

# Do Crime Risk Assessment Reports Really Assess Crime Risk?

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SYDNEY LAW SCHOOL

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# NSW Planning Instruments - Hierarchy

EPA Act

*Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*



SEPPs

State Environmental Planning Policies



REPs (No longer operational – merged into SEPPs)

Regional Environmental Plans



LEPs

Local Environmental Plans



DCPs

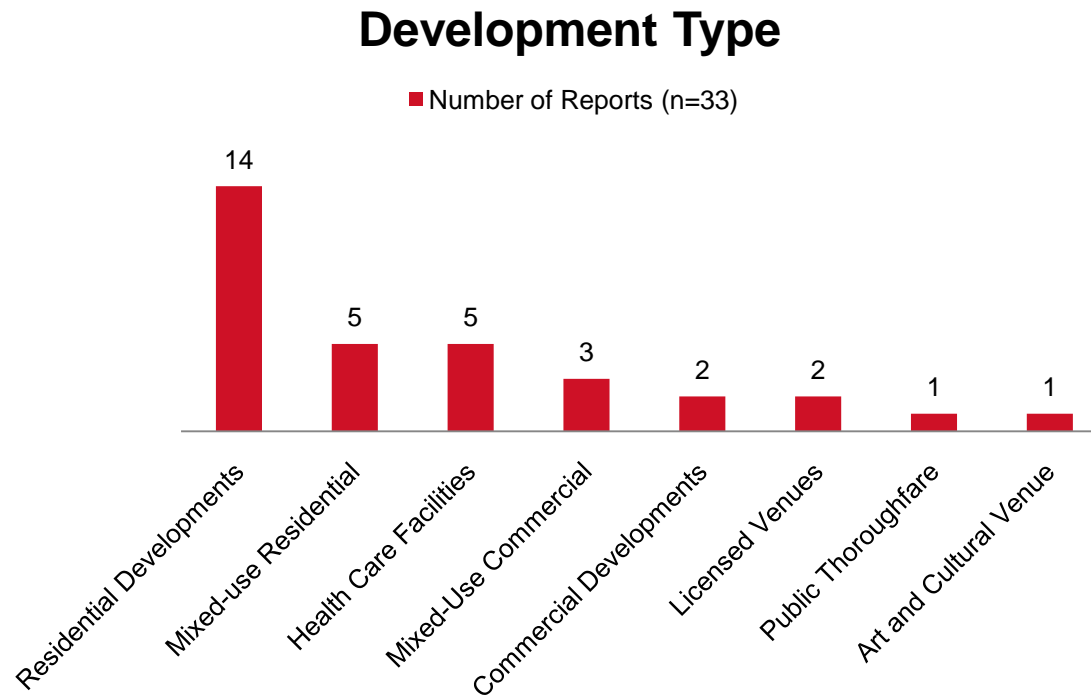
Development Control Plans

## S 79c *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW) Guidelines*

- › A formal crime risk assessment is needed for any development that is likely (in the council's opinion) to create a risk of crime. Examples would include:
    - a **new/refurbished shopping centre or transport interchange**
    - a **large scale residential development** (more than 20 new dwellings), or
    - the **development or re-development of a mall or other public place**, including the installation of new street furniture.
  
  - › A crime risk assessment is a systematic evaluation of the potential for crime in an area. It provides an indication of both the **likely magnitude of crime** and **likely crime type**. The consideration of these dimensions (crime amount and type) will determine the choice and appropriate mix of CPTED strategies.
  
  - › A crime risk assessment is based on four key CPTED principles: access control, territorial reinforcement, natural surveillance and space management.
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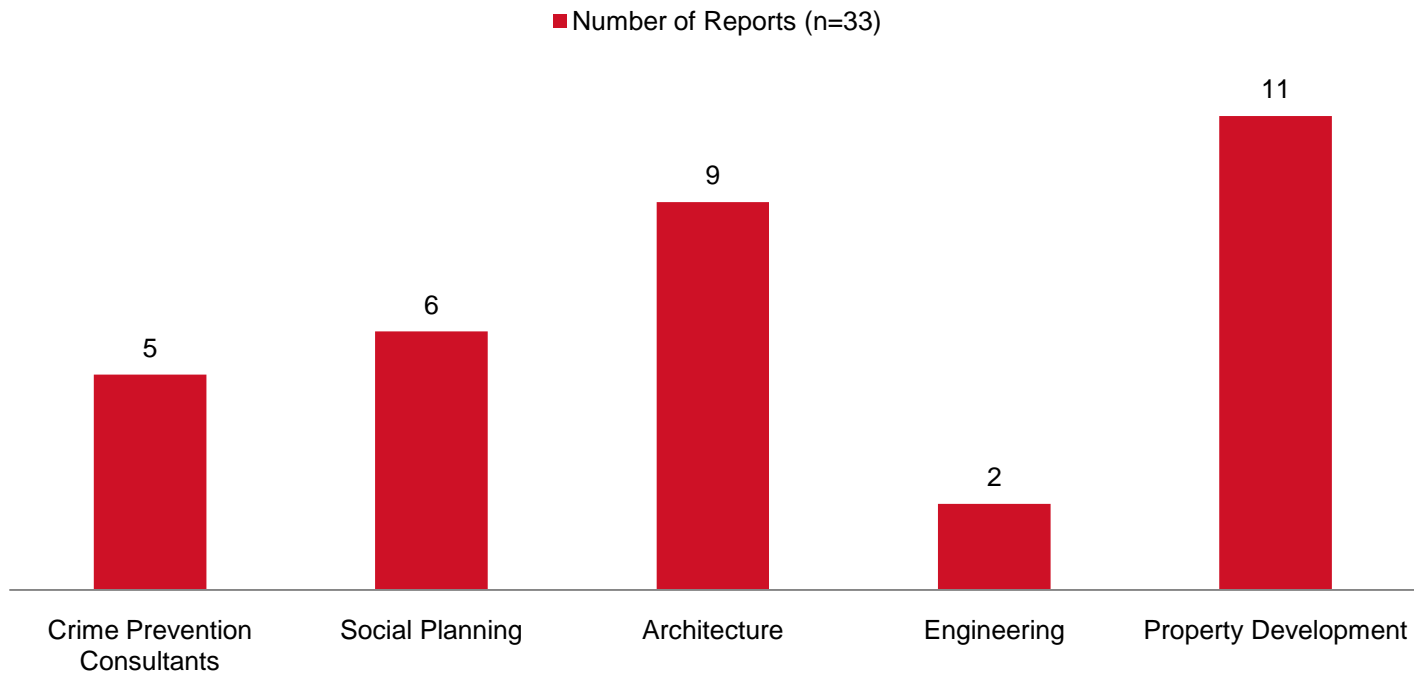
- › Co-authored crime risk assessment reports on mixed used developments and residential complexes.
  - › Found the Guidelines to be unhelpful in dealing with the practicalities of assessing crime risk.
  - › Challenges encountered:
    - Crime risks operate on macro, meso and micro levels. Difficult to know where to begin on very large developments.
    - Often engaged late in the development process, which limits opportunities for iterative discussions.
    - Timeframes often very tight.
    - Few opportunities to speak with consultants engaged in other aspects of the DA process.
    - Objectivity questionable.
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- › Analysed 33 crime risk assessment reports prepared for developments in NSW between 1 January 2007 and 31 October 2010
- › Reports located from the NSW Department of Planning's active tracking system are put on public display at: <http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au>



- › Twenty-four (24) separate companies compiled the 33 reports. Of the five companies that prepared more than one report, three authored two reports, one company prepared four reports, and another produced five reports.

## CRA Author Professional Background



1. The length of the reports (not including appendices) ranged from two pages to 35 pages. The mean number of pages was 11.5 and the median was 11 pages. The standard deviation was 8.5 pages.
2. All reports included generic CPTED information.
3. Some form of crime data was presented for 16 of the 33 reports (48.5%).
4. Eleven (11) of the 33 reports (33.3%) made reference to a site visit (or visits) during the preparation of the report.
5. Thirteen (13) of the 33 reports (39.4%) made reference to stakeholders being consulted during the preparation of the crime risk assessment report.
6. Eleven (11) of the 33 reports (33.3%) made reference to demographic data for the area of the proposed development in the report.
7. Twenty-three (23) of the 33 reports (69.7%) made explicit reference to architectural plans of the proposed development.
8. Seventeen (17) of the 33 reports (51.5%) included recommendations about how crime risks could be mitigated or managed.
9. Seven (7) of the 33 reports (21.2%) contained adverse findings.

Principle	Assessment
<b>Surveillance</b>	
<i>Clear sightlines between public and private places</i>	<p>The private spaces of the proposed development, particularly the apartments, have clear sightlines with the streets and the public open space. Balconies are specifically oriented to the communal open space areas between buildings 4 and 5 which will enhance the causal surveillance. In addition, balconies are also oriented towards the adjoining street again increasing surveillance as it will be possible to observe vehicles and pedestrians approaching the building. These measures will promote surveillance and minimise crime risk.</p>



Principle	Assessment
<b>Surveillance</b>	
<i>Clear sightlines between public and private places</i>	<p>The private spaces of the proposed development, particularly the apartments, have clear sightlines with the street and the communal open space areas in the site. Balconies and courtyards face the street as well as windows from habitable rooms. This will promote casual surveillance and minimise crime risk. Due to the positioning of balconies, there will be particularly close causal surveillance of the public spaces around the site.</p>

- › The NSW guidelines state:
  - “when conducting individual crime risk assessments, the consequences and likelihood of crime are identified and measured using recorded crime statistics, hotspot analyses and Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) socio-economic data” (DUAP 2001:3).
- › Given that some form of crime data was presented for 16 of the 33 reports (48.5%) and 11 of the 33 reports (33.3%) made reference to demographic data for the area of the proposed development in the report, it would seem that the spirit and intent of this section of the NSW guidelines have not been fully realised in the sample of crime risk assessment reports.
- › Report 6 includes the number of incidents and the rates for 60 separate offences across a five-year period for the LGA in which the proposed development sits. Given that the proposed development is mixed use, including commercial and residential units, it seems noteworthy that data would be provided on justice procedures (escape custody, fail to appear, breach of bail) and stock (livestock) theft (amongst other offences). The inclusion of data on these offences seems unnecessary.

# Elements of Comprehensive Reports

- › The most comprehensive reports contained:
  - Detailed and relevant demographic and crime data analysis
  - Site visit information
  - Findings from key stakeholder consultation
  - Clear analysis of architectural plans and clearly linked observations (i.e. Reference to specific plans)
  - Clarity regarding when the crime risk assessment was conducted in overall development process
  - Recommended changes or issues requiring attention
  - Clear reference to relevant design guidelines and planning instruments

# Limitations of the Guidelines

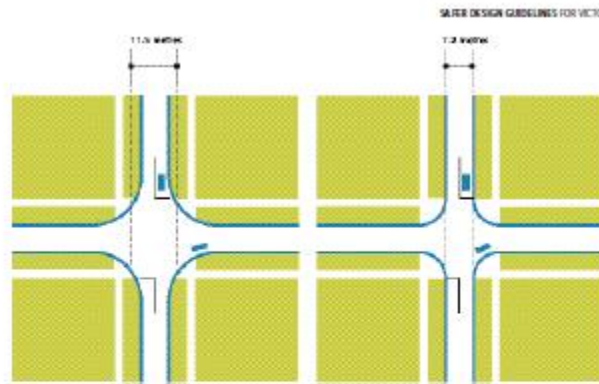
- › The guidelines are based on only four CPTED concepts:
  - Narrows analysis to just these concepts
  - Not all concepts are relevant to all developments
- › Ability to assess the crime risk assessment reports is undermined by the vagueness of the guidelines
- › Guidelines fail to adequately communicate to the intended audience (no pictures, diagrams, photos, etc.)



# Victorian Guidelines



MAJOR LINKING STREETS WITH LONG SEGMENTS ENSURE AREAS ARE EASILY READ AND UNDERSTOOD.



AS THE RADIUS OF THE KERB IS INCREASED, CARS ARE ABLE TO TRAVEL FASTER AND THE OBSTACLES PEDESTRIANS HAVE TO CROSS INCREASE. MAKING WALKING SAFER, HAZARDOUS. KEEP KERB RADIUS TO A MINIMUM AT INTERSECTIONS TO SLOW TRAFFIC AND PROVIDE THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE CROSSING DISTANCES FOR PEDESTRIANS AND OTHER USERS. ENSURE CROSSING POINTS ARE EASILY IDENTIFIED FOR ALL USERS.



- › 10 design elements
  - Urban structure
  - Activity centres
  - Building design
  - Parks and open space
  - Walking and cycling paths
  - Public transport
  - Car park areas
  - Public facilities
  - Lighting
  - Signage
- › 178 design suggestions
- › 60 photos
- › 10 diagrams
- › 2 aerial images

- › The NSW Guidelines were introduced in 2001 and to date they have not been reviewed or evaluated.
  - › There is no formal accreditation process for people compiling crime risk assessment reports. The NSW Police Force 'Safer by Design' course (4-days) is the only course offered in NSW.
  - › Based on analysis of the 33 crime risk assessment reports, there appear to be certain weaknesses of the existing system. Many of the processes that the guidelines seem to imagine are not always adopted in the preparation of crime risk assessment reports.
  - › While some reports were very thorough, many merely provided glowing endorsement of the proposed development and engaged in 'magical CPTED thinking'.
  - › It is recommended that the NSW guidelines be reviewed and modified. They should be more specific, contain images, diagrams and design guidance and they should more clearly outline processes required for a satisfactory crime risk assessment.
  - › More research is required to determine if these preliminary observations are more widespread. Nonetheless, it is questionable if the original intentions are being met by the current arrangements.
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- › Join CrimNet to receive FREE email updates on crime and justice related issues
- › Attend an upcoming event:
  - CPTED Plus 12 August 2011
  - Short courses on forensic psychology, working with offenders post-release, introduction to crime prevention, brief interventions for young offenders, etc.
- › Listen to podcasts from previous events (including Critical Perspectives of CPTED - <http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/6438>)
- › Become a member of the Institute
- › Subscribe to the *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* journal
- › Study criminology (GradDip Crim / Mcrim) at Sydney

# Thank You

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