventions was a vast improvement on their routine responses.

- **Summary**

In summary, in the two Project sites, Ashfield and the Mid North Coast, respondents were more likely than the comparison groups to have received a security assessment and a Victim Support Package. Both Project sites were very positive about the interventions they received, and rated the quality of the service provided by the police in relation to their break and enter significantly higher than did their comparison groups.

The Ashfield control group received fewer interventions than the other three groups: they were less likely to receive a security assessment, attendance by the fingerprint team, or a Victim Support Package. However even when they received a security assessment they were less happy with it than were the other groups. This group also rated the quality of the service provided by the police much lower than did the other groups.

3.5 Did the awareness of home security increase among residents over the course of the Project so that they took responsibility for crime prevention?

- **Conduct of a public education campaign about housebreaking reduction strategies**

Increasing the awareness of home security among residents in Ashfield and the Mid North Coast LACs was one of the major objectives of the Housebreaking Reduction Project. The major strategy by which this was to be achieved was by the conduct of a Public education campaign. As discussed in Chapter 2, the costs involved in properly evaluating this strategy were prohibitive. However anecdotal evidence from the Mid North Coast indicated that the information was well received by the public and requests for security information increased. The information was distributed to the population of the Ashfield LAC too late in the year to have an impact on the level of awareness of home security during 1999.

- **Comparison of Project sites with comparison sites on the extent of improvements to household security**

As part of the interviews with break and enter victims, questions were asked about any crime prevention strategies victims had undertaken in the month since their interview. Most of the

questions related to improving their household security. Again comparisons have been made between the responses given in the Project sites with those by the comparison group interviewees.

Firstly, interviewees were asked whether they had engraved their valuables since being broken into (Table 3.20).

Table 3.20 Number who have engraved their valuables since the break-in

Ashfield Ashfield control MNC MNC control

Yes 92 (24.0%) 19 (16.4%) 90 (30.0%) 13 (14.9%)

No 246 91 172 53

Done previously 10 - 35 20

No valuables left 35 6 3 1

Total 383 116 300 87

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 19, MNC: 92, MNC control: 8. A large number of interviewees in MNC were not asked this question. Between 15% and 30% of respondents had engraved their valuables in the month since their break-in.

Significantly more interviewees in Mid North Coast reported that they had engraved their valuables than had interviewees in their comparison group (chi-square = 7.8, df = 1, p = 0.005). There was no difference between the proportions engraving their valuables in Ashfield and its comparison group.

Interviewees were also asked about the recording of the details of their valuables since their break-in (Table 3.21).

Table 3.21 Number who have recorded details of their valuables or filled out a Property Register since their break-in

Ashfield Ashfield control MNC MNC control

Yes 184 (48.7%) 46 (39.7%) 109 (37.7%) 38 (43.2%)

No 194 70 180 50

Total 378 116 289 88

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 24, MNC: 103, MNC control: 7. A large number of interviewees in MNC were not asked this question

There were no differences between the Project and control sites in the rates at which they recorded details of their valuables in the month since their break-in. All reported relatively high rates, between 38% (Mid North Coast) and 49% (Ashfield).

Respondents were significantly more likely to record details of their valuables, or fill out a Property Register, than they were to engrave their valuables (chi-square for all four groups combined = 72.0, df = 1, p < 0.0001).

Interviewees were asked about specific improvements they had made to their residence in the month since their break-in. The improvements made are listed in Table 3.22.

Table 3.22 Number of interviewees who made the following improvements to their security since their break-in

Type of improvement	Ashfield (n = 402)	Ashfield control (n = 116)	MNC (n = 392)	MNC control (n = 95)
Deadlocks/double locks - external doors	149 (37.1%)	59 (50.1%)	72 (18.4%)	16 (16.8%)
Security screen doors	61 (15.2%)	31 (26.7%)	51 (13.0%)	21 (22.1%)
Key-operated window locks	90 (22.4%)	38 (32.8%)	42 (10.7%)	5
Bars/grilles/security screens - windows	53 (13.2%)	24 (20.7%)	41 (10.5%)	8
Burglar alarm	70 (17.4%)	25 (21.6%)	33	7
Intercom/security buzzer	4	2	4	2
External sensor lights	46 (11.4%)	25 (21.6%)	39	4
Dowel rod on window	26	5	54 (13.8%)	7
Other	28	-	26	8
Total	527	209	362	78

Percentages are provided where improvements have been made by more than 10% of the respondents

The two most popular security improvements installed by all four groups were deadlocks or double locks on external doors, and security screen doors. Deadlocks and window locks were the most frequently installed security devices in Ashfield and the Ashfield comparison group.

The number of respondents who made any improvements to their household security following their break-in is given in Table 3.23.

Table 3.23 The number (and percentage) of respondents who improved their security in each site

Site	Proportions who improved security	No. Improvements per household (mean)
Ashfield	264 (65.7%)	2.0
Ashfield control	85 (73.3%)	2.5
MNC	210 (53.6%)	1.7
MNC control	54 (56.8%)	1.4

Between 53.6% and 73.3% of respondents in the four groups made some improvements to their security following their break-in.

There were no significant differences between Ashfield and its control group (chi-square = 2.37, df = 1, p = 0.12) nor Mid North Coast and its control group (chi-square = 0.33, df = 1, p = 0.57) in

the proportion who made security improvements. The Ashfield control group had the highest rate of improvements at 2.5 improvements per household. However some over-reporting is suspected with this group.

When the Ashfield and Ashfield control groups are combined and compared with the Mid North Coast and Mid North Coast control groups combined, a significant difference is revealed between the city and the country groups (chi-square = 18.3, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$). The city respondents were more likely to report improving their security than were the country respondents.

Interviewees were also asked whether they had any plans to improve their household security. Thirty-one percent of respondents in the Ashfield and Ashfield control groups, 16% of Mid North Coast, and 11% of Mid North Coast control group respondents had plans to make improvements to their security. The Ashfield groups were most likely to be planning a burglar alarm.

Significantly more people in the Mid North Coast had made no improvements and had no plans to improve their security ($n = 146$ or 37.2%) than people in Ashfield ($n = 86$ or 21.4%) (chi-square = 24.1, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$).

Those who had made no improvements and planned no improvements were asked to explain. The reasons given are outlined below (Table 3.24).

Table 3.24 Reasons for no improvements in security

Response	Ashfield	Ashfield control	MNC	MNC control
Too expensive	15 (22%)	2	7	1
Not owner/tenant	22 (32%)	2	15 (29%)	10
Moving premises	8	4	9	2
Happy with level of security in place	32 (47%)	11	38 (73%)	5
Intending to in future	1	2	6	-
Other	16	-	10	-
Total	68	20	52	18

Non-respondents: Ashfield: 18, MNC: 94, MNC control: 20. A large number of interviewees in MNC were not asked this question. Percentages are given for the most common responses only due to the small numbers of respondents.

The most common reasons given by Ashfield and Mid North Coast respondents were firstly that they were *happy with the level of security in place*, then that they were *not the owner*.

The final question relating to the prevention of household burglary was about any changes in behaviours the respondents had made to increase the protection of their home since the break-in. The responses from all interviewees in Ashfield, Mid North Coast and the Mid North Coast comparison groups are provided in Table 3.25. The results from the Ashfield comparison group have been excluded for this question because of errors in the way the question was asked.

Table 3.25 Numbers reporting changes in behaviour

Response	Ashfield	MNC	MNC control

(n = 402) (n = 392) (n = 95)

More careful about locking up 225 (56.0%) 184 (46.9%) 50 (52.6%)

Improved visibility in front & side eg trimmed trees 55 18 4

Engraved/marked valuable items 43 11 3

Staying at home more 70 (17.4%) 25 (6.4%) 5 (5.3%)

Obtained a dog 20 14 12

Ensuring house/premises looks occupied 78 (19.4%) 23 (5.9%) 3 (3.2%)

No. respondents who made behavioural changes after BES 333 (82.8%) 219 (55.9%) 61 (64.2%)

A large number of respondents reported changing their behaviour since their recent break-in, ranging from 55.9% in the Mid North Coast to 82.8% in Ashfield.

The Ashfield respondents were significantly more likely than the Mid North Coast respondents to make some behavioural changes (chi-square = 68.1, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$). However the Ashfield result may be slightly higher than expected due to errors in the way the question was asked by one interviewer.

The most frequent behaviour change reported across all four groups was that they were *more careful about locking up*. The Mid North Coast and Mid North Coast control groups mentioned few other behavioural changes. The Ashfield respondents were more likely than the Mid North Coast respondents to *stay at home more* (chi-square = 23.0, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$), and *ensure the house looks occupied* (chi-square = 32.8, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$).

- **Summary**

In summary, it appears that the interventions conducted as part of this Project have made no difference to the rate in which the break and enter victims have protected their property. There were no significant differences found in the rate at which interviewees from the Project sites recorded details of their valuables, made improvements to their household security, or changed their behaviour following their break-in. Only with the engraving of valuables was a significant difference found between the Mid North Coast and its control site.

Other conclusions that can be drawn from the data, however, are that respondents were more likely to record the details of their valuables than they were to engrave their valuables. In addition, respondents in the city (Ashfield and Ashfield control) were significantly more likely to improve their security and change their behaviours following their break-in than were the country respondents (Mid North Coast and Mid North Coast control).

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Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project Evaluation Report - Chapter 4

Process evaluation

The following section describes how well the Project interventions were implemented by the police and police opinions of these interventions.

4.1 The extent to which the interventions were implemented by general duties police

- **The extent to which the security assessments were conducted**

All residential break and enters were subject to the Housebreaking Reduction Project interventions. The number of residential break and enters reported in 1999 in Ashfield was 1,199 (refer to Figure 3.3) and 1,132 in the Mid North Coast (refer to Figure 3.6). In examining the *premise sub-types* for these break and enters, it was revealed that they included several categories that were not suitable for home security assessments. The categories *aged home care, boarding house, caravan, carport, clothes line, driveway, farmhouse, garden, hostel, lodge, motel, outhouse, private hotel, shed, verandah, and yard* were therefore excluded from the denominators when calculating the number of break and enters eligible for security assessments. In Ashfield the number of break and enters became 1,123 and in the Mid North Coast 987 were eligible.

The number of security assessments conducted by police in Ashfield and the Mid North Coast throughout 1999 are listed in Table 4.1.

As can be seen from the following table (Table 4.1), 70.5% of Ashfield and 73.9% of Mid North Coast break and enters victims had police conduct security assessments of their residences in 1999. This security assessment rate is likely, however, to be conservative. The numbers of eligible break and enters may still be an overestimate as not all residences that were the subject of *attempted break and enters* were eligible to be included, nor were all the repeat victims.

Table 4.1 Number of security assessments conducted each month 1999

Ashfield

January 76
February 46
March 51
April 68

May 53
 June 72
 July 76
 August 74
 September 93
 October 59
 November 51
 December 73

Total 792

No. eligible BES 1,123

Security assessment rate (%) 70.5

Mid North Coast

January 85
 February 59
 March 109
 April 63
 May 43
 June 49
 July 30
 August 72
 September 57
 October 69
 November 30
 December 63

Total 729

No. eligible BES 987

Security assessment rate (%) 73.9

The table also shows that the numbers of security assessments conducted fluctuated on a monthly basis unrelated to the number of break and enters in the month (refer to Figures 3.2 and 3.5). The Community Safety Officers in both Commands undertook regular checks that relevant dwellings were being assessed and provided reminders and feedback to the general duties police. These activities varied according to each officer's workload and probably accounted for some of the monthly variation.

- **Victim follow-up interview responses on the receipt of security assessments and Victim Support Packages**

As discussed in Chapter 3, break and enter victims were interviewed one month after their break-in. Ninety three percent of Ashfield and 87% of Mid North Coast respondents reported that police had conducted a security assessment of their home (refer to Table 3.14).

Ninety percent of Ashfield and 92% of Mid North Coast interviewees reported receiving a Victim Support Package, sent by the volunteers in policing one week after the security assessment (refer

to Table 3.17).

However the receipt of these interventions is higher amongst these interviewees than it would be amongst those who were not interviewed.

- **Police informing immediate neighbours of the residences broken into (canvas cards)**

The extent to which the canvas cards, informing the neighbours that there had been a break-in and to contact the police with any information, were distributed by the general duties police was measured only by asking a sample of police.

Twelve general duties police from Ashfield participated in three discussion sessions held as part of the Project evaluation. Eight general duties police were interviewed individually from a range of stations in the Mid North Coast including Port Macquarie, Kempsey and Laurieton. Some basic characteristics of those interviewed are in the following table (Table 4.2). The Mid North Coast interviewees were generally more senior and with greater experience in the Police Service than were the Ashfield participants.

Table 4.2 Characteristics of police discussion session participants

Number in each Local Area Command (LAC)	
Rank:	Constable 9 Ashfield 1 Mid North Coast
	Senior constable 3 Ashfield 4 Mid North Coast
	Senior Sergeant 2 Mid North Coast
	Inspector 1 Mid North Coast
Gender:	Female 3 Ashfield 2 Mid North Coast
	Male 9 Ashfield 6 Mid North Coast
	Average years in police force: 4.5 Ashfield 16.3 Mid North Coast

Police respondents were asked to describe the situations in which they distributed these canvas cards. Opinion was divided over the benefits of distributing canvas cards to victims' neighbours. Many felt that it was inappropriate to inform neighbours of break and enters by a canvas card, and that people needed to be informed in person, especially in small country towns. Others liked the cards. However there was not always time to give them out, especially when the break-in occurred near or in apartment blocks when the police may not have brought enough cards with them.

4.2 The extent to which the fingerprint team attended residential break and enter scenes

One of the major Project interventions was increasing the rate at which the fingerprint team attended burgled premises. The data obtained from the Fingerprint Section at Parramatta, given below, examines trends in break and enter (commercial and residential) scenes attended, prints lifted and positive identifications for the years 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999 (Tables 4.3 and 4.4).

Table 4.3 Fingerprints data for break, enter and steal (commercial & residential): Ashfield and comparison areas

LAC - 1996 - 1997 - 1998 - 1999

Ashfield

Scenes attended - 522 - 319 - 449 - 579
 Prints lifted - 141 (27.0%) - 100 (31.3%) - 212 (47.2%) - 301 (52.0%)
 Positive IDs - 0 - 0 - 23 (10.8%) - 45 (15.0%)
 Scenes attended as % of all BES- 28.2 - 15.7 - 22.6 - **37.4**

Campsie

Scenes attended - 392 - 277 - 320 - 258
 Prints lifted - 108 (27.6%) - 94 (33.9%) - 124 (38.8%) - 89 (34.5%)
 Positive IDs - 0 - 0 - 0 - 16 (18.0%)
 Scenes attended as % of all BES - 21.0 - 11.8 - 15.5 - **16.3**

Burwood

Scenes attended - 526 - 277 - 443 - 473
 Prints lifted - 140 (26.6%) - 86 (31.0%) - 143 (32.3%) - 15 (24.3%)
 Positive IDs - 0 - 0 - 0 - 10-15 (8.7%- 13.9%)
 Scenes attended as % of all BES - 33.3 - 18.0 - 32.8 - **30.8**

Marrickville

Scenes attended - 306 - 208 - 416 - 716
 Prints lifted - 104 (33.9%) - 76 (36.5%) - 234 (56.3%) - 387 (54.1%)
 Positive IDs - 0 - 0 - 0 - 32-42 (8.3% -10.9%)
 Scenes attended as % of all BES - 29.1 - 18.6 - 20.0 - **46.3**

A significantly higher proportion of break and enter scenes were attended in Marrickville by the fingerprint team than were attended in Ashfield (chi-square = 25.1, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$). However, a significantly higher proportion of break and enter scenes were attended by the fingerprint team in Ashfield than were attended in either Campsie (chi-square = 178.8, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$) or Burwood (chi-square = 15.3, df = 1, $p = 0.0001$).

Ashfield and Marrickville shared the same fingerprint team throughout 1999, and greatly increased the number of scenes attended and prints lifted between 1998 and 1999. Marrickville and Ashfield were the only two of the four LACs examined to significantly increase the proportion of break and enter scenes they attended between 1998 and 1999 (Ashfield: chi-square = 92.4, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$; Marrickville: chi-square = 287.5, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$). Campsie and Burwood LACs also shared a fingerprint team but did not experience the same increases as the other two LACs.

There was no difference between Ashfield and Marrickville in the rate at which they lifted prints (chi-square = 0.55, df = 1, $p = 0.46$). However the Ashfield fingerprint team (and the Marrickville team) lifted a significantly greater proportion of prints than did either the Campsie team (chi-square = 21.9, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$) or the Burwood team (chi-square = 83.4, df = 1, $p < 0.0001$).

Table 4.4 Fingerprint data for break, enter and steal (commercial & residential): Mid North Coast and comparison areas

LAC - 1996 - 1997 - 1998 - 1999

Mid North Coast

Scenes attended 489 498 556 618
 Prints lifted 188 (38.4%) 156 (31.3%) 185 (33.3%) 253 (40.9%)
 Positive IDs - - - 35 (13.8%)
 Scenes attended 29.3 27.0 27.2 **32.5**
 as % of all BES

Manning/Great Lakes (Hunter Region)

Scenes attended 390 293 417 316
 Prints lifted 116 (29.7%) 95 (32.4%) 125 (30.0%) 90 (28.5%)
 Positive IDs - - - 51 (56.7%)
 Scenes attended 36.1 29.9 33.0 **25.1**
 as % of all BES

Coffs/Clarence

Scenes attended 712 571 685 610
 Prints lifted 245 (34.4%) 171 (29.9%) 231 (33.7%) 153 (25.1%)
 Positive IDs (all crimes) - - - 107 *
 Scenes attended 38.4 33.0 28.2 **30.4**
 as % of all BES

* No percentage calculated

A significantly higher proportion of break and enter scenes were attended by the fingerprint team in Mid North Coast than were attended in Manning/Great Lakes (chi-square = 19.5, df = 1, p < 0.0001). There was no difference between the Mid North Coast and Coffs/Clarence in their attendance rates (chi-square = 1.85, df = 1, p = 0.17).

The Mid North Coast fingerprint team lifted a significantly higher proportion of fingerprints than did either the Manning/Great Lakes team (chi-square = 14.0, df = 1, p = 0.0002) or the Coffs/Clarence team (chi-square = 34.9, df = 1, p < 0.0001). There appear to be discrepancies in the data on positive identifications.

Mid North Coast was the only LAC which increased between 1998 and 1999 the number and proportion of scenes its fingerprint team attended (chi-square = 13.2, df = 1, p = 0.0003) and the number and proportion of prints lifted (chi-square = 7.4, df = 1, p = 0.007).

Both the Mid North Coast and the Ashfield fingerprint teams attended scenes at a rate higher than their respective Regional rates. The Mid North Coast's fingerprint attendance rate was lower than Ashfield possibly because the distances that must be travelled to reach break and enter scenes were greater and may serve as a deterrent to attending.

Data obtained directly from the Ashfield and Mid North Coast Local Area Fingerprint Gatherers (LAFG) allowed for some examination of the fingerprint attendances for residential break and enters only. In the Mid North Coast the proportion of residential scenes attended matched the proportion of break and enters that were residential in 1999 (59%). However in Ashfield there appeared to be a higher proportion of residential than non-residential premises attended by the LAFG, and an increase throughout the year in the number of residences attended, possibly reflecting the increasing emphasis placed on fingerprint gathering by the Housebreaking Reduction Project.

Two other sources of information on the attendance of the fingerprint team at break and enter scenes were examined.

Break and enter victims were asked whether the fingerprint team had come to their home in response to their break-in. Forty eight percent of Ashfield respondents and 44% of Mid North Coast respondents reported attendance by the fingerprint team (refer to Table 3.16). These percentages are, in both Ashfield and the Mid North Coast, higher than the actual proportions who attended, but indicates a higher attendance rate at Ashfield as in Tables 4.3 and 4.4.

In the discussion sessions held with police, they were asked in what situations they called the fingerprint team to a break and enter scene. Police from both Ashfield and the Mid North Coast reported that they were encouraged to call the fingerprint gatherers to all break and enter scenes, unless they were sure that no prints could be lifted. Police responded that the fingerprint teams attended scenes faster since they had been based locally. Mid North Coast officers also reported that at times they called the fingerprint team, even though they did not expect that any prints would be lifted, specifically to provide reassurance to a victim, such as an older person.

4.3 Target-hardening of repeat victims' residences

Follow-up of the residences target-hardened as part of the Housebreaking Reduction Project revealed the following results.

Ashfield LAC

Ashfield adopted the *hot dot* approach of targeting individual premises that had been repeatedly victimised. Attempts were made by Ashfield police to contact the owners or tenants of all those residences that were broken into more than once during 1999 (n = 58). The results are listed below in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 The results of attempts to contact the 58 repeat victims in Ashfield

Number of Security improvements following break-ins

- Installed burglar alarm - 10
 - Installed door/dead locks - 9
 - Installed window locks - 9
 - Installed security doors - 5
 - Installed security bars on windows - 5
 - Installed security/lockable gates - 4
 - Number making security improvements - 27
-
- No improvements made - 4
 - Not applicable - 10
 - No contact made - 17

Of the 31 contacted, 27 were found to have already made some improvements to their security since the break-ins.

The vast majority of those contacted expressed their gratitude for the additional follow-up by

Ashfield police. The Tactical Intelligence Officer observed that several of these repeat victims' residences backed onto the Cooks River and the adjoining reserve, which allowed offenders to enter from the rear of the premises without being seen.

Those dwellings which were identified by telephone as potentially needing assistance with security were visited and a comprehensive assessment undertaken. Five premises were then identified as needing further security improvements. Forty window locks were fitted to these premises in October 1999, at a total cost of \$448.00.

Subsequent examination of the 1999 COPS data for break and enters revealed that one of the above houses, located in Earlwood, was broken into again in November, following the installation of window locks. However further investigation revealed that this break and enter was to the external laundry only, where the door was forced open. No access was gained to the main section of the house.

Mid North Coast LAC

In the Mid North Coast LAC the *hot spot* approach of targeting high risk areas was adopted. Each house in Middleton Street South Kempsey was given a security assessment by the Community Safety Officer in early 1999, after which a need for adequate locks on 17 houses was identified. Those premises considered unsuitable for target-hardening were unsuitable because they were either rented premises, the reported offences related to stealing from outside the premises, they were owned by the Department of Housing or Community Services, the owner did not wish to participate, or electronic security alarms had already been installed. By August 1999, 27 deadlocks and 47 window locks had been installed at a cost of \$2,830.00.

A subsequent examination of the COPS data for break and enters revealed that one dwelling was broken into on two further occasions in 1999 after window locks and deadlocks had been fitted. In September 1999 a locked door was jemmied open, and in December 1999 entry was gained through an open window. No further break and enters were recorded at any of the other target-hardened Middleton Street houses. In October 1999 the Community Safety Officer revisited Middleton Street and found that of the 17 houses that had been target-hardened, five had been re-burgled. However these burglaries were committed by entering through open doors; the residents had not been using the deadlocks that had been installed.

Following the October visit, it was decided to target-harden three additional houses in Middleton Street. This decision was made in order to dissipate racial tensions from supplying locks to one group only, and after efforts to encourage other government departments improve the security to their premises had failed.

Also in October, a need for target-hardening of another *hot spot*, Yarravel Street South Kempsey, was identified. Following security assessments of houses in the street, target-hardening of 11 premises in Yarravel Street was completed. Twenty four dead bolts and 77 keyed window locks were installed at a total cost of \$3,220.00 (including the three houses in Middleton Street). None of the premises that were target-hardened in Yarravel Street had appeared in the COPS data as a repeat break and enter victim in 1999.

In the South Kempsey area, the South Kempsey Neighbourhood Improvement Program is underway. The Department of Housing owns 102 premises in this area and has recently target-hardened 32 of their houses in Middleton Street and two in Yarravel Street. These premises were fitted with deadlocks and window locks as appropriate.

In summary, extensive target-hardening was undertaken in two identified areas in the Mid North Coast LAC, at a total cost of \$6,050.00. Deadlocks and window locks were fitted to 31 premises at a cost per dwelling of \$195.00. Each window lock cost \$20.00 and each deadlock \$70.00. Significantly less target hardening was undertaken in Ashfield, where most repeat victims

contacted had already improved their security. Only \$448.00 was spent on window locks for five dwellings, at a cost per dwelling of \$89.60, \$11.20 per window lock.

4.4 Operations targeting property crime

Another strategy by which the detection of housebreaking offenders was to be increased was by the conducting of police operations targeting property crime.

Around six break and enter-related operations were conducted in 1998 in Ashfield, compared with twelve in 1999. Results obtained in 1998 were: 150 intelligence reports, 92 charges, and 63 arrests. In 1999 these operations resulted in 180 intelligence reports, 122 charges, and 62 arrests. This may indicate some increase in the detection of offenders in Ashfield in 1999.

In the Mid North Coast no specific operations were conducted which targeted break and enter offenders, although operations targeting property crime in general were undertaken throughout 1999, as in previous years. Targeting of the receivers of stolen goods was considered the most effective method of reducing break and enters in this large rural area.

4.5 Discussions with police about their opinions of the Project interventions

- **Discussions with general duties police**

As described previously, discussion sessions were held with a sample of general duties police from Ashfield and Mid North Coast LACs. They were asked to express their opinions of the Housebreaking Reduction Project interventions.

Police discussion participants generally reported that they liked the security assessment forms, and considered that the forms made them look more professional and thorough. The revised form was considered to be a vast improvement on the first form trialed. Police liked the fact that there was no need for a notebook entry in addition to completing the security assessment form, and that there were prompts so nothing was forgotten. Police were also aware that the public liked to see them doing something which may reduce their likelihood of being revictimised. Other issues raised were the need to encourage real estate agents to be more responsible for security, and linking the security assessment form into the COPS system.

Calling the fingerprint team and having them attend promptly was considered by the police respondents to show a greater level of concern for the victim, and be a more professional approach. Having one or two officers attending most break and enters also provided greater continuity between break and enter scenes and increasing the likelihood of a *modus operandi* being identified. All the police interviewed considered that having Local Area Fingerprint Gatherers attending most scenes was a great improvement in the police response.

All project interventions were considered to improve the awareness of the general public about their security, and had positive benefits in improving relationships between the police and the public. Police expressed a desire for the project interventions, especially the security assessments, to continue beyond the formal completion of the project. Police were also of the opinion that the effects of these interventions would not be seen in the short term but would have long term benefits. A senior officer in the Kempsey Police Station commented that *there had not been one complaint* about the way police had dealt with break and enters since the Project commenced. The rural police in particular commented about the importance of the police's role in helping victims cope with the trauma of a break and enter with a personal but professional approach.

- **Crime Manager and Community Safety Officer interviews**

As the Crime Managers and Community Safety Officers in both Ashfield and the Mid North Coast were primarily responsible for implementing the Housebreaking Reduction Project interventions, their opinions were specifically sought in evaluating the Project. Their comments are outlined below.

Ashfield

Both the Ashfield Crime Manager and Community Safety Officer were of the opinion that the Project made a difference in terms of greater public satisfaction, increased awareness of home security, and improved service delivery by the police. They wanted the project interventions to continue, specifically the increased focus on fingerprint gathering, conducting security assessments, and victim follow-ups, especially with repeat victims. The security assessments and follow-ups were thought to remind people about security. Target hardening was not considered to be cost effective.

While the Project was underway it was negotiated that Ashfield's break and enter incidents were not to be referred to the Police Assistance Line (PAL). The Crime Manager and Community Safety Officer commented that PAL was not appropriate for dealing with break and enters where reassurance and support in person were needed. They considered that the additional victim follow-up and support provided as part of the Project is important as it keeps the public happy, as well as the police who receive more positive feedback.

Both officers considered that the Project had also contributed to reducing break and enter rates. They acknowledged that additional benefits, such as a greater awareness by police officers about crime prevention, would not be evident immediately but have longer term benefits.

Mid North Coast

The Community Safety Officer and Crime Manager in the Mid North Coast were similarly positive about the Project interventions, which have allowed for a more thorough and professional investigation of break and enter incidents.

The increased focus on fingerprint gathering was considered to be effective by both officers, attracting more benefits than just number of prints identified. With the advent of the LAFGs, fingerprints gatherers were able to attend more break and enter scenes as they had shorter distances to travel. Fingerprint gatherers attending most incidents also enhanced the gathering of intelligence on *modus operandi*.

The conducting of security assessments was considered more professional, informative but not intrusive, and the first time that paperwork had been reduced with positive effects. Both officers commented that the Project would have been better received if the revised form had been in use from the start of the Project.

Follow-up interviews were well-received by the public and both officers considered that they created a positive impression of the police. However both highlighted the fact that the LACs were unable to follow-up each break and enter victim with current resources and that it was inappropriate to rely on volunteers for such activities. Alternatives suggested were obtaining funding for police officers to follow-up victims on a rotational basis, or following-up on a smaller scale as a method of quality control. Support packages were also supported.

Conducting a mailout on household security measures was seen as an excellent opportunity to contact most of the population and provide them with some information. The feedback received from the public was reported to be very positive.

In the Mid North Coast target hardening was seen as having positive public relations benefits but

not cost effective, particularly as many of the locks installed were not used. It was not considered to be worthwhile retaining this intervention.

Both officers considered that by the end of the year a good package of interventions had been developed, after a process of fine tuning to make it workable for the police. However more positive feedback had been received throughout the year from the police and public than they had *ever had*. The community is seen to now be more security conscious, which assists police in reducing property crime. The size and diversity of the Mid North Coast LAC were seen as reasons why the incident rate did not reduce significantly. However it was considered that the benefits would be seen in the future, and the interventions, such as the security assessments and emphasis on fingerprint gathering, should be maintained and would have little budgetary impact.

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most recently updated 11 August 2001

Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project Evaluation Report - Chapter 5

Discussion of the Project results

In this chapter we will examine whether each of the objectives of the Housebreaking Reduction Project were met and draw some conclusions about the sustainability of the Project interventions.

5.1 Was residential housebreaking reduced over the course of the Project?

As can be seen in Chapter 3, the incidence of break and enters reduced in both Project sites between 1998 and 1999. Ashfield LAC experienced a 22.1% reduction in the total number of break and enters, and a 28.8% reduction in residential break and enters (actual and attempted). Mid North Coast LAC experienced a smaller reduction (6.9%) in the total number of break and enters, and a 8.9%% reduction in residential break and enters (actual and attempted).

However, when data on other property crime in the project sites and break and enter incidents in neighbouring Commands is examined, it can be seen that these reductions appear to be part of a wider pattern of reductions across New South Wales. The incidence of stealing offences reduced in both Ashfield and the Mid North Coast, and stolen vehicle offences reduced in Ashfield. Two out of three of Ashfield's neighbouring Commands experienced similar reductions to Ashfield in the overall number of break and enter incidents and in the number of residential break and enters. One of the Mid North Coast's two neighbouring Commands experienced larger decreases in both the number of total and the number of residential break and enter incidents than did the Mid North Coast. The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research reported a decrease of 10.0% in the number of break and enters - dwelling in New South Wales between 1998 and 1999 (Doak, 2000).

A number of explanations of factors that may have affected the numbers of break and enter incidents have been offered by the police and others. Some of these explanations are relevant to Ashfield or the Mid North Coast specifically, whilst others are more generally applicable.

Ashfield

In Ashfield, the Intelligence Supervisor advised that early in 1999 a drug syndicate being put out of operation may explain a reduction in the number of break and enter offences at that time and the later increase once the organiser was released from gaol and operating again around Ashfield. Historical intelligence data also indicate that the number of break and enter offences increases in the colder months of July and August. Officers suggested that over a three month period from July to October 1999 there was less focus on the project interventions for a number of reasons. It was also suggested that activities external to the Project, such as targeting of pawn brokers and the

Community Safety Team, may have also contributed to a reduction in break and enter incidents. The impact of the introduction of the Police Assistance Line (PAL) in early 1999 on the level of reporting is also unknown.

Police activities conducted in other Commands also had an impact on the crime level in Ashfield. For example, the Crime Manager commented that areas such as Kings Cross and Redfern were targeting drug activities during 1999. This may have temporarily increased the number of people travelling to Ashfield for their drug supplies with a corresponding increase in the number of break and enter offences. Campsie LAC expended significant resources in their area, especially in targeting recidivist offenders, which resulted in some offenders moving their activities to other areas such as Ashfield.

Mid North Coast

Police in the Mid North Coast were less convinced of the effects of the Project interventions for a number of reasons. As the Mid North Coast covers such a large and diverse area, it was more difficult to impact on the incident rate, according to the Crime Manager. Some of the project interventions such as the security assessments were considered not to be applicable to outer rural areas where people do not generally lock up. It was considered that it would take time and a variety of methods to make rural residents more aware of their security.

Throughout 1999 the patterns of break and enters in the Mid North Coast were affected by a number of other activities. Break and enter offences increase during the tourist season and decrease when the tourists leave. Increases were also observed in March, August and October due to a small numbers of offenders being released and committing large amounts of property crime until they were apprehended. At different times, offences will peak in Kempsey and Port Macquarie. Police resources are concentrated in these two centres as the rest of the LAC covers a large geographic area and accounts for only a small proportion of the crime.

More generally it is possible that reporting of break and enter offences may have increased as a result of raised awareness from the project interventions and publicity surrounding the Project. In addition, some of the interventions may not have been in operation long enough for the effects to have been detected by the end of the follow-up period.

5.2 Was repeat victimisation reduced for residential housebreaking over the course of the Project?

Although the actual number of repeat break and enter victims identified via the COPS data decreased, repeat victims as a proportion of break and enters did not, because the overall number of break and enter offences also reduced. Because identical methodology was used to calculate the number of repeat victims over two years at both Project sites, and the same patterns were detected whether calculated via the COPS data or via interview, there is added confidence in the finding that there was no change in the repeat victimisation rate between 1998 and 1999.

In comparing the three estimates of repeat victimisation calculated in this report, a number of disadvantages with each of the methods must be discussed. The estimates calculated using the COPS data will be an underestimate for a number of reasons. These include the fact that not all break and enters are reported to the police, there are a number of errors in the recording of data, such as incorrect unit numbers, and the calculations do not allow for offences that may have been recorded under another classification, such as *steal from dwelling*. Also these estimates do not include break and enters that were committed in the previous calendar year.

Estimates extracted from the security assessments and interviews will be over- estimates for a number of reasons. Interviewees may report break and enters from more than twelve months ago, include those not reported to the police, offences not categorised as break and enters by the police, and those occurring in a previous residence.

For these reasons mid points were chosen as more likely estimates, and suggested that the Mid North Coast had a slightly higher rate (14.3%) than Ashfield (11.9%). Both of these estimates are lower than the 20% reported in the 1998 Crime and Safety Survey and in estimates derived from COPS data by Ireland (1997). However the Crime and Safety Survey estimates may be an overestimate because of the same problems with recall outlined above. Ireland estimated repeat victims over two years instead of the one year used in this report, and appears to have not used home unit numbers. These differences would have increased his estimates in comparison to the ones used here.

As well as revealing a lower rate of repeat break and enter victims than previously, the data shows that only 21% occurred within one week of the previous break-in. This finding differs from that of the English studies that found that the secondary victimisation usually occurring within a 24 hour period and continues as a heightened risk hump for a period up to four months (Polvi et al 1991).

The numbers of repeat break-ins reported by interviewees within the last month are higher than expected. This may be partly explained by interviews often being conducted more than one month after the break and enter thereby increasing the period for repeat victimisation.

In conclusion, although there was no major impact on the level of repeat victimisation, the data suggest that repeat victimisation may not be occurring at levels reported in other jurisdictions overseas.

5.3 Was there an increase in the detection of offenders for housebreaking and property-related offences over the course of the Project?

Both project sites and the comparison sites made some increases in their clear-up rates for break and enters between 1998 and 1999. However in Ashfield this increase was more due to a decrease in the number of break and enters rather than an increase in the number cleared-up and the absolute numbers reported as cleared-up remain very small.

However the Mid North Coast LAC significantly increased the proportion of break and enters cleared-up, and the rural LACs in general cleared-up a greater number of break and enters than the city LACs. An explanation offered by the Mid North Coast Crime Manager was that rural areas can better identify and contain crime as they have smaller populations, are more familiar with the residents, and generally have fewer people passing through. For example, *Kempsey crime is committed by Kempsey residents.*

It was expected that the increase in the fingerprint attendance rate would have resulted in an improvement in the detection of offenders which, in turn, would have shown up in the clear-up rates. There is no evidence that this occurred. However all LACs were increasing their fingerprint attendance rates at the same time as the project sites, although not at the same rates. Increased detection of offenders may occur over time as the number of fingerprints held on the police system increases.

5.4 Did the quality of the policing response improve over the course of the Project?

In the two Project sites, Ashfield and the Mid North Coast, respondents received much more in the way of additional services and follow-up in relation to their break-in. They received security assessments and Victim Support Packages not received to the same extent in the neighbouring Commands.

However some of these interventions, particularly the security assessments, may be of less benefit in rural areas, so interventions will need to be adapted as appropriate.

There was no evidence that the target hardening undertaken in the Mid North Coast made any

difference to repeat victimisation, and it was not done sufficiently well in Ashfield to assess. However, South Kempsey residents were reported to see the police coming back to help with security as positive and impacting on the level of other offences.

Both the break and enter victims and the police were overwhelmingly positive about the project interventions, particularly the security assessments, victim follow-up and attendance by the fingerprint gatherers. Through the project activities there has been an increased focus on break and enters, and the positive perception of the police by the community has increased. This improved relationship may have benefits in the long term.

5.5 Did the awareness of home security increase among residents over the course of the Project so that they took responsibility for crime prevention?

It appears that the project interventions, such as the security assessments, made no difference to the rate at which break and enter victims protected their property. People tended to improve their security and change their behaviours anyway following a break and enter, especially in the metropolitan areas.

It could be concluded from these findings that having police conduct a security assessment did not change the protection behaviour because becoming a victim of a break and enter had already initiated security improvements. The provision of security information to people who have not been recently broken into may have more of an effect on changing protection behaviour.

5.6 How well was the Project implemented?

The impact of the Housebreaking Reduction Project interventions is likely to have been limited by a number of shortcomings in the way the Project was implemented. A number of these are listed below:

Security assessment forms

- Inaccurate and incomplete details were recorded by police on the security assessment forms
- Several security assessments were not completed
- Security assessment forms and interview schedules were not properly designed at the start of the Project and had to be redesigned while the Project was underway

Timing of the interventions

- The mailout and target hardening interventions in Ashfield not undertaken until the end of 1999, reducing the impact in the intervention year
- The short period that the Project was underway means that the effects may not be felt until after the conclusion of the evaluation period

Staffing issues

- There was no project manager to ensure that the interventions were conducted as instructed
- Police staff turnover and lack of training and commitment to the Project reduced the quality of the interventions
- Some variation in the commitment and skill of fingerprint gatherers was reported

- Problems with the recruitment and inexperience of interviewers created delays and hindered the interpretation of the results

Geographical difficulties

- Having the Project underway in two sites was difficult to manage, although it increases the generalisability of the findings
- Neighbouring commands used as comparison sites implemented other strategies as well as some of the Project interventions rendering conclusions about the findings difficult to interpret

Information and data

- Inaccurate recording of details on the COPS system hampered the follow-up of break and enter victims and the identification of repeat victims

However, it must be appreciated that many of these difficulties occurred because the Project interventions were being conducted without the appointment of any additional staff. Most of the additional duties were undertaken by the police in addition to their normal duties, which at times resulted in onerous workloads.

However, the increased awareness and commitment by general duties police, over the course of the Project, about the benefits of such crime preventions activities may result in additional benefits in the future.

5.7 Conclusions

In conclusion, the major finding is that victims of break and enter offences liked the additional service and follow-up provided as part of this Project, but that they did not make a difference to the Project objectives in the short term. Given the positive feedback, the low costs involved and the small positive results from the Project evaluation, it is recommend that Commands, as part of their standard response to residential break and enter incidents, conduct security assessments, provide additional victim support, and increase the rates of attendance by fingerprint gatherers at break and enter scenes.

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Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project Evaluation Report - References

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Appendices

Appendix A Management Committee of the Safer Towns and Cities Housebreaking Reduction Project

- Ashfield Local Area Command
- Commander Warren Fletcher - LAC Commander
- Inspector Douglas Mckenzie - Duty Officer and Project Manager
- Sergeant Brendan Donnellan - Community Safety Officer
- Sergeant Margaret Brett - Intelligence Supervisor
- Mid North Coast Local Area Command
- Detective Inspector Bruce Lyons - Crime Manager
- Senior Constable Brett Martin - Community Safety Officer
- Sergeant Wayne Sainsbury- Intelligence Supervisor
- Crime Prevention Division, NSW Attorney-General's Department Mr Bruce Flaherty
- Evaluation Coordinator Dr Stephanie Taplin

Please note the following appendices have not been included on the website. If you would like a copy of any of the following appendices please contact the Crime Prevention Division on (02) 9228 8307 and we will send it out to you.

Appendix B Original project security assessment form

Appendix C Redesigned security assessment form

Appendix D Example of a victim support package

Appendix E Example of a canvas card distributed to neighbours

Appendix F Copy of public education campaign letter (MNC)

Appendix G Interview schedule for victim follow-up interviews

Appendix H Interview schedule for comparison group interviews

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