Community Safety Strategy

NICHOLAS STREET PRECINCT

October 2020

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is a brief prepared by the Community Safety and Innovation Manager for the General Manager, Coordination and Performance concerning community safety concerns within the Ipswich CBD, Nicholas Street Precinct and the surrounding area.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Safety has long been a concern within the Ipswich CBD and it is important to recognise that safety (and crime) are quality of life issues that affect all communities, be it real or perceived.

A person's perception may be objectively unjustifiable or just plain out of touch with reality and in some cases inherited from the bad experiences of others. Either way, perceptions and opinions affect our community and should be identified as a quality of life issue. That said, there is some reality to some perceptions in Ipswich that should be recognised and addressed if we want to encourage the community to work, live and play in this space.

The most common offences committed in our city range from traffic offences through to fare evasion, property damage, tagging/graffiti, good order offences and drug and alcohol related offences

Youths congregating and/or persons loitering are other issues that may not necessarily be illegal but can have a negative impact on members of the public going about their business (perception).

Ultimately, an overall strategic approach through Council partnerships with the local Police and other identified local networks and community groups is important. The ability to engage the community across numerous levels in order to identify an individual issue or people that may be in need of assistance, support or brought to the attention of police.

This multi-platform engagement is important to understanding current social issues impacting on our community. Issues that, if addressed, will give people a positive experience and the ability to enjoy what our city has to offer.

A key element in addressing safety and potential crime is local input, knowledge and basic crime prevention through environment design principles (CPTED) as well as a selection of other crime preventative techniques applicable to the City of Ipswich.

The following steps, if practiced, will endeavour to address public safety concerns. These concerns have been identified and explored through initial consultation and collaboration with local business and other stakeholders, site visits and CPTED audits.

3.0 CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED)

CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) is one of the most robust crime prevention models in use today and can be traced back to the Roman Empire. Fundamentally, CPTED works if its principles are adopted and practiced by stakeholders of a given area or space. This approach is relatively easy to understand with solutions becoming apparent and eventually common sense.

"CPTED is the proper design and effective use of the built environment that can lead to a reduction in the form and incidence of crime and improvement in the quality of life."

Dr C. Ray Jeffrey, 1971

The four major principles of CPTED are:

1. **Passive or Natural Surveillance**
2. **Natural Access Control**
3. **Territorial Reinforcement**
4. **Maintenance and Management**

The following are descriptions of the four principles according to the National Crime Prevention Council of Singapore. These descriptions are generally similar across various global agencies.

3.1 Principle 1: NATURAL SURVEILLANCE

The fundamental premise is that criminals do not wish to be observed.

Surveillance or the placing of legitimate 'eyes on the street' increases the perceived risk to offenders. This may also increase the actual risk to offenders if those observing are willing to act when potentially threatening situations develop. So the primary aim of surveillance is not to keep intruders out (although it may have that effect) but rather, to keep intruders under observation. Natural surveillance can be achieved through a number of techniques. The flow of activities can be channelled to put more people (observers) near a potential crime area. Windows, lighting and the removal of obstructions can be placed to improve sight lines from within buildings.

3.2 Principle 2: NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL

Natural access control relies on doors, fences, shrubs, and other physical elements to keep unauthorised persons out of a particular place if they do not have a legitimate reason for being there.

In its most elementary form, access control can be achieved in individual dwellings or commercial establishments by the use of adequate locks, doors and window barriers. However, when one moves beyond private property to public or semi-public spaces, the application of access control needs more care.

Properly located entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping and lighting can subtly direct both foot and vehicular traffic in ways that decrease criminal opportunities. Access control can be as simple as locating a front office to a warehouse. While access control is more difficult on streets and areas that are entirely open to public use, there are other techniques for controlling access in these circumstances.

For example, nonphysical or 'psychological' barriers can be used to achieve the objective of access control. These barriers may appear in the form of signs, paving textures, nature strips or anything that announces the integrity and uniqueness of an area. The idea behind a psychological barrier is that if a target seems strange, or difficult, it may also be unattractive to potential criminals. Because any strategy that fosters access control is also likely to impede movement, careful consideration should be given to access control strategies. Such strategies may limit the opportunity for crimes, but should not hinder the mobility of potential victims.

3.3 Principle 3: TERRITORIAL REINFORCEMENT

People naturally protect a territory that they feel is their own, and have a certain respect for the territory of others.

Clear boundaries between public and private areas achieved by using physical elements such as fences, pavement treatment, art, signs, good maintenance and landscaping are ways to express ownership. Identifying intruders is much easier in such well-defined spaces.

Territorial reinforcement can be seen to work when a space, by its clear legibility, transparency and directness, discourages potential offenders because of users' familiarity with each other and the surroundings.

3.4 Principle 4: MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

This is related to the neighbourhood's sense of 'pride of place' and territorial reinforcement.

The more dilapidated an area, the more likely it is to attract unwanted activities.

The maintenance and the 'image' of an area can have a major impact on whether it will become targeted. Another extension of the concept is that territorial concern, social cohesion and a general sense of security can be reinforced through the development of the identity and image of a community. This approach can improve not only the image of the population has of itself and its domain, but also the projection of that image to others.

With clear spatial definitions such as the subdivision of space into different degrees of public/semi-public/private areas and the raising of standards and expectations, the level of social estrangement would decline. This is known to be related to reduction in opportunities for aberrant or criminal behaviour, such as vandalism.

Maintenance and management need to be considered at the design stage, as the selection of materials and finishes will impact on the types of maintenance regimes that can be sustained over time. For example, plant material should be selected for its size at maturity to avoid blocking of sight lines**.**

4.0 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

To ensure this draft strategy and its initial recommendations were reflective of the actual needs of the users of the Nicholas Street Precinct and the surrounding area, some early feedback was sought from a targeted group of key businesses and landlords from the precinct. The attached community engagement report provides a summary of their recommendations and feedback, which has been reflected in the recommendations noted in Section 5.0.

Fourteen businesses and six building owners within the Nicholas Street Precinct were approached to participate. Engagement included site visits to the businesses to assist with the online activity.

Thirty percent of targeted stakeholders completed the survey, including half of all building/site owners and 21 percent of all businesses in the precinct. The Shape Your Ipswich page attracted 51 views, 31 visits, 21 visitors, and six contributions.

All survey participants felt either very safe or quite safe in the Nicholas Street precinct during the day. This is echoed in feedback that the extra security guards in place 'make us feel safe'. During the evening, most participants felt either 'quite safe' or 'neither safe nor unsafe', while one participant felt 'quite unsafe'.

Responses from survey participants identified the biggest overall safety issue during both the day and evening as 'the precinct is empty or closed'. 'Anti-social behaviour' followed by 'the precinct is not family-friendly' were other safety risks identified, particularly for the evenings.

Participants believed that the following biggest barrier, real or perceived, that prevented their customers from visiting the Nicholas Street Precinct both during the day and evening, was overwhelmingly that 'the precinct is empty or closed'. There was also concern regarding anti-social behaviour and that customers may not feel safe. In addition to this, a real or perceived lack of cleanliness was identified as a potential barrier to customers visiting the precinct.

Suggestions put forward by participants to improve community safety in the Nicholas Street Precinct included the following:

- More police and evening security patrols,

- Good lighting including car park,

- Obvious security cameras,

- Improved signage,

- Regular cleaning,

- Increased community activity,

- More green space and street art,

- Greater connection between the precinct and top of Brisbane Street, and

- Redevelopment of Bell Street, Ipswich train station, Health Plaza and bus station.

Three survey participants nominated to be part of a group to have an ongoing voice in the City Safety Strategy on behalf of businesses in the precinct.

5.0 LOCAL INTERPRETATION OF PRINCIPLES RELEVANT TO NICHOLAS STREET AND THE CBD

For the Ipswich CBD and Nichols Street Precinct, the four CPTED principles can be interpreted and implemented as follows.

5.1 Principle 1: NATURAL SURVEILLANCE – Nicholas Street Precinct and surrounding areas

Identify, open up, activate and put eyes on the streets

Open up areas where practical, activate spaces with events and activities to bring people in, and increase both natural and artificial lighting (day and night in some areas).

1. Maintain current clear lines of sight to increase visibility for people to see each other, and the appropriate route to take.
2. Use public space design that encourages the legitimate use of the space allowing for 'public' surveillance and the management thereof.
3. Increase lighting to ensure consistent surveillance minimising shadows and taking into consideration the time of day (or night) of the space's intended purpose. This could be as simple as trimming vegetation to allow more light in, businesses leaving a light on after hours, changing current light bulbs and, of course, adding additional lighting to an area.

5.2 Principle 2: NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL (legible) – Nicholas Street Precinct and surrounding areas

Where am I, where do I have to go?

An urban environment has natural access control if its intended use permits people to easily move about the space, know where they are and how to get to where they are going.

1. Avoid clutter outside business entries, walkways and main thoroughfares.
2. Define areas that are not public.
3. Careful placement of entrances to businesses, car parks and spaces you want to encourage the public into as well as clear exit points so they can find their way back.
4. Adequate signage, tactful paving textures, barriers and lighting to guide pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic.
5. Landscaping and lighting can subtly direct both foot and vehicular traffic in ways that decreases criminal opportunities.
6. Such strategies may limit the opportunity for crimes, but should not hinder the mobility of potential victims.

5.3 Principle 3: TERRITORIAL REINFORCEMENT – Nicholas Street Precinct and surrounding areas

Community participation and partnerships

It is important people in general understand the use of a space, who owns it, can I go there and can I claim or mark the territory if no one appears to own it. Clearly establish ownership and avoid allowing an offender who maliciously damages property the defence that they misunderstood the space.

A sense of shared responsibility and ownership by the community and business owners alike can also play a significant part.

- **Cleary define the intended use of the space.**

    - Dogs permitted on a leash, bicycles to travel at walking pace, trolleys, vehicles, smoking, speed limits, hours of operation and the like.

- **Provide opportunity for community partnership and participation.**

    - This could be through a number of strategies, including;

1) Yearly surveys to assist in developing each financial year's safety strategy for specifically targeted areas.
2) Targeting specific issues that have been identified.
3) The creation of a Community Safety Partnership or Group for each area that allows for any business to be involved to varying degrees. This would include updates on any safety initiatives, informal educating for areas of concern (i.e.: shop steal, fraud, and armed hold up to self-check security audits
4) Recognise those members who contributed to making the community a safer place (eg through awards night, local news articles, social media, etc.).
5) Encourage shop owners to take responsibility for their immediate space outside the shop as well as inside.

5.4 Principle 4: MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT –– Nicholas Street Precinct and surrounding areas

Public places that are broken down, dirty, vandalised, full of rubbish and generally "looking unloved" are less likely to encourage active legitimate use by most groups, let alone a sense of pride and ownership by the community - Queensland Police Service.

1. Regular daily/hourly cleaning regime.
2. Cleaners to be seen actively going about their job (increase cleaners' presence).
3. Graffiti, tags, broken lights and damaged items to be cleaned, replaced or repaired as quickly as possible.
4. Safe City cameras and security staff onsite to assist in identifying maintenance issues.

There is the common criminology theory called "*broken windows*" that states that visible signs of crime, anti-social behaviour and civil disorder creates an environment that encourages further crime and disorder, including serious crimes.

This same theory suggests that policing methods that target minor crimes, such as public nuisance, vandalism and drinking in public, can also create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness, thereby preventing more serious crimes.

Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken.

1. Increase security and police presence (particularly during events and peak periods).
2. Control vegetation. Trees and plants should be selected for their size at maturity to avoid blocking of sight lines and places of concealment.

The presence of both security and police may assist in preventing and reacting to unacceptable behaviour, as well as provide piece of mind to traders and community members. The Queensland Police Crime Prevention Unit may also play a part in providing a presence, as would the Volunteers in Policing (VIP's) and Police Liaison Officers.

Under some circumstances, police can be hired to perform 'specials'. This is particularly useful when incidents are not necessarily occurring but a police presence would assist in a more controlled method such as council officers patrolling for scheduled compliance issues.

1. Increase the presence of uniformed or labelled council staff, compliance officers, event organisers and the like.

6.0 ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 SAFE CITY PROGRAM

In addition to CPTED, Safe City will continue to monitor for activity or events that threaten the public or its property.

1. The Safe City public safety surveillance cameras can also contribute to the overall safety, from locating lost or missing persons through to identifying people in distress, unacceptable behaviour and areas/assets that require cleaning or maintenance. Safe City also has the capability to alert cleaners, security and the police to matters requiring their attention.
2. The appropriate signage (collection notices) regarding cameras may in themselves provide a deterrent factor as well as a method of informing the community about the council's Safe City cameras.
3. Cameras are being installed and reinstated in this area with a view to being completed by Christmas 2020.

6.2 WORKING GROUP FORMATION

In regards to safety in the Nicholas Street Precinct and CBD, it's proposed that a working group is formed, initially made up of representatives from the QPS, local businesses and landlords, council officers, and councillors.

Members from the Crime Prevention Unit, Volunteers in Policing and Police Liaison officers as well as special and general police would be invited to participate in this group.

As social issues are identified, representatives from relevant groups and bodies would be invited to attend specific meetings to help address these issues (eg Drug Arm, Rosie's etc). The key to the success of this group is the inclusion of these additional stakeholders.

While the initial focus of the group would be the Nicholas Street Precinct area, the plan would be to quickly expand the scope to include the Top of Town and Bottom of Town.

This group would consist of stakeholders having an input and involvement into current and future public safety issues with the CBD.

This group could report to a city-wife Safe City Steering Committee, should this structure be implemented.

Identified issues may include, but would not be limited to;

- Lighting
- Drug and alcohol users
- Intellectually challenged persons
- Loitering
- Cleanliness/maintenance
- Bicycles/skateboards/scooters
- Activation of identified spaces
- Increasing the security presence
- Surveillance: public safety cameras
- Signage, camera collection notices, wayfinding, and general accessibility
- Policing: presence of various policing units, ability to move people on at the discretion of police
- Business and community participation and partnerships (including reporting and initiative monitoring of the strategy)
- It is also recommended that specific officers from the Community, Culture and Economic Development Department (CCED) be provided professional training in public safety and CPTED audits to best provide immediate and future guidance and advice to council and the community.

7.0 REFERENCES

There are numerous documents that were referenced and utilised to provide guidance on the crime prevention. For further detail:

https://www.police.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-08/CPTEDPartA.pdf

https://rems.ed.gov/docs/Mobile_docs/CPTED-Guidebook.pdf

https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/basics/broken-windows-theory

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