



The Northbridge curfew (Epilogue)

Overall, the government was satisfied by the gains that had been made under the policy but at the end of 2006 there were no immediate plans to wind back the curfew. Discussions between the Department of Premier and Cabinet and business owners suggested that the “youth” issue was no longer seen as a problem, compared to the issue of alcohol and drug affected adults.¹ In addition to helping address some of the problems experienced by traders, the project also helped the government identify gaps in Department of Community Development (DCD) service provision. Other outcomes included:

- An increased recognition of the need for services to be provided to young people.
- A co-ordinated interagency approach being developed to appropriately manage the issues affecting young people in Northbridge
- The allocation of additional DCD resources for the project, including Crisis Care, and Outreach workers
- Data collection that has been able to identify and quantify a number of young people and families that would benefit from further intervention.²

The police and Mission Australia continued to work together in Northbridge and eventually signed off on a Memorandum of Understanding which clarified aspects of their working relationship. In terms of the project’s future, Inspector Charlie Carver wanted to see the creation of a dedicated detox centre where kids and adults got

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¹ O’Brien, P. ‘Northbridge Project Information’ Department of Community Development, 18 October 2006 p.2.

² *ibid*, p.3.

professional help in dealing with their substance abuse issues before tackling their other problems. Sergeant Paul Coveney hoped that local councils would develop programs better tailored to the needs of indigenous youth:

“My view is that the kids are going to come anyway; it’s easier to contain them and engage them and do something safe and constructive with them. You can’t make them sit down and make them do white Anglo Saxon middle class kids’ stuff. I would like to see some safe places where they can do activities which are appropriate for them where we can minimise the harm they do to themselves.”

For his part, Mission Australia Team Leader Peter Feasey considered that the reduction in the number of juveniles coming to Northbridge was largely a result of the follow-up interventions put in place. He also suggested that there was a general belief within government that the situation would revert back to pre-curfew levels if the policy was rescinded. He hoped that in future more resources could be put towards early intervention strategies. In Deputy Police Commissioner Chris Dawson’s estimation, the project had proved useful in getting to grips with exactly how big the problem was. Although he believed that the situation was much improved, he felt that the policy still had a place:

“Part of me says I can’t see an end to the problem or the need for the community at large to address it. It goes with inner city nightlife areas that you’re always going to have some significant challenges with young people. It comes with the territory...I’m not suggesting that this policy is the panacea for everything. Northbridge and interaction with the police is very much downstream from where the problems started. All this is trying to do is to interrupt this sad cycle and not by scooping them off the street and making the place look cleaner but by actually trying to help them stop this self-destructive approach. If it diverts a young person from a more dangerous situation than they would otherwise be in, then it’s worth it.”