



Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria

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Introduction

The Victorian experience of developing and implementing CPTED is markedly different from other states in Australia and comparative international models.

Victoria has had a relatively long history (relatively long in community safety terms, that is) in community safety and crime prevention. Since 1988 commencing with the Good Neighbourhood program, Victoria has progressed a number of State Government iterations of crime prevention and community safety strategies. Most were directed at local government using differing models of community development, strategic planning partnerships and 'local solutions to local problems' approaches. Increasingly local government has played a crucial role in coordinating community safety and crime prevention at the local level with community consultation constantly confirming community safety as a priority issue for local government to address. Some local governments became leaders in community safety in Victoria and developed numerous strategies and initiatives, involving collaborative partnerships particularly with police.

These strategies inevitably included the use of CPTED principles. Over the years, Victoria was visited by a number of interstate and international experts in CPTED and local government staff and elected officials attended conferences and seminars where CPTED was featured as a critical component of any strategic approach to community safety. A number of local governments contracted these experts to conduct in-house training sessions for staff and subsequently developed CPTED guidelines for their own use.

By 2000, a growing number of Victorian local governments recognised CPTED as a fundamental planning tool and were considering adopting CPTED principles into their statutory and strategic planning processes. In discussion, these local governments decided that rather than developing individual CPTED guidelines a consistent state-wide set of principles and guidelines to use in their statutory planning frameworks was needed. The newly established State Crime Prevention agency, Crime Prevention Victoria, was approached to coordinate the development of such guidelines.

Discussions also identified that the only CPTED training available was conducted by interstate practitioners, Victoria Police or academic institutions and these options were considered either too costly, too lengthy or on consecutive days which were deemed not appropriate or viable for all council staff, particularly town planners – the primary target. So the local governments also requested CPV develop a complementary, low cost, flexible training package to raise awareness of CPTED, gain commitment from



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Council senior management and elected officials and ensure the implementation by all Council staff.

In response, CPV convened a working party consisting of local government, state government and police representatives and engaged a consultant to develop a set of guidelines and strategic statements for inclusion in local planning frameworks and processes.

The resultant draft guidelines were widely disseminated and underwent a lengthy consultation process. The guidelines were overwhelmingly accepted and resulted in a recommendation that rather than amending each local government Planning Policy Framework to include CPTED principles, as was originally proposed, they should be incorporated into the overarching State Policy Planning Framework. In essence, these principles would become state legislated guidelines that must be considered in all major planning proposals.

Concurrently, the Victorian State Government was undertaking major community and industry consultation to shape Melbourne 2030 – a strategy for managing the growth of Melbourne for the next 30 years. This consultation showed that Victorians wanted safe, vibrant, accessible environments and neighbourhoods. So when CPV approached the State Planning department to negotiate endorsement of the CPTED guidelines as requested by local government, it was most timely. The Department agreed in principle to include the guidelines - now titled the Safer Design Guidelines, to reflect that the guidelines covered not only crime prevention but also perceptions of safety and increased usage of public space i.e. walkable neighbourhoods – in the State Policy Planning Framework. However, the Office of Local Government requested further consultation to confirm this widespread support by local government and the Urban Design Unit within the Department of Sustainability and Environment, with the planning portfolio, required format change to reflect State government style.

This further State-wide consultation with local government facilitated by the Municipal Association of Victoria elicited either strong support or indifference – mainly from smaller rural councils. Other consultations with key stakeholders ensured complementarity and not conflict with other existing urban design paradigms such as ‘Supportive Environments for Physical Activity’ Road Safety, Access and Disability and Shade provision. Formal endorsement was attained with the Minister of Police and Minister for Planning agreeing to a joint launch of the guidelines.

Meanwhile a Safer Design training package, based on a concept developed by South Australia’s Crime Prevention unit, was being piloted with six local governments. The 2-day, 5 module training package on CD, included PowerPoint presentations, background material and facilitators notes. It has the capacity to be delivered in-house, to all council staff at flexible times. Feedback to date has been extremely positive.

The draft guidelines and training package has also been used and included in State government strategies and programs such as the Neighbourhood Renewal program, the Women’s Safety Strategy, Transit Cities - a place management program



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encouraging residential, commercial and educational development around transport hubs, Melbourne 2030, Physical Activity Strategy and Walking Action Plan.

In October, 2003, the 'Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria – an introduction' a summary booklet was launched by the Minister for Police and the Minister for Planning. One of the recommendations from the local government consultation was that awareness information was needed prior to any State Planning Policy Framework amendments so that local governments could introduce the concept of safer design across Council and to customers.

The complete reference document – Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria is scheduled to be launched in October 2004 with the Safer Design for Victoria training package.

Lessons Learned

- Local government leading the process resulted in strong ownership by local government and subsequent commitment from State government rather than being viewed as another state government directive imposed on local government.
- Partnerships, particularly Police, are critical from the beginning.
- Use existing programs and consultation as leverage.
- Integrate complementary principles eg. Health, well-being and access.
- 'Serendipity' happens! (or timing is everything)