

Crime and Caravan Parks

A Report to the West Australian Office of Crime Prevention

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All errors and omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The aim of the study was to investigate the nature and extent of crime within caravan parks in two regions in Western Australia and two regions in New South Wales through case studies of 36 caravan parks and 121 face-to-face and telephone interviews with park managers, tourists and permanent residents, police, security guards, local government and industry personnel. Routine Activities and Hot-Spot Theory were employed to seek a deeper understanding of the relationship between crime victimisation and the physical deterrence factors of the park environment and the extent and effectiveness of security practices undertaken by park owners/managers.

Research Outcomes

A review of the literature on crime and tourism revealed that no previous victimisation studies of Australian caravan parks have been conducted. Offences on parks in Australia are not separately recorded in official crime data and it is likely that many crimes go unreported because of the transient nature of park populations. The profile of the participants within the present study demonstrated the heterogeneity of caravan parks and their populations. Transience and economic diversity and low social cohesion can inhibit collective efficacy within park communities to effectively maintain control over crime and anti social behaviour. Never the less, several small communities of permanent residents, tourists, the town, and the caravan park industry do provide some measure of collective efficacy within parks. Participants believe these communities exist and were assured of shared norms of respect for others within park environments. However, such beliefs and expectations can encourage people to disregard security while on holiday.

The research addressed four key questions:

1. *How extensive is the problem?*

The principal findings were that crime and anti-social behaviour is generally not a major concern within caravan parks. While 23% of tourists and 32% of residents reported being a victim of crime, each of the mostly older aged group of victims reported only one incident of relatively minor theft in their lifetime. Furthermore, the attitudes of all participants towards crime and safety demonstrated a lack of concern. Few crimes were reported to police because they were considered not to be serious. However, 25% of caravan parks within the study experienced problems with crime particularly petty theft and break and enter. Motivated offenders had detailed knowledge of various makes of caravans, were aware that locks on vans and canvas annexes are easily accessible and knew how to enter a van where people are asleep without making the van rock. The types of items reported stolen included clothing from clotheslines or washing machines, alcohol and food from eskies, bicycles, surf-boards, wetsuits, fishing rods and other sporting equipment, mobile phones, laptop computers, wallets and handbags, generators, tools, barbeques and gas bottles. Some thefts of park property were committed by park patrons. The most common complaint by managers particularly on parks located within town centres, was trespassing on the park by groups of teenagers. These groups were seen as responsible for the petty theft and vandalism.

2. *How does risk vary between caravan parks and between sites within parks?*

Crime on caravan parks is clearly situational. Police data for the study areas revealed caravans within

caravan parks appear to be much safer than caravans parked in other areas such as roadside stops, bush camps or private residences. Certain ecological factors, such as the proximity to urban centres and highways, and the ease of accessibility to parks that are unfenced renders parks “hot spots” for property crimes. Parks in busy holiday coastal regions appeared to be more vulnerable to crime than some small rural towns. The level of crime within the surrounding community appears to have an effect upon the level of crime experienced within a park. Certain sites within parks such as those along park boundaries were also hot spots for victimisation. Security lighting, static guards, security fencing and boom gates appear to be the most effective forms of security.

3. Why does risk vary?

Routine Activities Theory was employed to examine victimisation against factors that influence the level of guardianship on caravan parks. Informal guardianship contributes to security within parks though the eyes and ears of permanent residents and between parks through networks of park managers that allow the sharing of information on deviant residents or tourists. Formal guardianship through police patrols and static security guards in particular, were reported to increase security on parks. Although park managers are diligent in safeguarding their parks, many tourists remain vulnerable to crime because they are nonchalant about their personal safety and security. While tourists considered security when choosing a park, the standard of park facilities was the deciding factor.

4. How can park property crime offences be reduced?

Only half of the managers provided or offered any crime prevention information to people entering the park. Managers face a quandary of the necessity to encourage crime prevention practices amongst their guests versus the need not to raise alarm and provide a relaxed holiday environment. While some tourists were anxious if managers did give a warning or if there was an obvious high level of security on a park, victims of crime blamed managers for not providing sufficient warning.

Although there was some concern for the safety of children on parks particularly in regard to traffic, there was no evidence of fear of crime amongst participants. Victims of crime did not consider crime to be serious and reported no fear of crime. They were also likely to return to a park where an offence occurred. Tourists may experience some cognitive dissonance rationalising the costs and value of holidays against negative victimisation experiences. Similar findings were revealed in British studies that found that tourists’ fear of victimisation was considerably less than their actual level of victimisation. Complacency about security however, does not facilitate precautionary behaviours amongst tourists. Tourists who were victims of crime tended to believe that the event was beyond their personal control, which suggests that tourist may play a helpless role in regards to their personal safety and security. At the same time, most tourists acknowledged that their safety and security was their own responsibility, which means that will be open to educational problems to enhance precautionary behaviours.

Park residents believed managers were primarily responsible for park security. Communities were regarded as more responsible than police for ensuring safety and security on local caravan parks. Blame for crime was attributed to juveniles and poor parenting as well as drug and alcohol abuse.

Implications

Tourists need to be made more aware of safety and security while travelling and encouraged to be more security conscious in their thinking and in their actions and more attentive to locking and securing their property. Crime prevention initiatives that target tourists are needed to encourage behaviours that will minimise risk. The findings suggest that tourists will be receptive to security information. As tourists frequently use tourist information bureaus in the towns that they visit, this may be the best avenue to distribute crime prevention information.

Park managers should be encouraged to have local police conduct a security audit of their park to increase target hardening. In designing and planning layouts for new parks, developers need to be attuned to safety and security. Park managers should be encouraged to join industry bodies to receive the benefits of legal, educational and moral support these agencies provide.

While there is an appreciation of the heterogeneity of caravan parks in Australia, many security practices on parks appear to be ad hoc. Problems could arise in terms of liability should some serious crime occur. There is clearly a need for caravan industry protocol regarding serious crimes such as child abuse. Consistency in park management and policy would increase if more businesses become aligned with state and national bodies of the Caravan Industry or park chains.

This research was conducted in two regions in two states only. Thus the findings cannot be generalised beyond these regions. As it is impossible to identify the numbers of people have given up caravan or camping holidays because of crime, it is suggested that a national mail survey of tourists and park managers may provide a clearer understanding of the exact nature and extent of crime experienced on Australian caravan parks.

The lack of official recorded crime data on crime within caravan parks contributes to the lack of understanding of the extent of victimisation. Data collections are also complicated by the varying methods of categorisation and collection methods between the states. There is a need for more detailed data collection at regional, state and national levels to allow comparisons of offence types and rates among regions, increase knowledge of this type of crime, and assist in its prevention. Furthermore, there is insufficient general data on transient people within Australia. Although Census data is collected on caravan populations, the distinction between tourist and transient is blurred. The issues noted within this study concerning people with high social needs demands more information to better target resources. There is a need to recognise the contribution caravan park managers make in providing accommodation for some of the most marginalised in society, particularly in small rural communities.

Conclusion

This study has found that crime and antisocial behaviour is not a major concern. However, tourists do need to be more security conscious in their thinking. The caravan industry is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in Australia and with the baby boomer generation about to join the *Grey Nomads* touring around the country, future growth is assured. There is a need for crime prevention programs that empower tourists to take a more proactive role in personal safety and security, while helping park managers to minimise incidences of crime on parks.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been drawn from the findings of this study.

- ◆ That the caravan park industry encourage park managers to have a security audit of their park conducted by local police.
- ◆ That a crime prevention education program for tourists be developed for distribution through Tourist Information Bureaus across Australia.
- ◆ That industry bodies ensure that policy and guidelines regarding security practices, particularly in respect to serious crimes such as child abuse, be extended to all park managers and owners to ensure consistency in park security management practices.
- ◆ That police services in each state liaise with the caravan park industry to develop policy and guidelines for police officers as well as the industry on the rights and responsibilities of park owners, park residents, guests and visitors in dealing with anti-social behaviours and criminal acts on parks.
- ◆ That park managers be encouraged to join industry bodies to receive the benefits of legal, educational and moral support that these agencies provide.
- ◆ That more social and educational opportunities be provided for youth in small communities to alleviate the anti-social behaviour experienced on parks caused by groups of teenagers.
- ◆ That a nation-wide mail survey of tourists and park managers be conducted to extend the knowledge gathered in this study.
- ◆ That the Australian Bureau of Statistics collect data on transient populations.
- ◆ That official crime data collections be made uniform across states and regions for consistency and to allow for comparative analyses between regions.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Caravan parks are extraordinary places. They contain microcosms of social life. At any time, within any park there can be an eclectic group of domestic and international tourists, families on holiday, retirees touring the country, seasonal workers as well as temporary and permanent residents. There can be the very young and the very old; the very wealthy and those most marginalised in life. Thus, caravan parks provide a unique environment in which to examine crime and anti-social behaviour.

This report presents the findings of study of crime and anti-social behaviour on caravan parks that was conducted in two states in Australia in the summer of 2005. The study was exploratory in nature, as no previous research has been conducted on this topic in this country. Case studies of rural and coastal regions in New South Wales and Western Australia explored the extent and nature of crime and anti-social behaviour on caravan parks through interviews with park managers, tourists and permanent residents, police and security guards. The principal findings were that crime and anti-social behaviour is generally not a major concern within caravan parks. However, certain hot spots of crime were identified. Petty theft was the most frequently occurring type of crime. The study revealed that although park managers are diligent in safeguarding their parks, many tourists remain vulnerable to crime because they are nonchalant about their personal safety and security. There is a need for crime prevention initiatives that target tourists to encourage behaviours that will minimise risk.

1.2 Why crime in caravan parks?

There is widespread acceptance that crime is a common occurrence in western industrial societies and that repeat victimisation is common. Crime impacts significantly on its victims, and indeed on wider society where anxiety over a variety of crimes is extensive. However, while the concept of space is well recognised in the literature, both in terms of the general location for crime and the specific property targeted (Bottoms and Wiles 2002; Brantingham and Brantingham 1995; Mawby 2001) most research has focused on city centres and residential areas, in the latter case concentrating almost exclusively on residential housing. However, there is also some evidence that holiday property (hotels, motels, caravan parks etc) is also targeted (Mawby and Jones 2004; Mawby and Gorgenyi 1997). This is not surprising given that research in Australia, the USA and elsewhere has shown that tourists in tourist locations are easy targets for criminals (Jones and Groenenboom 2002; Sherman, Gartin and Buerger 1989; Ryan 1993; Chesney-Lind and Lind 1986; Kelly 1993; Mawby, Brunt and Hambly 1999; Pizam and Mansfield 1996; Stangeland 1998), with some research providing policy recommendations (Prideaux and Dunn 1995). These studies indicate that more dedicated research is needed to assess the extent of the problem of victimisation amongst tourists, its concentration, and the reasons behind any patterns found. The purpose of the present study was to examine the nature and extent of crime within caravan parks in Australia towards increasing knowledge and understanding of victimisation within these populations.

Crime victimisation within caravan parks is an issue that has not been previously researched in Australia. The National Crime Survey excludes caravans from the sample of households surveyed. Furthermore, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides no specific data on thefts from caravan parks. Such thefts are incorporated under the category of Unlawful entry with Intent/Burglary,

Break-and-enter, which is defined as the “unlawful entry of a structure with the intent to commit an offence where the entry is either forced or unforced”. These structures include comprise houses, flats as well as caravans (ABS 2001).

The very nature of caravan parks renders them vulnerable to property crime. Tourists, particularly overseas tourists, will carry considerable sums of money and possess items such as cameras, mobile phones, portable CD players, cash, credit cards and valuables that are of interest to thieves (Crotts 1996). Many retirees will travel with their own four-wheel-drive vehicle, caravan or mobile home as well as a trailer and boat all valued between \$150,000 and \$400,000. The fact that tourists will carry ‘stealable goods’, combined with the transient nature of park residents, the ease of access to caravans, tents and cabins means caravan parks can be an inviting target for thieves, vandals and other criminals. Furthermore, it is highly likely that many crimes go unreported because of the transient nature of those victimised.

The Australian Tourism Commission states that the caravan industry is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors. At the 2001 Census, there were 2,728 caravan parks Australia-wide with a total capacity of 268,619 caravan sites (ABS 2002). This market accounts for around ten per cent of total visitor nights spent by international and domestic visitors (Tourism Queensland 2005). The estimated number of persons residing on a permanent basis in caravan parks based on the 2001 ABS Census was approximately 61,463 persons. This figure excludes visitors and holidaymakers. The importance of the tourism industry to the national economy demands a duty-of-care. More importantly, the safety and lives of tourists and residents of caravan parks is paramount. Therefore, there is a need for an investigation of the nature and extent of crime within caravan parks in Australia.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate the nature and extent of crimes within caravan parks in two regions in Western Australia and two regions in New South Wales through surveys and interviews with caravan park residents and visitors, park managers or owners, and other stakeholders. The study also explored the extent and patterns of security practices undertaken by park owners/managers, tourists and permanent residents and assessed their effectiveness. The relationship between victimisation and physical deterrence factors was explored to seek an understanding of why the problem was more pronounced in some situations than in others. The research addressed four key questions:

1. *How extensive is the problem?* Using primary and secondary data, any differences in risk between crime offences in caravan parks and residential homes were identified to seek an understanding of the extent of crime in caravan parks.
2. *How does risk vary between caravan parks and between caravan sites/mobile homes within parks?* High-risk locations/properties were identified in terms of: the nature of the site; caravan/mobile home use; property design; property location within the complex; property security; and site security. Patterns in crime and in vulnerability to victimisation across parks and within parks were identified.
3. *Why does risk vary?* Place-based theories of crime were applied to the specific context of caravan parks to explain variations in risk.
4. *How can park property crime offences be reduced?* A series of recommendations for enhancing the security of caravan parks and reducing property crime was developed based upon the research findings and suggestions from participants.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Review recent research and developments concerning tourism and crime (specifically relating to caravan parks) in Australia and overseas.

- Conduct a series of interviews with caravan park populations (managers, tourists and residents) in two regions in Western Australia and two regions in New South Wales to explore the nature and extent of victimisation within caravan parks.
- Conduct additional interviews with police, security guards and other key stakeholders to gather additional information and perspectives on caravan park crime.
- Establish a profile of crime victimisation within caravan parks, including:
 - the types of items or property affected by crime;
 - the hot-spots and other environmental factors that increase the vulnerability of caravan parks and individual caravans for victimisation;
 - residents' vulnerability to crime;
 - the type and extent of security practices undertaken by caravan park owners and managers;
 - the level of fear of crime and risk perception among tourists and park residents;
 - whether or not victims report crimes to police; and
 - who or what residents blame for crime.
- Provide a final report with recommendations for future crime prevention initiatives as well as the development of crime prevention materials for tourists and for caravan parks on better security practices.
- Evaluate and compare the findings with research on caravan park safety and security conducted concurrently in Cornwall (England).

1.4 Structure of the report

In Chapter 2, the report begins with an overview of the caravan park industry in Australia and the various types of people who frequent parks. A review of the Australian and international literature relating to crime and caravan park populations is then presented. The theoretical orientation employed in this research is also outlined. In Chapter 3, the methodology by which the study was conducted is defined. In Chapter 4, official crime data on crime within caravan parks in the case-study regions are summarised and discussed. A profile of the parks and the participants within the study is provided in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, the data on the victimisation experiences of caravan park residents are presented as statistical analyses and in participants' verbal accounts. In Chapter 7, crime prevention on caravan parks is examined from a hot spot and routine activities perspective. The opinions of police and security guards are also provided. The attitudes of participants towards a range of issues pertaining to crime on caravan parks are explored in Chapter 8 to seek a better understanding of the social environment in which these crimes occur. Participants' reactions to victimisation experiences, their level of fear of crime, and their views on responsibility and whom or what is to blame for crime and anti-social behaviour on parks are investigated. In Chapter 9, the research findings are summarised and the implications for crime prevention for caravan parks are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: Background

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a profile of caravan park populations in Australia is presented to provide background information for this examination of crime within caravan parks. This is followed by a review of the Australian and international literature on crime and tourism within caravan park environments and the perceptions of crime amongst tourists. Various explanations of crime and tourism are summarised and a theoretical orientation is developed which is utilised to guide the analyses in subsequent chapters. The literature searches utilised the World Wide Web, the University of New England's Library and various electronic databases.

2.2 Characteristics of caravan park populations

At the 2001 Census, there were 2,728 caravan parks Australia-wide with a total capacity of 268,619 tourist sites and 90,000 long-term sites (ABS 2002). New South Wales has the largest proportion of caravan parks, while the Northern Territory has the greatest use of caravan parks (9%). More than 50% of all domestic tourism consumption occurs in non-metropolitan Australia (Federal Government Tourism Medium-Long-Term Tourism Strategy Green Paper 2003). Parks are an important part of the local economy of many rural communities. Almost every small town in Australia has at least one caravan park. Only one-tenth of caravan parks in Australia are located in capital cities. Many town-based parks are owned and managed by the local council. There are also major caravan park chains operating throughout Australia, such as Big4 Holiday Parks, Family Parks and Top Tourist Parks.

One of the most important facts to note regarding the caravan park sector is that their structure and their populations are extremely diverse. Caravan parks offer unpowered and powered sites for caravans, campervans or tents, as well as onsite caravans or cabins, with or without ensuite facilities. Most parks have a camper's kitchen (stove and refrigerator), laundry, hot showers, and are usually in a convenient location near town. Parks range from those that are 'tourist-only', providing affordable overnight and holiday accommodation, to those that cater only for permanent residents. Others provide a combination of accommodation types including temporary and even crisis accommodation (Shelter SA 2004).

2.2.1 Tourists

The caravan industry is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors, with sales almost trebling in the past ten years. The caravan and associated manufacturing, service and supply industries are worth over \$2 billion and employ more than 20,000 people (CRVA 2004).

For the year ended June 2004, there were 5,778,000 domestic visitors and 276,218 international visitors to caravan parks/commercial camping grounds in Australia. These figures represent 8% of the total number of domestic tourists and 6% of the total number of international tourists to Australia. New South Wales received the largest number of domestic visitors (2,211,000), which is 8.4% of the total number of domestic visitors to NSW), and Western Australia received 55,900 domestic visitors (8.6% of Western Australia's domestic tourism market) (Tourism Western Australia 2005). International visitors were mostly from Europe (72%), of whom 26% were from the United Kingdom 15% were from Germany, while 31% came from elsewhere in Europe. Others came from New

Zealand (9%) and the United States of America (6%) (Tourism Queensland 2005). By 2012, the Tourism Forecasting Council expects around 7.6 million visitors per year.

Domestic tourism constitutes more than 76% of visitor nights and expenditure in Australia. More than 87% of Australians have stayed in a caravan park (CRVA 2004). Caravanning is a popular holiday option for many Australian families, with many leasing a caravan site on a semi-permanent basis for weekend and annual holidays.

The number of older Australians touring around Australia is increasing. This group is commonly referred to as *Grey Nomads*. Roy Morgan Research (cited in CRVA 2004) found that 75% of people aged 55 and over travelled within Australia in 2003 and 80% reported they would like to travel in the future. Many retirees plan to spend about three years on the road but then find that anything up to nine years is insufficient to explore all of the country. Some circle Australia several times and their recreational vehicle becomes their permanent home. Most of these retirees are away from home for at least 140 nights a year. Increasing demand has seen the production of motor homes and caravans treble since the early 1990s. There are now 350,000 recreational vehicles registered in Australia. More than 70% of new caravans and motor homes are purchased by people in the 55-and-over age group. Five percent of the 55-to-64 year age group own a caravan (McKay 2004). However, camper trailers and camping are more popular amongst younger people and families (Roy Morgan Research 2004, cited in CRVA 2004).



Crossing the Nullarbor

Caravans are increasing in size and quality. While a basic caravan can be purchased for \$30,000, large tandem axel vans (known as Fifth-Wheelers) can include showers, solar heating, flat screen televisions and washing machines and cost up to \$70,000 and require large capacity 4WDs to tow them. The cost of motor homes ranges from \$85,000 up to \$500,000. Some people prefer motor homes because they are easier to drive, manoeuvre and set up camp, while caravans are preferred by those who like the ability to separate the van from the towing vehicle (McKay 2004).



Source: www.exploroz.com

The other growth area is cabins on caravan parks. There are approximately 21,000 cabins nation wide with 1200 installed annually. The high quality of these accommodations has attracted a new market to caravan parks (Beadel 2000).



2.2.2 Permanent residents

Permanent residents of caravan parks are defined as those who consider their primary place of residence is a caravan park or those who have continuously resided in any caravan park or parks for three or more months and are not on holiday (Shelter SA 2004). The economic viability of many caravan parks is dependent upon the regular income of long-term residents (AHRC 1994). The 2001 ABS Census estimated that there are approximately 61,460 persons living long-term or permanently in caravan parks around Australia. Most are predominantly Australian-born and English speaking. Many are elderly. The Census found over 42 per cent of individuals were aged over 55 years, more than half of whom were over 65 years (see Figure 2.1).

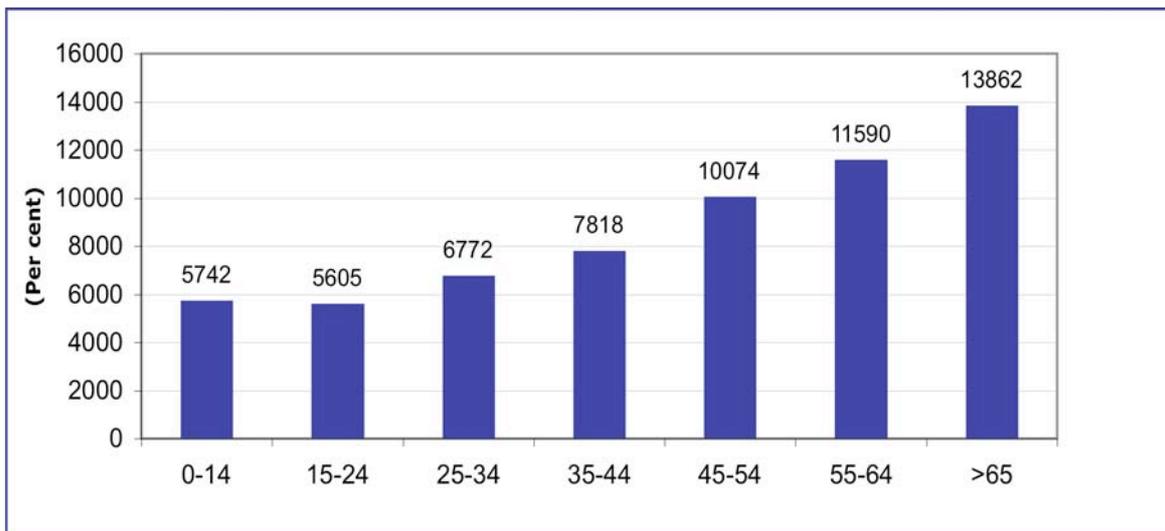


Figure 2.1: Age groups of permanent caravan park residents (Shelter SA 2004; Source ABS 2001).

Single-person households comprised 60 per cent of all permanent resident households in caravan parks. A further six per cent were also single-parent families (see Figure 2.2). There are proportionally more males living alone and older couple-only households than among the total population, and proportionally fewer couples with dependent children or sole-parent household (ABS 2001).

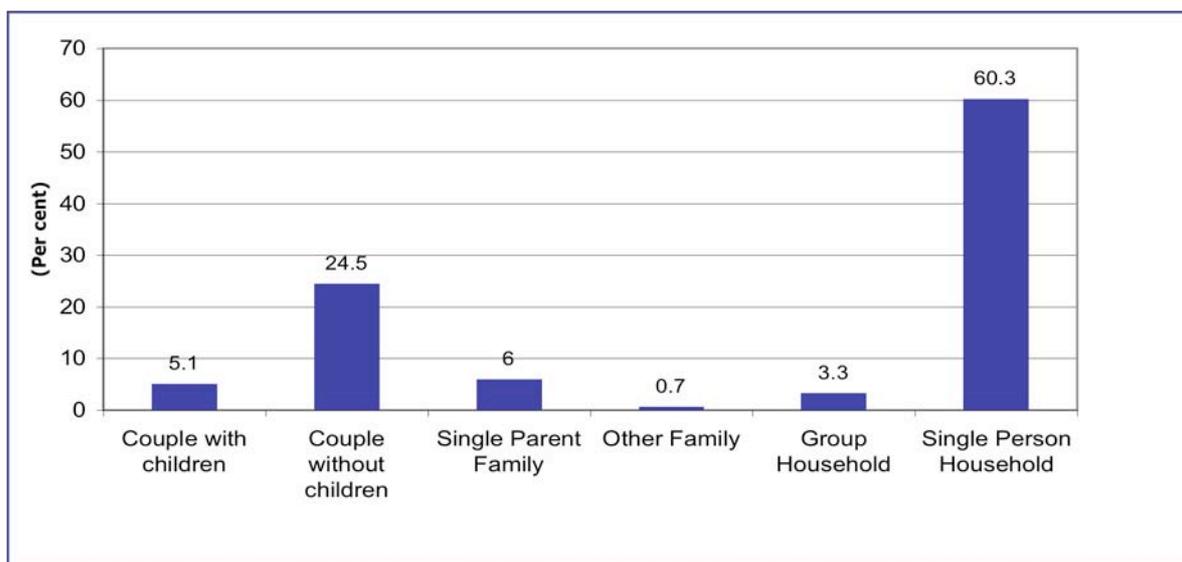


Figure 2.2: Family structure amongst permanent caravan park residents (Shelter SA 2004; Source ABS 2001).

Most residents are either very long-term occupants, or else are highly mobile, and they either own their own dwelling outright or rent from the caravan park owner/operator (see Figure 2.3). The 2001 Census found 38 per cent of residents were at the same address five years earlier and 54 per cent of households who lived in caravan parks owned their dwelling outright (the Australian average is 40 per cent). Approximately 30 per cent rented their dwelling from a private landlord (the Australian average is 21 per cent) (ABS 2001).

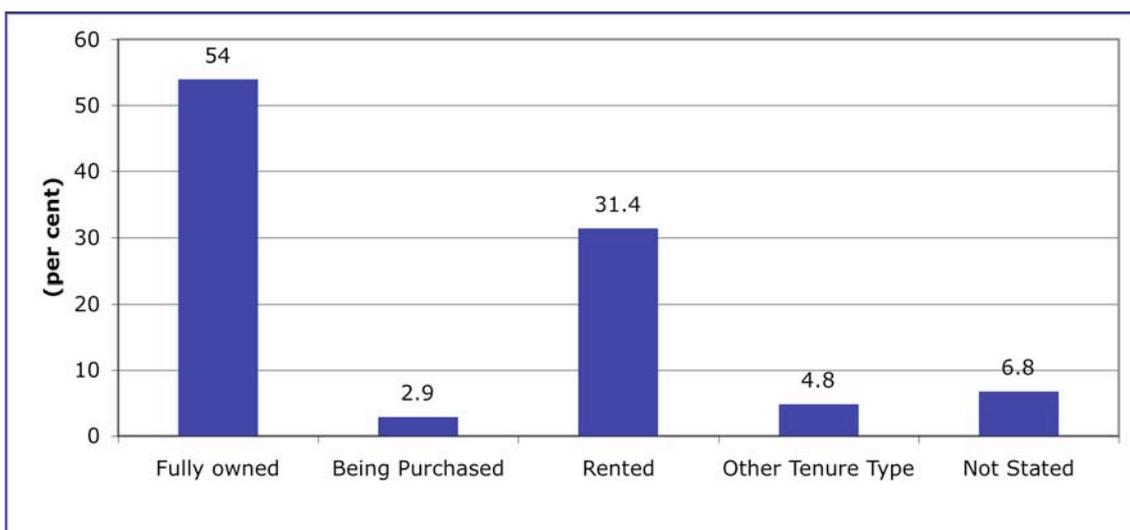


Figure 2.3: Tenure of permanent caravan park residents (Shelter SA 2004; Source ABS 2001).

There are three distinctive sub-groups or permanent residents within caravan parks (Eddy 1998; Wensing, Holloway and Wood 2003). They are:

- People choosing to live in a caravan park:** These folk enjoy the park lifestyle, including a sense of community, access to communal facilities, and the affordability and flexibility compared to other forms of housing. Within this sub-group there is a large proportion of retirees who either own their dwelling but rent a site ('owner-renters'), or rent both the caravan and the site. Many are on fixed incomes from superannuation or pensions and have been living in caravan parks for several years. It is not uncommon for residents to have been in the same park for 5–10 or for as many as 20–25 years. Some of these residents have sold their principal home and bought a caravan, and subsidise their income during retirement with the interest on the remaining funds. Others have worked in low-paid jobs and use their superannuation or lifetime savings to buy on the park where they have holidayed with their families over many years. It suits their life stage and for many of them their long-term aspirations are to remain living in a caravan park for long as they are physically able. In rural communities, many of the older residents are single men who have been itinerant workers and have elected to settle on the local caravan park after years of working in the area (ABS 2000; Greenhalgh and Connor 2003; Connor and Ferns 2002).
- Itinerant or seasonal workers:** Those working in the construction industry, farming and fruit-pickers or others with lower-paid jobs choose to live long-term or permanently in caravan parks. They tend to rent both the van and the site, so that they can move more easily with the availability of work. Australia's primary industries, particularly the fruit and vegetable industries, rely heavily on the availability of a sizeable, reliable, seasonal labour force. Increasingly, seasonal workers include young overseas backpackers on working holidays in Australia (Stayner and Barclay 2004).
- People who have no other housing alternatives:** They may have exhausted all other avenues or they simply do not have the means to gain access to housing in any of the mainstream sectors. They may have financial or personal crises in their lives and have complex support needs. Many of them are unemployed or on sickness benefits, or are no longer in the active workforce. Caravan parks are often used by Government Welfare Agencies as a form of crisis accommodation for vulnerable people including young people, women and single parents fleeing domestic violence, people with mental health problems and people with drug and alcohol problems (often single men) (Eddy 1998; Wensing, et al.,2003).

2.2.2.1 Social issues amongst permanent residents

Most long-term residents of caravan parks have low incomes. The Census found 62 per cent of households that reside in caravan parks earned less than \$500 per week (see Figure 2.4). This was

significantly different from Australia as a whole, where on average 29 per cent of households earned less than \$500 per week. This finding is partly due to the fact that retirees are commonly on low incomes, but this also applies to younger residents. The Census revealed that almost 10 per cent of individuals who lived in caravan parks were unemployed (see Figure 2.5). Those in employment were in lower-paying occupations, and 80 per cent of individuals in caravan parks had no recognised post-school qualifications. Nearly 41 per cent of those households in a caravan who rent privately were in rental stress (i.e., paying more than 30 per cent of their income on rent) compared with 27 per cent of all households (ABS 2001).

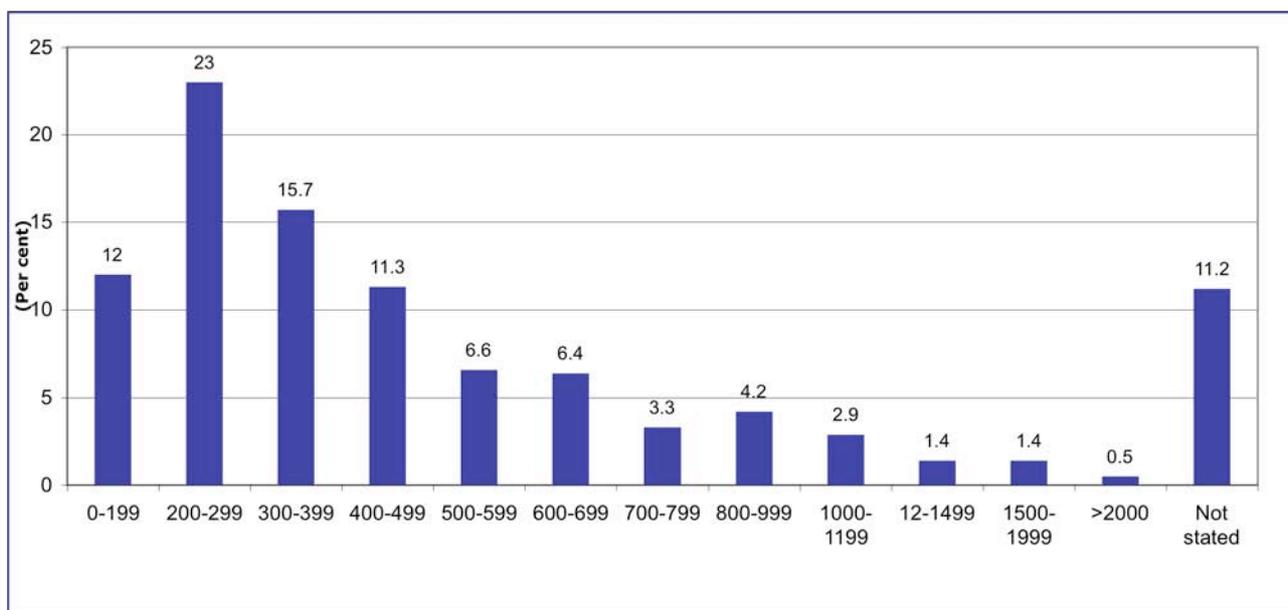


Figure 2.4: Household Income of permanent caravan park residents (Shelter SA 2004; Source ABS 2001).

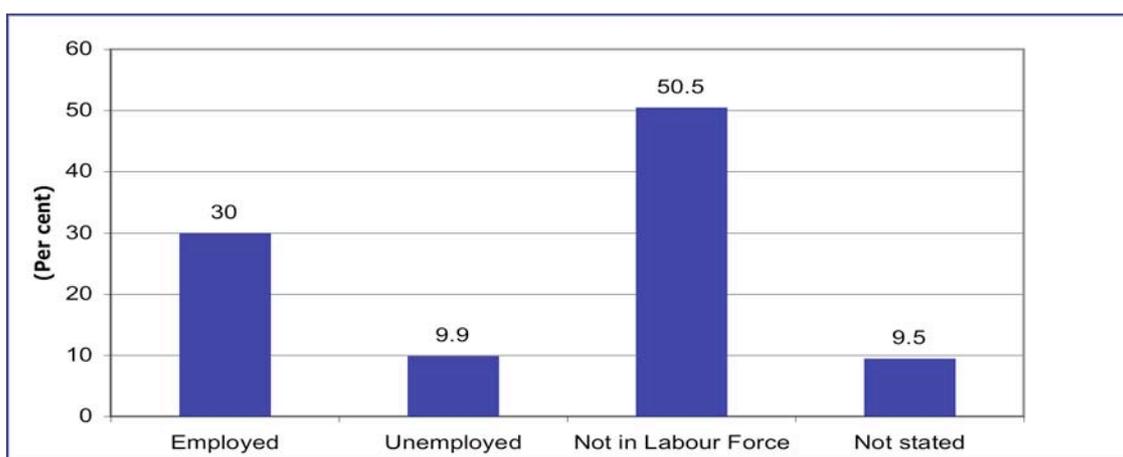


Figure 2.5: Labour Force Status amongst permanent caravan park residents (Shelter SA 2004; Source ABS 2001).

Shelter SA (2004) claims that people living permanently in caravan parks often live in very basic conditions with minimal facilities and poor standards of amenity compared to conventional forms of housing. Depending on the location of the park, these residents can be isolated from basic services and facilities such as shops, schools, childcare facilities and other community services. These caravan park residents are vulnerable to homelessness through the failure to pay rents; personal and life circumstances, including previous housing careers; park closures or changes in market sector; lack of security of tenure; poor park design, poor amenities; and stringent park rules and management styles.

When no other alternatives are available, caravan parks are used by welfare agencies as temporary accommodation. The fastest growing sub-group within the homeless population are families, but obtaining crisis accommodation for this group is difficult as there are few resources to draw upon. While some housing services and clients may consider caravan parks a better housing solution for families in crisis than other forms of emergency accommodation, other agencies try to avoid using caravan parks. This is because many caravan parks are located in geographically isolated positions with minimal public transport, separating families in crisis from the welfare services that support them. Families relocating to another region can also become isolated from schools, friends, relatives and other social support networks (Proudley and Wylie 2001). The University of Newcastle Family Action Centre found that families who move regularly can experience social isolation and social disconnectedness. Children in particular who have not had secure housing or ongoing education find it difficult to develop social skills (Eddy 1998).

Moreover, the cost of entry into a caravan as emergency accommodation can be prohibitive for agencies ranging from \$270 to \$600. Some caravan parks require a two-week refundable "key deposit," as insurance, in addition to one-week's rent in advance. The weekly rent in caravan parks is frequently higher than rent for a unit or flat. There are also additional costs, such as laundry, showers and electricity. Furthermore, people living in a caravan park are not automatically covered by the Residential Tenancies Act and can be vulnerable to eviction (Proudley and Wylie 2001).

In any case, caravan parks are scarcely ideal environments for vulnerable families. Some caravan parks, particularly those with a significant proportion of transient residents, have problems with drug and alcohol abuse, and violence. These parks are unsafe environments, particularly for children. Shared toilet and shower facilities can create safety concerns, especially for women and children. For example, where there are no facilities designated for families, a single mother will have difficulty helping to bathe or supervise her male children. Overcrowding and lack of privacy within the van due to small size, and outside the van due to vans/sites being very close together can facilitate friction. The stress of living in this environment can lead to conflict within the family, which is often not tolerated by either residents living in close proximity or the caravan park operators resulting in their eviction (Proudley and Wylie 2001; Shelter SA 2004).

Greenhalgh (2003), in a study of long-term residents of caravan parks in the rural communities of Chinchilla and Murilla in Queensland, found residents were characteristic of the above profile of caravan park residents in that they had high levels of disadvantage, low incomes and a reliance on Government benefits. The majority of the residents had migrated to the area and immediately moved into a caravan park. However, these caravan parks were not utilised as crisis accommodation due to the discriminatory practices of the park operators as a form of 'risk management'. The study concluded that caravan parks play an important role in the housing system of rural areas.

2.2.2.2 Life satisfaction amongst permanent residents

While these social concerns do exist in varying degrees within caravan parks in Australia, amongst long-term residents of caravan parks, particularly those that are permanent residential or retirement villages, strong social networks can contribute to a high level of attachment and satisfaction with caravan park life and a profound sense of community. Several studies of the life satisfaction of caravan park residents in Australia (Manicaros & Stimson 1999; Kambouris, 1986; Secombe 2000; Greenhalgh and Connor 2004) have found that most long-term residents were very satisfied with their lifestyle, which for the most part was based as much upon **choice** as economic factors. Retirees are the most common type of family within caravan parks and are the longest terms of residence. Most aged residents own their caravan park dwelling and display the highest commitment to and satisfaction with caravan park life as a long-term residential option. Secombe (2000) found that many park residents have no desire to return to low-density housing with private gardens or to a flat or shire house

because they enjoyed the 'community' or 'village' atmosphere and the camaraderie and security of the caravan park.

Greenhalgh and Connor (2004) found that parks can provide an ideal environment for the development of strong supportive friendships and informal care networks that enable older residents to continue living independently. Limited space and privacy is compensated by having neighbours close by who watch out for them. Another study of aged residents of a caravan park in Mandurah, Western Australia, (Beckwith 1998) found that although buying a conventional home had not been a practical option, the majority were very satisfied with their park home. Most had treated the purchase of their van or mobile home as their final housing investment. As the park was within a kilometre of the shire centre, residents had ready access to the shire's services and many residents were actively involved in the Mandurah community. While affordability did attract residents to the park, the lifestyle was a deciding factor. The foreshore location, natural beauty and access to the shire facilities and services, supportive neighbours and interaction with park visitors, a lack of crime and high standard of park management were important motivators. Most of the residents had formed strong attachments with their neighbours in the park. Many reported incidents where their neighbours had provided support in times of need. The aged residents also enjoyed the periodic bursts of social interaction with younger people during the holiday season, although they also appreciated the quieter times. Some acted as surrogate grandparents to children who regularly returned to the park during holidays as well as self-appointed guardians of their neighbours' caravans. International visitors were particularly welcomed. The constant changing population within the park provided new people to talk to and thus was a far more stimulating environment than a retirement home or residential suburb. While there is some indication that caravan parks in the future will move away from the current mix of short-term holidaymakers and long-term residents towards either short-term or long-term parks, Beckwith argues that this will not provide the lifestyle that those currently in parks are seeking; that is, the social interaction with holidaymakers of all ages and low-cost accommodation (Beckwith 1998).

Secombe (2000) assessed levels of life satisfaction amongst retirees living in mobile homes within of 34 parks on the north coast of New South Wales. Of the 778 participants in the study, 94% were satisfied with their homes and environment. Their level of satisfaction was mostly influenced by the interactions and perceptions of residents, while their psychological adjustment was affected by a positive attitude towards self and neighbours. Together these variables contributed to a sense of community within the park.

MacTavish and Salamon (2001) found residents of a mobile home park in central rural Illinois in the US similarly exhibited a collectively held rural ideology that fostered a sense of community. Mobile home parks are becoming an increasingly common form of community across rural America, offering the most affordable and most available rural housing. Growth in these regions has tightened housing markets and displaced lower-income rural families. MacTavish and Salamon (2001) found a shared homeowner status contributed to a higher sense of community, although there were differences between residents in their individual experience of 'community'. Residents who were embedded in neighbourhood social networks held a heightened sense of community, while those more transient residents were less likely to experience community. Pockets of neighbouring were evident rather than overlapping social networks with the capacity to integrate community. These neighbourhood clusters were centred on older, residentially stable households rather than among younger families with children. As Goudy (1990) found, older adults have a stronger sense of community in rural settings. Lower incomes restrict opportunities for social engagement (Bennett 1991; Rubin 1994). Thus, length of residence, life stage, and socio-economic position will shape an individual's ties to a caravan park community. These qualities of 'community' vary along a continuum defined by the social structure of individual communities (MacTavish and Salamon 2001).

A homogeneous population with a common lifestyle based upon shared occupational or class status provides a consistent daily rhythm that makes life predictable and thus more secure for residents

(Suttles 1972). There is a greater 'density of acquaintanceship' (Freudenburg 1986) because the residents know each other well, communicate face-to-face, believe common norms and share and value a common identity. Freudenburg notes that people within small, integrated communities work out interpersonal agreements for achieving desired outcomes. Such agreements are usually informal, often unspoken and sometimes may not be consciously acknowledged. They are made possible because people know each other well enough to be able to predict and depend upon each other's behaviour. Within small communities these informal social norms and emotional obligations also contribute to maintaining social order (Wilkinson 1991). People who deviate from these social norms may be punished by negative gossip, ostracism and intolerance from other community members (Ellickson 1991).

According to Social Disorganisation Theory (Bursik 1988; Sampson 1988; Sampson and Groves 1989; Sampson 1996), the ability of a community to control crime depends upon the prevalence and interdependence of social networks in a community and in the span of collective supervision that the community directs towards local problems. Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls (1997) note that the willingness of local residents to intervene for the common good depends upon conditions of mutual trust and solidarity among neighbours. They defined this ability as 'collective efficacy'. The ability of a community to mobilise collective efficacy is limited by factors of residential instability, ethnic diversity and economic disadvantage. The authors maintain that the differential ability of neighbourhoods to realise the common value of residents and maintain effective informal social controls is a major source of variation in crime.

2.5 Previous studies of crime and caravan parks

Previous studies have shown that tourists disproportionately are victims of crime (Mawby et al 1999) and that crime levels are relatively high in tourist areas. Chesney-Lind and Lind (1986), in a study of crime against tourists in Hawaii, found tourists were markedly more likely to be victims of crime than were residents. Kelly (1993) mapped crime rates in Queensland and found that the highest rates of crime were in the tourist regions of the Gold Coast and Cairns.

Other studies have found that large numbers of tourists or transient people can impact upon a community's infrastructure and create social problems, including increasing crime. Jobes *et al* (2001), in a study of one small rural community in the centre in a large labour intensive vegetable growing area in Australia, found there were 600 seasonal workers in a shire of 900 permanent residents. Most of these were overseas tourists. While residents welcomed these people to the community because they were essential to the shire's economy, most believed that the seasonal workers brought drugs and crime into the community. Residents would avoid the hotels and bars where the seasonal workers gathered to drink. Residents distinguished between the overseas tourists and the 'bad element' amongst the transient population. Local police observed that the residents of the shire appeared to be willing to tolerate the higher risk of crime in order to have the workers available. Ross (1992), in a study of the impact of tourism upon residents of Cairns, Queensland, also found that increasing crime and a loss of friendliness amongst residents were the negative impacts of tourism. Ross raised concerns that visitors may experience negative reactions from local residents who resent the growing impact of tourism upon their community. A similar study in rural communities in Colorado (Long, Perdue and Allen 1990) also found increasing crime was a consequence of increasing numbers of tourists to a region.

However, a review of the literature in Australia revealed no previous research that focused upon crime within caravan parks. Only one study (Prideaux and Dunn 1995), which examined crime within two major tourist areas in Queensland (Cairns and the Gold Coast), noted that caravan parks in Cairns experienced significant numbers of thefts. The study found that these tourist areas experienced rates of property crime that were far higher than state averages. Many parks had poor

security while tourists failed to observe even minimal security precautions, such as locking doors and windows. Nonchalance on the part of tourists provided numerous opportunities for both amateur and professional thieves who were attracted to tourist areas for these reasons.

Overseas research focusing on caravan park crime is limited. In the UK, a study conducted in the Newquay district of Cornwall (Mawby and Jones 2002) found that 26% of all burglaries from dwellings were from static caravans (onsite vans). Static caravans were 2.5 times more likely to be victimised than other dwellings. Furthermore, 11% of those caravans victimised suffered repeat victimisation. The study also found that some caravans at certain times of the year were at greater risk than others. The majority of break-and-enters was a result of forced entries through doors or windows. The authors concluded that crime occurs because of a caravan's physical vulnerability. Newer caravans with improved security features were less likely to be burgled, whereas vans on the perimeters of parks were most vulnerable. On two parks where thefts occurred within the park, the police had concluded that the perpetrators were other tourists in neighbouring vans. Incidents occurred during the day when the tourists were away from the park. Some thefts occurred because vans were left insecure with windows open. The findings indicate that nonchalance on the part of tourists contribute to their victimisation. Cash, credit cards, jewellery and designer clothing were the main types of items stolen (Mawby and Jones 2002). In a rather different park home environment, Mawby and Gorgenyi (1997) described burglaries of datchas in Hungary as common due to the fact that they were often unoccupied but contained goods attractive to offenders.

One Scottish study demonstrated how attractive caravans were as targets for potential offenders. Shaw and Pease (2000) interviewed 32 male offenders in two Scottish prisons to enquire how they went about targeting victims and to what extent they returned to the same target. One offender revealed that caravans were appealing as targets because they had similar or identical characteristics and once one type of caravan had been broken into, he knew he could break into others. Furthermore, the same types of goods were likely to be inside (in this case, televisions). Many of these targets were in the same area of the caravan park; the quieter areas which were near the perimeter of the park and which offered concealment from both formal (security guards) and informal surveillance. The offender used a simple fork to gain entry into each caravan, which caused little or no damage. A return was made very soon after the initial entry, sometimes less than 12 hours later. The combination of knowing that the owner was unlikely to return (knowledge gained from pre-offence surveillance), and the lack of evidence of tampering of the lock (which would not alert the security staff to anything), made the return very easy.

2.6 Tourists' perceptions of crime

As Prideaux and Dunn (1995) found, tourists' nonchalance about safety and security facilitates crime. Mawby *et al* (1999) suggests there is a *culture of carelessness* where tourists take more risks. A study amongst British tourists travelling abroad (Mawby *et al* 1999; 2000a, 2000b) found 4.7% of the tourists had suffered a burglary over a two-week period, while the 1998 British Crime Survey found 5.9% of its national sample reported a burglary in the previous year. Yet, while many British tourists took safety into account when choosing a holiday area, few saw crime and safety as a problem when they went on holiday. More recently, McIntosh (2005), in a study of managers and residents of 22 residential-only caravan parks in Cornwall, also found residents' fear of crime, particularly their fear of serious crime, was disproportionate to their actual risk of crime. Although homes on the perimeter of parks were the most vulnerable to break-and-enter, the study concluded that the design of parks did not reduce the incidence of crime. Yet residents believed they were safer on the park than they were off the park. Thus, while most studies of crime risk reveal that fear exceeds actual risk, these studies found that amongst tourists, the risk exceeds fear. Mawby *et al* (2000a) state that tourists need to show more concern and that crime prevention initiatives that target tourists are needed to encourage behaviours that will minimise risk.

Tourists' cognitions, including the way they attribute cause to negative experiences such as criminal events, will influence their behaviour. Jackson, White and Schmierer's (1996) study of tourism experiences and attributions assessed whether tourists attributed positive and negative experiences to their own ability or inability to control their life, or to good or bad luck, or to the tourist industry *per se*. The researchers applied these attributional categories to tourists' reports of positive and negative experiences and found that external (situational) attributions were more likely to be employed to explain negative events. The authors concluded that tourists' attributional style will influence their behaviour. If tourists perceive they have minimal or no control over their experiences and attribute negative experiences such as crime to external factors, they will have no incentive to be proactive in crime prevention behaviours.

Previous studies have also found that tourists do not always report crimes to police. Jobses, Barclay and Donnermeyer (2001), in a study of crime within a major tourist area in northern New South Wales, found that police and local residents believed there was much under-reporting of crimes within the tourist population, particularly international tourists. Even offences as serious as sexual assault were under-reported as incidents were likely to occur the night before the victim or offender was leaving. Reporting such crimes would mean remaining within the community to see through the process of law. Usually tourists are on a tight schedule and have to return to their own country and therefore do not report crime. Aware of this, offenders may target tourists because the chance of a conviction is minimal. Chesney-Lind and Lind (1986), in a study of crime against tourists in Hawaii, noted that even when perpetrators of crimes against tourists were detained, they were likely to be released without charge.

It is likely that break-and-enters will be the most commonly reported crimes amongst tourists. Break-and-enters will usually be covered by insurance and making a claim is generally contingent on prompt reporting (Ruback, Greenberg and Westcott 1984; Skogan 1984; Matka 1997). Tourists are likely to have paid camping fees and are likely to report an incident to park owners or managers. These findings indicate that any study of crime victimisation within caravan parks will require an examination of tourists' and residents' perceptions of crime towards understanding their level of fear of crime, their predisposition to safety and security precautions and their reporting behaviour.

2.7 Theoretical explanation of crime and caravan parks

While there has been little research on caravan park crime, clearly much of the more generic research on burglary (Mawby 2001) is relevant. For example, research has demonstrated that risk of burglary varies across a number of clusters of variables, covering: resident characteristics and lifestyle (Dodd, Nicholas, Povey and Walker 2004); the area in which the property is located (Bottoms *et al* 1987; Cromwell, Olson and Avary *et al* 1991; Dodd *et al* 2004; Evans 1989; Tricket, Osborn and Ellingworth 1995); the location of the unit within an area (Evans and Fletcher 1998; Rengert and Wasilchick 2000); and the housing unit (Cromwell *et al* 1991; Jackson and Winchester 1982; Poyner and Webb 1991).

In attempting to explain differential risk for burglary, researchers have cited *Hot-Spot* Theory (Sherman *et al* 1989), Routine Activity Theory (Cohen and Felson 1979), Defensible Space (Newman 1972) or theories focused around lifestyle factors. *Hot-Spot* Theory denotes the *criminology of place* in that some places will be associated with a high percentage of crime. These *hot spots* for crime provide convergent opportunities for crimes to occur (Sherman *et al* 1989).

The concept of *place* is one of the most important in criminology (Bottoms and Wiles 2002; Brantingham and Brantingham 1993; Eck and Weisburd 1995; Felson 1998; Mazerolle 2000; Tittle 2000). Block and Block (1995:148) claim that there are two dimensions to place; the characteristics of individual places such as addresses or buildings (and in the present study, caravans) and the

cumulative effect when individual places are aggregated into spatial clusters or 'hot-spots' within a community, such as a caravan park and its location. Studies have shown that places that are hot spots suffer repeated victimisation while other places experience none (Eck and Weisburd 1995b; Brantingham and Brantingham 1993). In Australia, Jochelson (1997), in an analysis of 4,472 assault and robbery incidents recorded in the Sydney police district over one year, identified five hot-spots which were associated with busy commercial centres accommodating entertainment premises, licensed premises or transport facilities. These findings suggest that something about a few places facilitates crimes and something about most places prevents crime (Eck 1998).

Crime prevention perspectives, like Situational Crime Prevention (Clarke 1992) and Wilson and Kelling's (1979) Broken Windows Theory, argue that criminogenic characteristics of places (like social and physical signs of decay) make some places more vulnerable to crime than others (Mazerolle 2000). Although these theories were based upon high-density urban environments, the principles when applied to caravan park environments suggest that the physical characteristics of parks such as their geographic location and the type and density of the vegetation, may determine their vulnerability to victimisation. Designing methods for blocking crime opportunities by changing the design of places to make crime more difficult, risky and less rewarding is the domain of Defensible Space and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (Newman 1972; Jeffrey 1971). For example, failure to secure caravans or lack of guardianship on parks (both formal and informal), are two place attributes that can increase criminal opportunities. Such attributes can also be the focus of crime prevention strategies (Mazerolle 2000).

Routine Activities Theory (Cohen and Felson 1979) seeks to explain variations in the crime risk of places. According to the authors, crime is an event that occurs when motivated offenders and suitable targets converge in space and time in the absence of capable guardians. Cohen, Kluegel and Land (1981) and Lynch and Cantor (1992) argue that properties are vulnerable where there is:

- High target exposure: the property is easily accessible.
- Poor guardianship; the property is poorly 'guarded', is often empty or appears empty.
- Target attractiveness: there are numerous items worth stealing.
- Proximity to offenders: potential offenders live near or regularly pass by the property.

Routine Activity and *Hot-Spot* Theory suggest that crime victimisation incidences will be associated with place-specific characteristics of caravan parks. Some parks will be more vulnerable to crime because of the routine activities that are characteristic to these places interact simultaneously with the physical environment to increase the likelihood of a crime occurring. Specifically, the inability to effectively guard these properties is predictive of crime in these places. The matrix in Table 2.1 combines these perspectives within the specific context of caravan parks. Note: 'the area in which the property is located' can be subdivided into the area where the caravan park is located and the individual caravan sites.

Table 2.1: Model for explaining variations in burglary between and within sites.

	Target exposure	Guardianship	Attractiveness	Proximity
Resident characteristics and lifestyle		Age, lifestyle Occupancy status	Occupancy status Income/social class	
Area where park is located	Isolated Near major roads Near leisure activities			Near where offenders live
The site itself	Number of access points	Occupancy status Secure perimeter Security guards		Occupancy status
Location of the unit within area	Near access point Near perimeter Near communal facilities	Well lit areas overlooked by informal guardians		
Housing unit	Detached etc. Garden Security of doors/windows Alarm			

Thus:

- Resident characteristics will affect the attractiveness of the property to a potential burglar, while age affects lifestyle and the extent to which the property is occupied. Occupancy status (that is, whether the occupant is a retired, a second home-owner, a low-income permanent resident, or a tourist) similarly affects both guardianship and attractiveness. In the latter case, for example, caravans may be particularly subject to repeat burglary where a new tourist will bring new 'stealable' goods.
- The area where the park is located will affect risk, particularly through target exposure; that is, whether or not the surrounding area is accessible and well used. Proximity of the park to where potential offenders live is also important here.
- The site itself is important in terms of access (target exposure) and security (guardianship). Occupancy status impacts in two ways. In terms of proximity, sites with tourists and/or low-income renters may mean potential offenders live onsite. Second, a large number and high turnover of caravan park tourists will reduce the ability of individual residents and tourists to act as guardians and self-police their environment. A caravan park must cope with many diverse groups of people who seek accommodation for many reasons. It is difficult to know who is a legitimate resident and who is not.
- Location of the unit within the area particularly impacts on target exposure and guardianship.
- The housing unit itself is also important in terms of target exposure.

Rates of victimisation will vary greatly between parks and between individual sites and will depend upon the character and particular mix of residents within each environment. Some caravan parks generally will have low guardianship ability due to the transient nature of the population. Shaw and McKay (1969), in examining communities with highly transient immigrant populations, concluded that the lack of stability, community organisation and identity are related to major social problems, such as crime. High levels of in- and out-migration mean there is less opportunity for residents to develop widespread and strong personal ties to one another and to community organisations. Conversely, other parks with high concentrations of permanent residents may experience less crime because they know each other well and can maintain a higher level of security. Meldrum (1992), in interviews with 200 residents of a New South Wales caravan park that catered for permanent sites only, found the main benefits of living in the park for the participants were companionship (89%), social support (60%) and security (33%). Many residents stated that they felt safe due to the closeness of neighbours and when they were away, their neighbours "watched out" and looked after the house.

Thus, caravan parks that comprise greater proportions of permanent residents may exhibit greater levels of “collective efficacy” to maintain guardianship over the caravan park environment (Sampson *et al* 1997).

Caravan parks offer a unique laboratory to examine crime within a Routine Activities/Hot-Spot/Defensible Space theoretical framework. Their social and physical characteristics allow comparison and analysis of those factors that may impact upon the incidence and location of crimes.

2.8 Conclusion

The above discussion has highlighted a number of key issues that require investigation. The caravan industry is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in Australia and with the baby boomer generation about to join the *Grey Nomads* touring around the country, future growth is assured. Little is known about the nature and extent of crime victimisation within caravan park populations. There have been no previous detailed studies of crime on Australian caravan parks. Offences within parks are not separately recorded in official crime data. In addition, the actual extent of victimisation may be unknown as it is possible that tourists may not report all crimes to police.

The discussion highlighted the diversity of caravan park populations. Not only do tourists vary in age, family structure, social and economic status, they share caravan parks with a diverse group of temporary and permanent residents that can include some of the most marginalised groups in society. There were differing reports on the degree of life satisfaction amongst long-term caravan park residents. It is likely that community cohesion within parks will vary considerably according to the social structure of their populations. Varying levels of cohesiveness will relate to the differential ability of park communities to effect informal social controls over deviant behaviour on the park.

There is a need to examine the relationship between the characteristics of park populations with levels of crime. There is also a need to research tourists’ and residents’ perceptions of crime towards understanding their level of fear of crime, their predisposition to safety and security precautions and reporting crimes to police. Social research such as this provides a means of obtaining information about victimisation within specific populations where existing data sources are inadequate. By surveying both actual and potential crime victims, information can be gathered about the beliefs, opinions and behaviours of tourists and caravan park residents relative to crime, as well as data on their experience of crime (Dunkelberger *et al* 1992).

It is likely that caravan parks can be easy targets for thieves because of the ease of access to caravans and tents, the constant turnover of their population and the fact that tourists carry stealable goods. While previous studies have examined who is most at risk either tourists or local people or where offences occur, few studies have examined the nature of the accommodation that is victimised. Little is known if some types of accommodation or some types of caravan parks are more at risk than others. To address this neglect, the present study employed Routine Activities and Hot-Spot Theory to seek a deeper understanding of the relationship between crime victimisation and the physical deterrence factors of the park environment and the extent and effectiveness of security practices undertaken by park owners/managers.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the procedure by which data were collected for the study is described. A combination of Hot-Spot Theory and Routine Activities Theory was employed to guide the survey design and analyses as these theories provide a useful means of examining how and where caravan parks can be vulnerable to victimisation (Crotts 1996). The chapter begins with a description of the case study areas followed by an outline of the study design and questionnaire.

3.2 The study areas

Case studies were conducted in four regions (two each in New South Wales and Western Australia). The regions included one large coastal shire and two rural shires within both states. It was decided to visit two shires in each rural region, as there was only one Caravan Park in each of the West Australian regions considered for inclusion in the study. The coastal shires were both popular holiday destinations and the rural shires were similarly located in broadacre wheat-growing regions. Pseudonyms are used within the report for the shires that feature in the study in order to protect the identity of the caravan park businesses and the communities. Table 3.1 summarises the main social characteristics of the six communities as defined by the 2001 Census (ABS 2001). Although these data are now five years old, they do provide some indication of the ethnic, residential and economic diversity that can impact upon the *collective efficacy* of community to maintain social control. It was difficult to match communities by population size as Western Australia has an overall smaller population than New South Wales. Instead, communities were matched by population type and economic base. All of the rural communities had a similar climate and were primarily supported by broadacre cropping industries. They also had individual tourist attractions to support a small tourism industry and each had a relatively high proportion of Indigenous people. All of the rural regions have suffered a population decline over the past five years, whereas the coastal regions have experienced significant growth. The coastal communities were primarily supported by tourism and some associated horticultural industries.

Table 3.1: Social characteristics of the six case-study communities. Source: ABS Census 2001.

Social Characteristics	New South Wales			Western Australia		
	Rural 1	Rural 2	Coastal	Rural 1	Rural 2	Coastal
Population	14,477	15,936	67,442	3,428	9,960	27,546
Indigenous population	7.8%	17.8%	2.9%	4.7%	4.9%	1.5%
Overseas-born	4%	5.3%	11%	12.3%	14.8%	14.5%
Median age	37	33.2	40	34.5	37	35
Median individual income	\$300-\$399	\$300-\$399	\$200-\$299	\$300-\$399	\$200-\$299	\$300-\$399
Median household income	\$600-\$699	\$700-\$799	\$500-\$599	\$600-\$699	\$600-\$699	\$600-\$699
Unemployment rate	5%	8.1%	13%	4%	5.3%	4.2%
People married	54%	49%	53%	52%	50.4%	55%
Sole-parent families	13.7%	16%	18%	13%	16.6%	13.8%
People in caravans	213	419	2081	41	46	462

3.3 The sample

While all caravan parks in rural communities were surveyed, a random sample of parks in each of the coastal regions were selected for case study according to the degree they represented the target populations of tourists, and temporary and permanent residents. Table 3.2 shows the total number of caravan parks in each region.

Table 3.2: Total number of caravan parks within the case-study areas.

Case-Study Area	Number of Caravan Parks
NSW Rural Shire1	4
NSW Rural Shire2	3
NSW Coast	25
WA Rural Shire1	1
WA Rural Shire2	1
WA Coast	17

Park owners were originally contacted by telephone and asked if they would consider being a part of the study. Information on the research was then forwarded by email or fax. Arrangements were then made with the managers to set a time and date for the interviews to be conducted. The researcher visited the community and stayed onsite in one park for one to two nights observing park life. Some cold-call visits to parks were made and all were well received. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with the managers of parks, followed by tourists and temporary and permanent residents staying on the parks. Additional interviews were conducted with local police, security guards, local government representatives and housing and welfare groups within the community. A further six telephone interviews were conducted with managers of parks within remote outback towns and some outer city suburbs. A total of 121 interviews were conducted. Table 3.3 details the design of the sample population.

Table 3.3: Participant sample design.

Participants	Total N=121	Description
Caravan park managers/owners	36	All managers in smaller case-study communities, a random sample of managers in larger communities. Additional telephone interviews with purposively selected parks in city and isolated outback areas.
Tourists	40	Participants were purposively selected to ensure a cross section of age, type of camper and family size.
Permanent residents	22	Participants were randomly selected on a park.
Police officers	6	The opinions of police were sought on crime and security on caravan parks in their Local Area Command.
Security guards	5	Being professional observers of life, security guards were able to provide a very knowledgeable and unique perspective of crime and security on local caravan parks.
Local Government personnel	5	Council staff provided an overview of crime and safety issues in their town and the management of Council owned parks within the community.
Housing or welfare organisations	6	Staff provided an insight into accommodation support services available in the community and the relationship between the service and local caravan parks that provided crisis accommodation.
Caravan manufacturer	1	Provided information on various types of security available for caravans.

Tourists and residents of parks were interviewed within two parks within each community with the exception of two communities that only had one park. A sample of ten per cent of the current

population on the selected park was interviewed. Face-to-face interviews was the preferred methodology as it was expected that a significant proportion of caravan park residents could be elderly, have literacy problems, or come from a non-English-speaking background. While a random sample of patrons was the preferred methodology, it became evident very early in the study that large proportion of the sample were aged 60 and over. Therefore, it proved necessary to seek a purposive sample in order to gather the perspectives of a wide range of the population in age, family structure, accommodation type (cabin, caravan or tent etc.) and type of traveller (grey nomad, backpacker or family holidaymaker etc).

The permission to approach people staying on parks was obtained from park managers. Managers were also asked to sign a consent form. All participants were provided with a statement outlining the aims and objectives of the study, assurance of the confidentiality of the information they provided and their right to choose not to participate in the study or answer some questions. Permission to tape the interviews was sought prior to commencement. The interviews lasted between five and 90 minutes.¹ Detailed field-notes were also recorded immediately following the interview. In some instances where a face-to-face interview was not possible, participants were offered the opportunity of completing a mail questionnaire and returning it to the investigator in a replied-paid envelope.

Key informants in the selected areas were also interviewed either face-to-face or by telephone in order to seek further background data or gather additional information to clarify and support some of the findings of the interviews with caravan park residents. Those interviewed included in each region police officers, security guards, housing or welfare officers, church groups, local government and caravan industry personnel.

The response rate was very high. There was a 100% response rate from permanent residents. There was only one tourist who did not want to be interviewed on each park and then it was mostly because they were about to go out; not because they were not interested in the study. Only one park manager declined to be part of the study.

3.4 The questionnaire

Semi-structured surveys were designed for the face-to-face interviews with participants. As this was an exploratory study, the survey comprised mostly open-ended questions to allow participants to express their opinions and reveal the most important issues pertaining to the topic and increase validity of the findings. Questions incorporated those used in the survey of caravan populations in Cornwall to enable comparisons of the findings between the two countries. The surveys were approved by the University of New England's Ethics Committee before being piloted with caravan park residents and owners in Armidale, New South Wales.

¹ The longer interviews were conducted with park managers and some permanent residents. The shortest interviews were conducted with two tourists who were about to leave the park but were happy to spare a few minutes. However, all questions within the survey were briefly answered.

The survey sought residents' perceptions upon the following topics.

The quality of caravan park life:	The positive and negative features of the caravan park Degree of 'community' amongst residents How easy it was for newcomers to be accepted into the community Participants' level of involvement in the wider community
Crime:	The perceived incidence of a range of crime types and public incivilities Victimisation experiences Impact of victimisation Reporting crime
Safety and Security:	The level of security on the park Whether there were any unsafe camping areas What precautions participants took for their personal safety and for the security of their possessions Where participants received information on crime Whether participants had any thoughts or suggestions for reducing the level of crime on caravan parks
Attitudes:	Perceptions of the seriousness of crime in caravan parks Fear and concern about crime Where the responsibility lies for safety and security on caravan parks The perceived source of blame for crime in caravan parks

Fear of crime and risk perception amongst caravan park residents was assessed using the survey design of previous studies conducted in the UK by Professor Mawby (Mawby 2000; Mawby, Brunt and Hambly 2000a; 2000b). The study assessed the degree to which people worried about crime.

Assessment of participants' perceptions of crime and victimisation drew upon Jackson, White and Schmierer's (1996) study of tourists' experiences and attributions. The aim was to identify whether tourists or residents in caravan parks attribute their victimisation to their own ability or inability to control their life, or to bad luck or to the caravan park or tourist industry *per se*.

Information was also gathered on the physical environment within each park such as the density of vegetation, geographical location, and level of security to identify those physical factors that may contribute to the safety and security of parks.

3.5 Analysis

All interviews were taped to ensure all information provided was captured. The transcripts of each tape were transcribed and evaluated and relevant information drawn for inclusion in the study. Statistical analyses were conducted on the quantitative data collected in the interviews and self-report surveys. Although the primary focus of the fieldwork was qualitative, the responses to open-ended questions were coded and entered into a database and statistically analysed. Crime prevention material for caravan owners and caravan parks was developed from the data gathered and is presented in Appendix A.

3.6 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the methods by which the fieldwork within this study was conducted and the questionnaires for participants were structured. The following chapters present a summary of the findings and a discussion of the data collected by these methods.

CHAPTER 4: Caravan parks and crime: A profile

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a profile of officially recorded offences for caravan parks in the case study regions is presented. Although no official crime statistics for caravan parks are available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics, data were obtained from official police records for each state. These data reflect those crimes that are recorded; crimes that are either detected by police or reported to police and authenticated. However, officially reported crime statistics often underestimate the actual level of crime in the community because they are dependent upon a number of factors which are difficult to control, such as the willingness of people to report crime and by the activities and number of police in an area (Matka 1997). Biles and Braithwaite (1979), in an analysis of an Australian national survey of urban residents, found that over half of all crimes are not reported. The most common reason for non-reporting was that the victims believed the offence was too trivial or that the police could not do anything about it.

In rural areas, the implications of reporting an offence of a sensitive nature, will be more acute in communities where both perpetrator and victim are likely to be widely known (Pennings 1999). Sexual assault, along with offences such as domestic violence and blackmail, may also go unreported due to a degree of sensitivity, guilt and shame which may be associated with the incident or because of fear of reprisal (Matka 1997). Crimes without immediate victims such as drug offences may not be reported because those who deal or cultivate drugs do not report upon themselves or their customers (Matka 1997). Offences that are most likely to be reported to police are those that involve loss or damage to property such as motor vehicle theft and break-and-enter crimes. Apart from the desire to recover stolen property, insurance claims necessitate reporting the incident to police (Matka 1997).

As noted in Chapter 2, previous studies have raised concerns that tourists within caravan parks, particularly those from overseas who are on tight travel schedules may neglect to report crime to police. Therefore, in regard to the issues raised above, the data presented in this chapter should be interpreted with caution. However, Matka (1997) maintains that even if only a proportion of all offences are recorded, crime statistics are still an indication of trends in crime as long as there is roughly a constant proportion of offences being recorded.

4.2 Officially recorded crime incidents in caravan parks

The following data are presented for selected offences across the case-study communities for the calendar years 2000 through 2004. No actual comparisons between the case-study communities can be made as the data are presented as the numbers of incidents only. Crime rates, which are necessary to assess trends between areas of different population size, cannot be used as the populations of caravan parks and caravan annexes cannot be accurately defined. While the ABS Census data does provide population counts for caravan parks, these counts include permanent residents of parks only. Tourists, holidaymakers and temporary residents are excluded. Comparisons between states are also confounded by different recording methods between state jurisdictions. Currently statistics are not produced according to national counting rules and national

offence categories (Morgan 2003). Thus, no real comparisons can be made by offence type between states.

Three main types of offences are presented along with the balance of incidents occurring on parks. These include:

- **Property Offences:** These include break-and-enter offences or burglary, fraud, handling stolen goods, motor vehicle theft, theft from a vehicle, stealing, petty theft and property damage.
- **Against the person:** Includes homicide, assault including sexual assaults, harassment and robbery. Assaults includes common assault, which does not involve actual bodily harm; aggravated assault, which results in actual bodily harm, namely any hurt or injury which affects the health or comfort of the victim; and aggravated assault causing grievous bodily harm, injuries inflicted by a weapon or other instrument resulting in permanent or serious disfigurement or injury to health (Jochelson 1997). A large proportion of assaults include domestic violence incidents.
- **Drug Offences:** The range of drug offences includes the possession, dealing, cultivation and importation of illegal drugs.

4.3 Crime incidents in caravan parks and individual caravans/annexes

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show the differences in the total number of reported incidents of crime in each of the six case-study regions for caravan parks and for individual caravans parked outside of parks; for example, at roadside rest stops, bush camping areas, or in the grounds of private residences. Roadside rest areas are located throughout Australia, providing facilities and an opportunity for travellers to stop and rest. They are not designed for long-term camping. In Queensland, regulations were introduced in 2003 to contain the overuse of roadside rest stops by caravaners. Under the new rules, the maximum stay at roadside rest areas has been reduced to 20 hours, and overnight stays are not permitted if there are commercial facilities within 50 kilometres.



Figure 4.1: Australian roadside rest area.

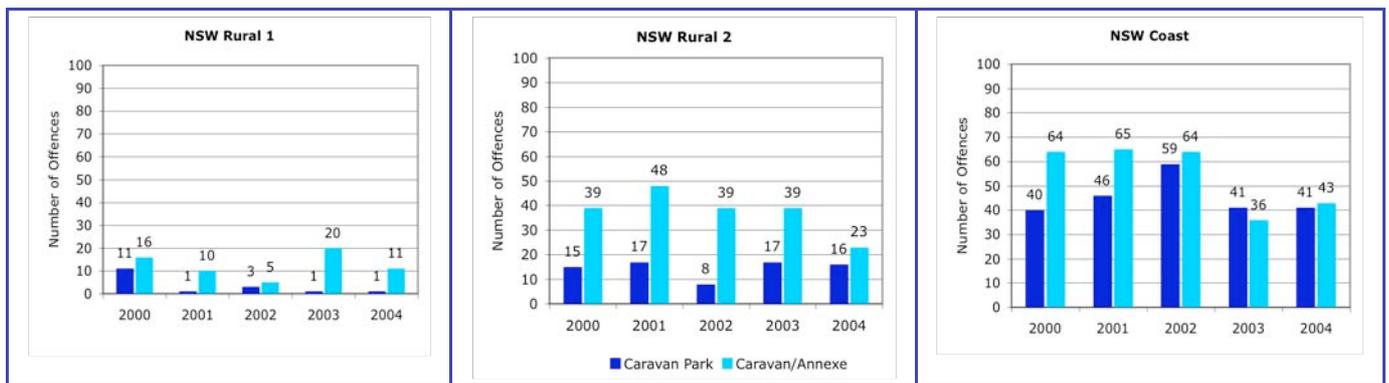


Figure 4.2: Comparison of the numbers of crime incidents between caravan parks and caravans/annexes in NSW case-study areas (2000–2004).
 Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

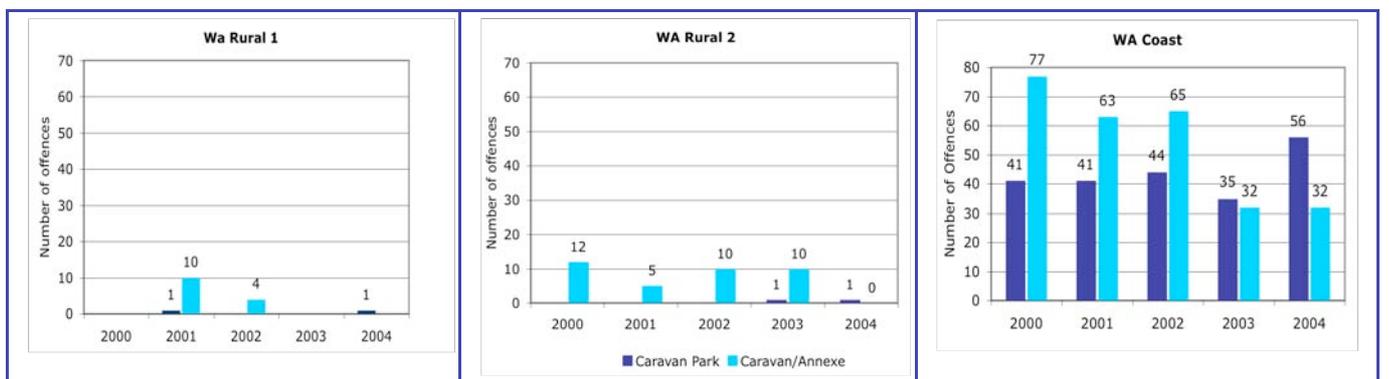


Figure 4.3: Comparison of the numbers of crime incidents between caravan parks and caravans/annexes in WA case-study areas (2000–2004).
 Source: WA Crime Research Centre.

There are clear trends in the data indicating that crime is less likely to occur in caravan parks where there is a greater density of population and thus a greater level of guardianship. One exception is the Western Australian coastal community, which recorded a greater proportion of crime incidents in caravan parks in 2004. There are a greater number of incidences reported in the coastal regions because they are larger communities with a significantly greater number of caravan parks. It is important to note that it cannot be established categorically that caravans parked in caravan parks experience less risk. To do so would require data on the number of vans in each location in each year.

4.4 Crime incidents by type

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present the official reported numbers of property, assault, drug and other offences occurring on caravan parks and caravans or annexes for the years 2000 to 2004 for the six case-study areas. The tables also show the total number of offences for the remainder of the shire, which provides an indication of the level of crime within each district. Property crime appears to be the most common type of offence occurring on caravan parks. The number of caravan parks within each shire must be taken into account when considering the extent of crime on parks within a region. As noted above no true comparison of offences can be made between states because of disparate recording mechanisms.

Table 4.1:
Reported numbers of Property, Assault, Drug and other offences occurring on WA caravan parks and caravans or annexes (2000–2004).

Year	WA Rural 1			WA Rural 2			WA Coast		
	Caravan Park (N=1)	Caravan/ Annex	Remainder of WA Rural 1	Caravan Park (N=1)	Caravan/ Annex	Remainder of WA Rural 2	Caravan Park (N=17)	Caravan/ Annex	Remainder of WA Coast
Property Offences	2000		419		10	1968	38	72	2384
	2001	1	526		2	1548	40	60	2332
	2002		659		7	1687	43	63	2362
	2003		420		5	1625	31	29	1980
	2004	1	293		4	1171	50	18	1794
Against the person	2000		81		2	178	3	1	204
	2001		105	5	2	285		1	163
	2002		74		1	256		1	226
	2003		51		4	246	1		162
	2004		60			288	1	1	197
Drug Offences	2000		74			129		3	211
	2001		105	4	1	128	1	2	204
	2002		79		2	149			192
	2003		30		1	168	1	3	259
	2004		13			187	1	3	135
Other Offences	2000		41			97		1	75
	2001		39			135			101
	2002		35			121	1	1	103
	2003		31			183	2		98
	2004		37			263	4		189

Source: WA Crime Research Centre.

Table 4.2:
Reported numbers of Property, Assault, Drug and other offences occurring on NSW caravan parks and caravans or annexes (2000–2004).

Year	NSW Rural 1			NSW Rural 2			NSW Coast			
	Caravan Park (N=4)	Caravan/ Annex	Remainder of NSW Rural 1	Caravan Park (N=3)	Caravan/ Annex	Remainder of NSW Rural 2	Caravan Park (N=25)	Caravan/ Annex	Remainder of NSW Coast	
Property Offences	2000	4	5	969	10	30	2315	20	32	4615
	2001	1	4	842	13	38	2303	29	31	4632
	2002	1	3	917	6	32	2581	47	43	4781
	2003	1	5	981	13	28	2197	32	20	4760
2004	1	5	760	11	11	2005	28	25	4433	
Against the person	2000	5	4	353	2	2	528	14	13	1234
	2001	1	3	311	2	4	540	11	16	1341
	2002	1	1	271	1	3	618	6	12	1354
	2003	1	8	363	3	5	651	4	11	1230
2004	1	3	333	2	4	684	8	10	1392	
Drug Offences	2000	1	1	42	1	1	73	1	1	392
	2001	1	1	49	1	1	91	1	1	386
	2002	1	1	36	1	1	212	2	8	458
	2003	1	1	75	1	1	94	1	11	611
2004	1	1	56	1	4	109	1	1	257	
Other Offences	2000	2	7	1134	3	7	1775	5	8	4699
	2001	0	3	2275	1	6	4431	4	10	9967
	2002	1	2	2029	1	4	3812	6	4	10594
	2003	0	6	2199	1	5	3477	5	5	11997
2004	0	3	2302	2	4	2795	5	7	10126	

Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

4.3 Conclusion

The official data presented in this chapter provide an indication of the number and types of offences that occur on caravan parks. Property crime is the most common type of offence that occurs. The data also suggest that caravans within caravan parks are much less likely to be victimised than caravans parked in other areas such as roadside stops, bush camps or private residences.

CHAPTER 5: Setting the scene

5.1 Introduction

To provide an understanding of the social and environmental structure of caravan parks in which this study of crime and anti-social behaviour was conducted, a profile of the sample of caravan parks and the inhabitants is provided in this chapter. Caravan parks represent diverse types of small communities with varying levels of cohesiveness. Community structures that are more cohesive and integrated; that is, more socially organised, are more able to socially control crime and anti-social behaviour (Carter, Phillips, Donnermeyer and Wurschmidt 1982; Jobes *et al* 2001). The more neighbours know and trust each other and are willing to intervene for the common good, the greater their 'collective efficacy' for social control of deviant behaviour (Sampson *et al* 1997). However, social characteristics such as residential instability, ethnic diversity and economic disadvantage can impact upon collective efficacy. Varying degrees of these characteristics are common to caravan park environments. Therefore, varying community structures within caravan parks will be related to the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour experienced. To assess community cohesiveness and collective efficacy on parks within the present study, the perceptions of park managers, residents and tourists of the quality of caravan park life were explored.

5.2 The parks

Of the 36 parks included within the study, four were tourist-only parks, one a residential-only park, while the majority hosted a blend of varying proportions of permanent and temporary residents and tourists. Nine parks were members of park chains, such as Big 4, Top Tourist or Family Parks. Ten were located close to a town's central business district but most were located on the outskirts of towns, often adjacent to a natural feature such as bushland, a river, or beach.

Parks ranged in size from 20 to 400 sites (mean 108). All provided powered and non-powered sites for caravans and motor homes, onsite vans, cabins or chalets and tents. Fees ranged from \$10 for a campsite to \$147 for a cabin. Some parks had basic facilities while others constituted tourist resorts complete with swimming pools, spas, pool and games rooms and tennis courts. Some tried to limit their clientele to specific types, such as families only. One manager explained:

We just don't encourage young people. If a young person rings up we tell them that there's no noise after eight, all music off at ten, etc, because there's three hundred retired people that live here, and it's family-orientated towards children – there's no swearing, there's no drunken behaviour. So if that doesn't suit you, you can go somewhere else.

Most parks that hosted both tourists and permanent residents had defined areas for each groups. There were clear differences in the attitudes of managers towards permanent residents. Some valued the reliable source of income permanence provided. Others valued the company of a small community of people that they knew well. Some of the residents contributed to the maintenance of the park and gardens. Permanent residents on all parks were acknowledged as a valued source of security as they would readily alert the manager if they suspected anything untoward. However, other managers believed managing permanent residents was more trouble than it was worth and had endeavoured to reduce their numbers over a period of years. Some retained a small group of 'good' tenants, while others became tourist-only parks.

One explained:

We have had no permanent residents on this park for 25 years. Permanent parks have permanent habits. Managers lose control. It's a huge market there. A lot of parks rely on permanent residents. It's a big part of the income of smaller parks, but our lifestyle here is a lot different.

Another reported:

I only have four. Don't believe in too many. Some of them tend to rule the roost. Makes life difficult. There were nine when I took over the park. A couple of them left on their own – went to other places. One fellow died. And a couple were ... I sort of helped them on their way. I was concerned – they were local drugos.

One manager summed up the diversity of parks:

Every park is different. They're all different. The very large parks that are mainly permanent residents have a different situation than the ones that have holidaymakers. It's just different. And they have different problems.

5.3 The park managers

There were 36 interviews conducted with caravan park managers or owners; 30 were interviewed onsite, while six were interviewed by telephone. Together, there were 12 males (33%), 16 females (44%) and eight (22%) couples. Most of the parks were family businesses primarily managed by the husband and wife team and some had married children also working within the business. The ages of the park managers was assessed by the interviewers and estimated to range between 27 and 70 years. The average age was approximately 48 years.

The park managers had been managing their park between two months and twenty-two years (Mean 6.9 years). Only 15 (42%) had managed other parks previously, which meant 58% were newcomers to the industry. Notably, several were former farmers. Others came from occupations that provided a strong background for managing and working within the tourist industry such as a police officer, a prison officer, taxi driver and hotel owner. Three reported they had taken up the park business as an option for semi-retirement. For all but one participant, managing the park was a full-time job.

Park managers were asked what were the best things about living and working on the park. The most common responses were the enjoyment of meeting new people (50%), while another 22 per cent liked the fact that the park was family-orientated. Others liked the lifestyle (25%) and the location of their park (44%), and the flexibility of being your own boss (14%). One reported:

If I ever left I would miss the contact with the public. You get the grumpy ones but they are a minority. The majority of people are wonderful – all walks of life, all nationalities.

Another agreed:

I do like this job, because you meet some beautiful people. And some of the people we've met have changed our entire life. It's been great, just salt-of-the earth people that teach you more and more about humanity and the good things in life. And I guess that's why I survive. Even now in the park, there's three-quarters of our regulars that have come down, and you sort of look forward to them coming. And I guess that's why I get a bit protective about security, because I'd hate to them go.

Another liked the autonomy:

You're basically your own boss. The best things are that you can work at home all the time when your kids need you, although you can't run off everywhere with them, and do things with them, because you're always working.

Managers were also asked to identify any particular difficulties experienced in managing their park. Three were frustrated with residents/guests being careless with their possessions or their personal safety particularly when travelling in the outback. Five revealed the frustrations experienced in managing permanent residents such as chasing rent, managing domestic arguments, or just dealing with trivial issues arising from boredom. One explained:

Things get blown out of proportion like you wouldn't believe [amongst the permanents]. It's just that they don't have much to do, and they get bored. Like we've got to go to a funeral on Thursday, and I've got to change rent day – so the easiest way to get the message around the park is to tell one person in particular, and he goes and tells everyone. And you know within twenty-four hours the whole park will know. This older guy that's here, he's got nothing better to do. At the moment there's a 'For Sale' sign out here on the corner – it's not actually for this block; it's for a couple of houses next door but they put it on our corner – and of course that freaked him out, and the next thing, the park is for sale. So that's probably the only thing that's difficult.

Four noted the stress of a large workload. Those in family-operated businesses were asked if they had relief staff and how often they were able to get away from the park. Larger businesses had assistant managers, while some managers of small parks never took a break. As several stated: *It's 24/7, especially if you've got a night-bell.* Another added:

Even when we're off, we're on call twenty-four hours a day. And if we're in town doing our shopping Tuesdays and Wednesdays, we've still got our mobiles, we're still on-call. If we do want to go away, we get in a relief manager. You have to have that break.

Other managers reported varying types of relief.

We get sixteen hours off, which is two days from eight o'clock to five o'clock. And after five we're back on, so we only get basically working days off which is not enough – you need to get away from it and just concentrate on just doing nothing. You can't stay at home during your day off – that's where we live – because whenever they [the relief managers] run into trouble, the first thing they always do is instead of using their own initiative, is come and get us.

Some husbands and wives took separate holidays.

I haven't had a break from it yet. My wife, every couple of months she goes to the Gold Coast for a couple of weeks at a time.

Managers noted the importance of having a reliable and competent relief manager that they could trust with the business and often live in their home while they took a holiday. One couple discovered their relief managers had pocketed money from the laundry and from the office. They now rely on one of the older permanent couples to mind the place if they need to get away.

Managers were asked whether they would have liked some management advice, assistance or training in how to handle people when they first began or whether they believed learning by experience was the only way to develop an understanding of caravan park management. Those who were part of park chains such as Big4, Family or Top Tourist Parks were aware of the training and mentoring available through those associations. All acknowledged it was tough in the beginning but were divided on whether training was necessary.

One said:

There's no book in the world that tells you how to handle people. You have to learn that yourself. Either you will or you won't.

Another maintained:

I reckon I had the best training in the world – I had twenty years in taxis. So I know exactly what's going on. And I've seen it all.

Another reported:

The previous manager provided on-the-job training, which was pretty good. It's the only way you can actually do this. You can do a few [courses] if you like – which we've done – gives you a grounding, but the actual on-the-job training is a lot better.

One believed some advice could be detrimental.

I'm never against learning, that's for sure. But the people that we bought the park from, if we had taken any advice from them, the place would be broke. They wanted us to come here every month before to learn how to run it, and I turned up the day before takeover, and just said, 'Look, I'll pick it up on my own and make my own decisions.' And we've doubled the tourist income in the first twelve months, and the tenants are all far, far happier and it's a great place to be. Prior to that, I was in my own pub and I'm a farmer, so I've had some experience with people, so this is easy compared with that, really.

One couple talked about learning by mistakes.

Probably best to be thrown in the deep end. We've made some mistakes and we've sort of thought: 'Well, we've learnt by that one – we won't do that again.' You learn to become quite hard, and quite sort of cold to people's problems like that. You give them a few minutes of your time but, you have to distance yourself from it.

In one rural town, a young 27-year-old woman was managing a busy park owned by her parents who lived in a neighbouring town at least a one-hour's drive away.

When asked how she managed to control any problem behaviour on the park, she responded:

Anything major – no, I can't. I mean, I can report them. I go up there and sort them out. I'm pretty good at that. But as far as there's something major, if I don't really want to go up by myself, I've got a few regular blokes on the park, who are really, really helpful. I've had that the whole time being here, which is really good. People always ask me that: 'Aren't you scared?' But I've never, ever had a fear of running the place at all, just because of the people that stay here.

One couple concluded:

Managers have to be a handyman, a diplomat and a politician. Most people only last about five years in this job. They need support and knowledge.

They suggested that a course should be provided for all park owners/managers to teach practical, commonsense management skills. They were unaware of any courses currently available to them.

All of the managers interviewed were warm, friendly, gregarious people who clearly enjoyed interacting with others. They were also caring, mindful of the social needs of some of their guests, yet had learnt to establish certain boundaries to effectively manage their business. Some claimed they

had become hard because the safety and security of their park was dependent upon their ability to instinctively identify possible troublemakers amongst arrivals to their park. One explained:

The previous owner, he would just take anybody who would come in, and I think the first year here I kicked 26 different groups of people out, and the second year was 14, and I haven't kicked anybody out now for a while, 5 or 6 years I suppose. You learn to pick your customers. You learn to do that.

Several managers commented that even with years of experience, they might still misjudge some people:

You might put a permanent in, and they turn out to be not a very nice person. Maybe on drugs – you didn't pick that up when they came in – or they have friends over and get abusive and things like that. We actually have our permanents fill out an application, so we do screen them quite well. We don't just sort of say: 'Well, come on in.'

5.4 The tourists

Of the 40 interviews with tourists, 25 (62.5%) were couples. Of the remainder, eight were male and seven were female. Their ages ranged between approximately 17 and 75 years (Mean 50 years).

The most common type of tourist interviewed was on annual holiday (17%). Twenty-two per cent reported that they took a break every chance they could. These tourists included families on holiday; four with one to three children under the age of 13 and three with teenage children. There were two groups of five related families. Others holidaying included professional people, four young people on weekend surfing trips, two backpackers and three overseas tourists.

The other frequently encountered group was the *Grey Nomad* (30%). These were usually couples aged in their sixties or older who were on long-term tours around Australia. They were all greatly enjoying this experience. Some had been on the road for more than years. However, there were two separate couples aged 26 and 30 who were also taking six-month tours around Australia.

Tourists had been travelling between two days and three years. The most common holiday period (22%) was two weeks. There were 24 (60%) in touring caravans, five (12.5%) in motor homes, nine (23%) in tents and five (12.5%) in cabins or onsite vans.

5.4.1 Reasons for choosing a park

Tourists were asked how often they used caravan parks when they travelled. The larger proportion (68%) responded that they *always* used parks, while 23% *sometimes* used parks often taking advantage of roadside rest stops where available. One of the *Grey Nomad* couples travelling in a campervan reported they sometimes camped in the bush. They had recently completed a trip across the Sandy Desert camping for nine nights. Three (8%) people reported that they rarely used parks.

Tourists chose the park they were staying on primarily for the location, the amount of shade (particularly for those in tents), the friendliness of the management, because they had stayed on the park before and the standard of the facilities, namely the cleanliness and quality of the ablution blocks. Those in tents also prioritised the quality of camp kitchens. Kitchens that were enclosed providing protection from the weather were highly valued. Several of those interviewed were members of Big4 or Top Tourist clubs and the like and clearly appreciated the benefits that membership afforded them, particularly the assurance of a certain standard of facilities. Figure 5.1 displays the most common responses from tourists as to the reasons why they selected the park where they were currently holidaying. This open-ended question revealed that security was not a primary factor in choosing a

park amongst the tourists interviewed. None of the tourists interviewed could identify any problems with the parks they were currently staying on.

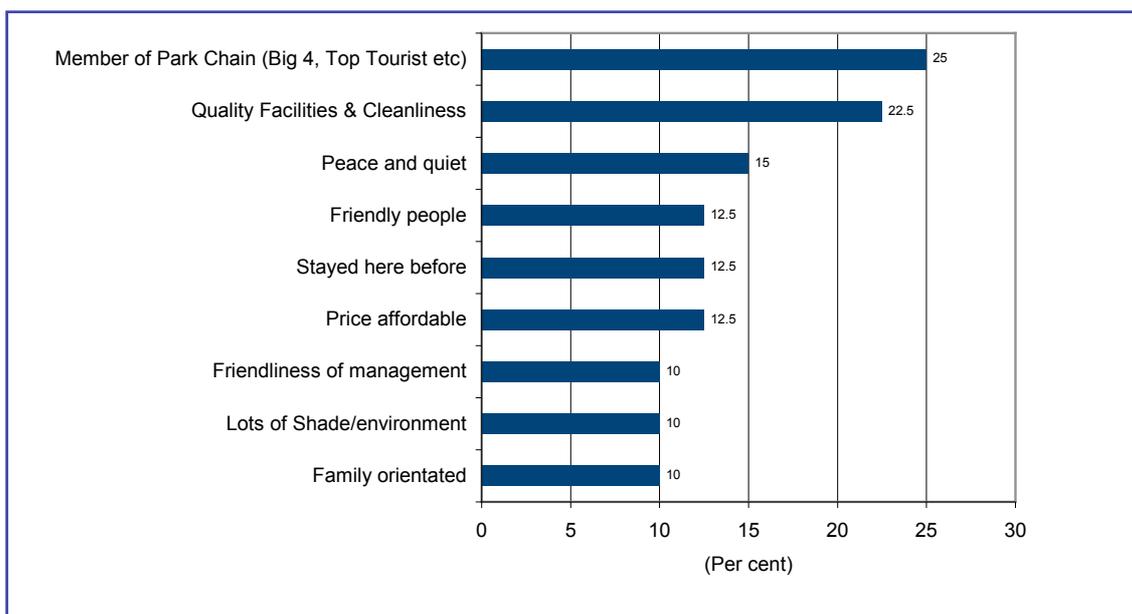


Figure 5.1: Factors influencing tourists' choice of parks.

5.5 The park residents

Amongst the interviews with park residents, there were eight temporary residents and 14 long-term permanent residents. There were eleven (50%) males and five females (23%) and six (27%) couples. Their ages ranged between approximately 25 and 80 years (Mean 60 yrs). Residents had been living on their park between 2 months and 20 years.

All of the long-term permanent residents interviewed were very friendly and pleased to be involved in the study. A series of questions explored their level of life satisfaction and attachment to place. Residents were asked why they chose the particular caravan park they were living on and what were the best things about it. They were also asked if there were any problems with the park.

Most of the long-term permanent residents were retired people who had chosen to purchase or rent a park home or onsite van within their local caravan park to remain in the community. This was an affordable option with few responsibilities and access to a community within the park that provided care when needed. When asked what were the best things about life on their park, one said: *Peace and quietness. No concerns and no worries.*

Another couple responded:

It's cheap accommodation. There's no gardening, apart from maintaining this place. It's good walking distance to town, the plaza, and the cinemas.

Another elderly lady expressed similar values:

The shops are just down the road. The beach is in walking distance. You don't have any problems. All the people are nice. I like it.

One lady in her early seventies had moved to the local caravan park when her husband died and planned to stay indefinitely. She had found that her home in town was difficult to maintain and there was always problems in securing workers to do repairs. The caravan cabin and annex allowed her to

do the maintenance herself. The positive aspects of life on the park were the atmosphere, the rural aspect; it was reasonably close to town and was a nice place to be. Having her own car allowed her to maintain her involvement in groups and organisations within the town.



Most of the park homes were rented. Only three of the permanent residents privately owned their park home. Some folk had established small gardens around their park home, which they carefully tended. Gardens established their personal boundary and identity on the park. A couple in their mid-seventies had been living in their cabin and annex for 20 years. They had a small lovingly cared for garden around their site. The annex formed a woodworking workshop for the husband. Their level of life satisfaction was high. As the husband stated: *They will carry us out in a box.* As Beckwith (1998) found, this couple particularly enjoyed the diversity of park life with the opportunity to meet people from overseas and other states from all walks of life.

On parks that allowed animals, some of the permanent tenants had a caged bird, dog or cat for company. One couple had a small wire fence around their site, which contained their small dog and gave them some sense of security. Several managers noted that parks offered a pleasant environment for older people.

One stated:

We've got a lady down the back there. Her husband is injured and hasn't worked for thirty years. But her mum lives next door. She should be in hospital – there's no two ways about it. But they won't put her in a nursing home. She's about 85–86. So she'll die on the park. But that's probably what she wants to do anyhow. She sits there in her doorway, and she just watches. She watches a little bird or a child going by. And she's not stuck in a tiny little flat. And she's got her daughter next door to look after her.

There were some men interviewed who suffered from alcoholism and lived alone on the park but had found company and support within the park community. None of the park managers reported any problems with these residents. Most were described as harmless.

As one manager explained:

Just occasionally one bloke, he'll swear a bit or drop the magic word. You just say: 'If you misbehave again, you'll be out.' You keep an eye on them if they're getting a bit out of line. Because they know they've got nowhere else to go. They know if they go anywhere else, it's not going to be as good as here.

Only six permanent residents reported any problems living on their park. Of these, two complained about traffic because their site was close to the highway, two complained about noisy parties amongst the holidaymakers and about people driving too fast in the park. Another two were concerned about outsiders that cause trouble when visiting residents on the park and destroy the reputation of the permanent group on the park.

The shorter-term residents staying on parks included construction workers, shearers, fruit-pickers and other seasonal workers. One professional man who visited one of the rural communities regularly used the caravan park cabins because they provided the best accommodation in town. Two young families were staying temporarily on a park while they were waiting for their home to be built. As one manager explained:

We've got a family – there are two adults and three kids and they pay \$85 a week, and their power. It's not bad, is it? Like, the kids can come around every afternoon and have a swim. They're back down the back fishing in the creek. She said: 'If we rent, we can't save. Living here, we can save for a house.' They're here for a couple of years. They're a bit squashed, but they've got air-conditioning. But where else can people live for \$85 a week? If you get it back to a daily rate, that's only \$12 a day. For five of them, it's \$2.50 a day. It's bloody cheap, isn't it?

Summing up permanent residents on his park, one manager stated:

Basically the people in the park are pretty good; you know, they're not rich people. They're never going to be millionaires, but they're basically nice people. Their lives aren't probably like yours and mine. They're doing the best with what they've got, and they are nice people.

However, there was an acknowledgement by managers, tourists and residents alike of the social problems associated with some disadvantaged groups on parks.

One long-term resident observed:

Obviously if they come wandering up with a bed and all their gear on them and a trolley, and that's their only possessions, I mean, you've a fair idea of what they're going to be like. You also get people with a lot of mental problems come on. We had one young one come on that lived down there. I don't think he was on medication because he used to rant and rave, shout and carry on, and nobody's there. They eventually got rid of him. But he put the windows through when he was leaving, over in the shop.

You get a lot of that kind in caravan parks, because there's nowhere to go. To get on here, if you had sixty bucks, you walked off the street here with just a backpack you're in. You can stay until your sixty bucks are up and then you have to find your next weekly pay or whatever. I think mainly because there's no housing for them anyway. There's no emergency housing for people like that. So they come to caravan parks.

As one manager concluded:

Some people choose to live here and some have to live here – and they are the ones you have trouble with.

5.5.1 Supported accommodation in caravan parks

To explore this issue further, the study investigated the extent to which caravan parks in rural areas were utilised by Government Housing Departments or welfare organisations for crisis housing under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, Emergency Relief or Crisis Accommodation Program. The purpose was to extend previous studies of homelessness and the use of caravan parks reviewed in Chapter 2 (Eddy 1998) to gather an understanding of the role parks play in rural communities in providing crisis housing. Park managers were asked if they were ever asked to accommodate people for short-term social housing and if there were any problems experienced. The findings differed between communities and between parks. In one inland town, the caravan park was never used in this way because it was too far out of town and was too costly for the Government Housing Department. This community was also fortunate to have a sufficient number of homes available for social housing within the community.

However, within the other communities, it was very evident that park managers play a significant and unrecognised role in providing accommodation for people in crisis. In three of the smaller inland towns, park managers reported a cooperative working arrangement with the local housing department or charity organisation. There was an understanding that the organisation would ensure that the park would only be asked to take people who would be good tenants and that all rent would be paid. As one manager stated:

I've got a good relationship with them, I must admit. The agency rings, and they'll say: 'They should be all right, Darl.' Occasionally they send me somebody that I'll ring them up and say, 'Uh-uh. Don't want this one,' and they will get rid of them as quick as they can. They're pretty good. They know that I won't take any real rubbish.

In another town, the manager had a similar successful arrangement with the local churches.

I have a good relationship with the Ministers' Fraternal – particularly one minister. He screens people and only sends us the genuine cases. It's just the way he words it when he asks me – it allows me to say yes or no. It's probably not a good thing to do but he is protecting me as well. Ninety per cent of these people are just using the church. I have people come here and they ask if they can stay until their money comes through in a week. And Ill say: 'Sorry, no – no money, no bed.' (Because we've been caught before. The churches pay for a couple of nights and then they stay and do a midnight flit.) And they will say: 'Oh well, I'll go ask the churches.' So I'll get straight on the phone and warn the minister: 'He's not genuine – he's just doing it because it's a cheap way to get around the country.' The next time I see him he [the minister] will say: 'I got your message and I know exactly what you are talking about.'

Other managers demonstrated a sincere compassion for the needs of these groups but acknowledged that many of these people are in crisis and there is a risk that they can cause trouble on the park and/or default on rent. Managers were also torn by the need to be mindful of the needs of tourists and other residents on the park who must share this space with those in crisis.

One reported:

We do occasionally take these people. We keep a close eye on them, as we've had difficulties in the past. And not necessarily on payment either – more to do with some social issues they've had in the park, which is an unfortunate thing. So we don't deter it, but we don't try to encourage it either.

Another reported financial loss:

Once in a while maybe, but we try to steer away from it. Because when we first came here, we had a bad run. It wasn't their fault. It was more probably because we weren't awake to what was going on. Two cabins were rented out to various people that were being looked after. But the agencies only pay for so long, and then they stop. And I said to the people in the cabins: 'Well, you've either got to move out or pay rent.' And of course both of them said: 'I'll fix you up next week.' Next week is like tomorrow – it just doesn't happen.

One other reported:

The people that we have had left the vans dirty, but they weren't trashed – but they did runners. Some of the people may be very clean, very tidy, but they do not look real good ... They sent a couple of young blokes around here, and they had that much metal hanging out of their face, there's no way you could put them in with the older generation. So we sort of try not to take too many of them. Once in a while I'll weaken, and let them in, but that only happens when my wife is not around.

Several managers reported that they refused to provide social housing on their park due to negative experiences in the past. As one manager explained: *When you have so much trouble you've just got to stop, especially if you're a holiday park.* Another added:

I did once and I'll never do it again. We weren't told what it was when this woman came here, and it was an absolute disaster. She wrecked the joint. She had a drug addict bloke in there, smashed windows, didn't pay the rent and left. We do have people come here for short-term crisis accommodation – like yesterday a guy rang up for an onsite van for six weeks. And I said: 'Sorry, we are booked out. You're going to have to book into the camping ground.' And he said: 'I picked a fine time to have a fight with my wife, didn't I?'

As Greenhalgh (2003) found in her study of park residents in Queensland, some discriminatory practices by park managers are a form of risk management. The Productivity Commission (2003), in their examination of homelessness in Australia, noted that some people are 'bad' tenants, and ways to improve their understanding of the requirements of tenancy may need to be explored. Furthermore, drug, alcohol or other mental health problems within some of these groups are inadequately treated and supported by health services. These social concerns are beyond the scope of the present study. Nevertheless, it is evident that some of the anti-social behaviours and crimes that occur on parks, such as vandalism of vans, drug abuse and domestic violence, are associated with these groups. Clearly where there is a mutual trust and understanding between park managers and a welfare agency that potential troublemakers will not be sent to the park, managers will continue to be a source of available crisis accommodation and provide a vitally important social service particularly for small rural communities.

5.6 A sense of community

Given the extreme diversity in the types of people that populate caravan parks, managers, tourists and residents were all asked if they believed there was a sense of community amongst those living or staying on the park. One manager responded:

We've got a darts thing down the back there where the permanents play darts, and if there's tourists, they'll quite often go down there and have a game of darts and a drink with them. As long as they're not snotty-nosed people; you know, just the average sort of person that comes in camping on holidays, they mix in with them pretty well.

On another park, a resident noted:

We always talk to tourists. I was sitting over there with old mate having a drink this one afternoon, and two old Dutch people renting the cabin there, when they moved in they said. 'Oh, you're having a drink. Can we bring ours down?' We get them like that.

One manager noted the way people on the park came together at a time of crisis.

When we had that big storm through here in January, we ended up with a big party over in the barbecue area with about thirty-five people. It was all in, because nobody could cook, the power was out across town so nobody was going to get anything to eat anywhere. And they all worked hard around the place, cleaning. They were fantastic. We had trees down, and you couldn't get up the driveway. And a tree came down here, and everybody was dragging limbs off and everything like that. I had the SES boys in with their big chainsaws, their great big mulcher and cut it all up, threw it over there, cleaned it up so we could get in and out. So we got barbecue out, and a couple of bottles of wine, and we had a nice old party.

Another manager believed the nature of caravan park environments broke down any social divides.

On a caravan park, whether you're a bank manager, or a creditor, or a lowly cleaner, everyone's the same, because everyone goes to the toilet in their pyjamas. You stop off and chat on your way to the toilet – you have to. In a motel, you only see people when you're going in and out the door in the hallway. Here, it doesn't matter who you are – your pyjamas are the same as everyone else's.

5.6.1 The tourists

Tourists identified a nation-wide community among the tourist population. One woman stated: *You always wave to people in a vehicle towing a van or in a motor home.* Tourists will usually socialise on parks in the evenings, a time where important information on places to go and the places to stay is shared. As one manager observed:

Tourists talk to one another, particularly people in the caravans. They can tell you from one end of Australia, to the other side – where to stay, where not to stay, how to do it, and all the rest of it.

One man travelling around Australia on his own added:

People are friendly in parks. You're not going into motels. Motels are very unfriendly – you shut the door and that's the end of it. Caravan parks you find that people will ask you to come and have a drink. I think since I left in the middle of January, probably I've had five – perhaps six – nights where I've had to have a drink by myself.

A Danish tourist commented:

It's the way you really get into the country by staying in caravan parks. We have travelled in many places and have stayed in hotels. You don't have any contact with people. And here you get it ... well, you can't avoid it in Australia. When we travelled in New Zealand, the Kiwis are nice, and they'll speak to you any time you talk to them, but in Australia you can't avoid it. That's the difference.

A few exceptions were noted:

The majority of people are nice. We do tend to find that some people stop in their caravan and don't get out very much. I don't know why they do it. We always get outside – that's the point of a caravan. I enjoy meeting people.

One was a little selective:

I don't chat to everybody. My mate – he does. It's nothing to do with snobbery. It's just that I get people sick of saying to me, 'Where do you come from? Where are you going? How much fuel does your car use?' I always go to the showers very early in the morning, because I can't stand people talking to me in the mornings.

Many tourists often return to the same park each year for their annual holiday. One extended family group interviewed had taken up five adjoining sites on a park. The group included several children and this was an annual pilgrimage to this park.

Another extended family occupied six sites at a park for up to five weeks for the Christmas holidays. They observed that there were several unwritten rules to follow when staying on a caravan park. These included watching out for each other's children, being expected to assist if emergency repairs are needed without being asked, sharing a good catch of fish with others and that property should be considered safe at all times. Because everyone knows everyone else, there is a mutual trust, which means things should not have to be locked away. One explained:

There are the people we stay with, like my mother-in-law and my father-in-law who are right next-door, and then they've got all their friends that are around them. They know who belongs to who, and they all kind of generally work out who belongs. We find the kids just sort of wander around. Even people we don't know, if you see them more than once then you know it's someone that is on the park.

Managers on other parks also noted that generations of families return each year to the same site. Friendships with other families lead to marriages between children and the annual caravan park holiday tradition continues.

There is a community because of the nature of the people that keep coming back year after year. They're friends from all over the state and book at the same time, and they always book the same sites so they're always together.

5.6.2 The permanent residents

As for the permanent residents, most agreed that a community existed on the park. All reported that there would always be someone who would assist them if required. One couple stated:

We're one little community. When you live so close together, you've got to get on with each other.

Another stated:

We talk to everybody. It's pretty friendly. I've been in a couple of caravan parks and this is the best. This is the best place. And they're good people too.

However, there were some different observations. One resident explained:

It's a mixture. There are a number of us that keep contact with each other, from day-to-day or time-to-time. There's a few of us all eat together, so if there's any real problem, then each one of us will help out the other. As for the tourists, they basically keep to themselves, but if you want to stop and have a conversation with them, that's fine. But for the rest of them, they're not usually here for too long, so you don't really have a lot of time to spend with them.

The type of park and the social structure of the park clearly defined the extent of community. One manager noted:

There are people who have a sense of community, and there are others who would prefer to remain anonymous. There are people who feel that they live in a fishbowl. They're wondering how they ended up living in a caravan park. Others are keen to live here, others aren't. We've got two very distinct areas too. One's like sort of up-market, and one's typical caravans.

There were some who were a part of the park community but still maintained a certain distance from other residents on the park. Some remarked that some residents on the park were not the type of people they wanted to mix with. A manager observed:

The permanents that live in the park, very rarely talk to one another. Every now and then they seem to get along all right, but most times if they pass one another, they'll say hello. They don't go and visit each other. A couple of them used to get on quite well – they used to have drinks with each other every afternoon. But since one died, they've got no one really to talk to.

Most residents believed it was easy for newcomers to assimilate into the community but several added that it depended mostly on the newcomers themselves. Some want to mix. Others do not. As one resident stated:

You like to give people time to settle in – they may not want to talk. It's an individual thing. We always stop and talk to them. You get the funny ones you get the sad ones. You meet all sorts of people and you take them as you find them.

A resident on another park stated:

It depends on the people who frequent the place, and depends on what's happening. If they're involved in certain areas or walks of life, then they can probably mix in easier than if they're not. It's not easy to say exactly how they mix, certain ones can mix quite simply. Those that are probably using marijuana or something like that, they tend to get themselves together reasonably quickly. People who are not into that usually don't mix with them.

Some managers organised morning teas or other social activities for residents to build social networks. All parks with 20 or more sites occupied by permanent residents are required by law to have a Resident Liaison Committee, which also promotes *community* within the park. The aim of these committees is to provide a forum for the discussion of park-related matters, such as reviewing and enforcing park rules and developing behaviour standards (Department of Fair Trading 2006).

5.6.3 Collective efficacy

A follow-up question ascertained the extent to which participants believed tourists and permanent residents watched out for each other, or kept to themselves. Most tourists believed they as a group watched out for each other. One couple commented:

Everyone's nosey, aren't they? I think people watch out. The grey nomads are really good. They'll tell you about what's going on. And you do look out. Even though you don't actually chat to your neighbour, you know that they're in their van or tent.

Others appreciated permanent residents: *Permanent are just gorgeous. They love to help everybody; most people are very considerate.* However, responses to this question revealed that on some parks, a social divide exists between tourist and permanent residents.

As one tourist noted:

I think the tourists keep an eye out for each other. The permanents do keep to themselves. There's definitely a two-tiered sort of situation – the permanents are the permanents, and the tourists are the tourists, and they don't really mix that much. Permanents have their own lives.

Another added:

Fortunately the permanents keep to themselves. It's always very hard to say this without sounding a snob, but permanent people live in caravan parks, you're usually at the lowest end of the economic scale.

Tourist and permanent sites are usually physically separate which may also contribute to this divide. As one tourist observed:

The permanents keep mainly to themselves – which I don't really blame them, because we're in and out. I think the parks segregate quite well. They keep their permanents separate from the others, and I think that's a good idea, really.

Some managers observed that young people kept to themselves while older people look out for each other. One added:

If one permanent doesn't see another permanent for a couple of days, he will bring it to my attention: 'Oh, where's old Keith?' Even though they might feud or fight a fair bit, they still will bring their attention to me that they haven't seen Keith for a couple of days. And I'll go and check him out.

An owner/resident of a static holiday onsite van noted:

The guy next door is a permanent. He's got a key to our van. Charlie, over there, he's got one. So if I think I've left the fridge on, we'll ring him and he will come in and check. The people over there have just gone home. We got a phone call last night and he said: 'Oh look, we forgot to turn the gas off. Will you turn it off for us?' They've got our phone number; we've got their phone number. If there's a problem, they just ring us.

On another small park, there were disparate views of collective efficacy. One resident was assured of a strong supportive neighbourhood.

Christmas times I go to my sister's, and I'm gone for two or three weeks and there's nothing gone when I come back. Everybody looks after each other's place. You just tell them when you are going away. They'll keep watch.

Yet two doors down, the response was entirely different. Clearly personality factors as well as personal experience play a significant role in individual's perceptions of community and safety.

There's a few watch out for each other. But there's no making anybody secure or anything. A lot of them on the park don't have a phone. So if I was going away, you couldn't rely on the next-door neighbour to look after the place. They'd probably clean it out, more than look after it, you know.

Figure 5.2 compares the responses of managers, residents and tourists on this question. It is evident that while tourists and residents were assured of support within their own group, they were less assured of support within other groups. This is possibly a case of "what you see depends on where you stand".

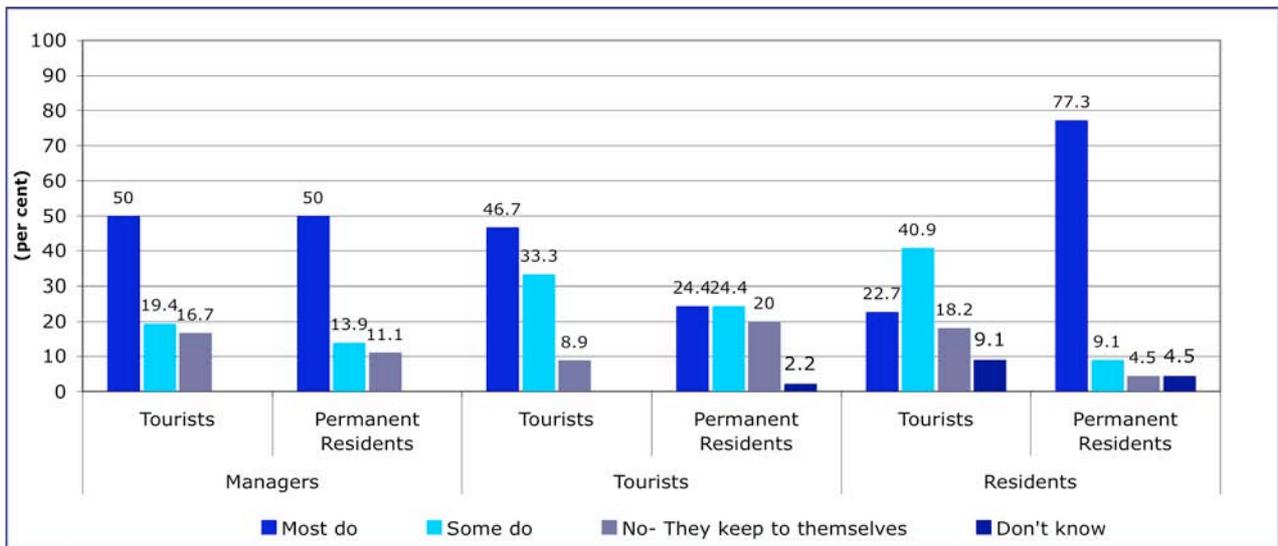


Figure 5.2: Perceptions of community care.

5.7 Conclusion

The profile of the caravan parks and the participants in this study presented above has clearly demonstrated the wide and disparate social structure of caravan park communities. Overseeing these uniquely diverse communities is a very hard working but caring group of managers. While the park chains and others closely aligned with the industry are aware of and access industry support, there may be a need to ensure that managers in smaller isolated parks have access to training and support for park management. There is a need for acknowledgement of the social role that managers play in providing accommodation for marginalised groups particularly in small communities.

Residential instability is characteristic of caravan park life. Furthermore, economic disparity exists within park populations ranging from wealthy tourists with large expensive caravans and four-wheel-drives to the most economically and social disadvantaged homeless people in society. These factors inhibit collective efficacy within a community to effectively maintain control over crime and anti-social behaviour.

Nevertheless, it is evident that there are several small communities within small communities, each with their own unique social structure, norms and values. These include the community amongst permanent residents within a park, the community of groups of regular tourists to the park, the community of the park as a whole, and the town wherein the park is situated. Then there is the Australia-wide community of tourists that use caravan parks and the caravan park industry as a whole (see Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3: Caravan park communities.

As the study of US mobile home parks (MacTavish and Salamon 2001) found, there were differences between residents in their individual experience of 'community'. Pockets of neighbouring were evident rather than overlapping social networks with the capacity to integrate community.

There is evidence that there are varying degrees of collective efficacy within these micro communities. Certainly parks that host a cohesive group of long-term permanent residents are ensured of an informal neighbourhood watch operative. The extent to which the other 'communities' are effective in collective efficacy is unclear. There are social norms that operate such as the need to be sociable and helpful to each other. Acceptance within any of these communities appears to depend upon the personality of the individual, what they expect from the community, and their willingness to make a commitment to it and to the social norms.

What is important is that most of the tourists and residents interviewed perceive that these communities exist. Furthermore, many believe that others share this belief and that there exists shared values of respect for others property and families within park environments. These beliefs persist even though there is awareness and an acceptance of some disadvantaged groups within caravan parks. Such beliefs and expectations can encourage people to lead a more trusting and casual way of life while on holiday, which means that many rarely lock up or secure their property and, therefore, can be easy targets for thieves. The extent to which this impacts upon the experience of crime on parks will be examined in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 6: Crime and prevention on caravan parks

6.1 Introduction

The experiences of tourists, park residents and managers concerning crime and anti-social behaviour on caravan parks are described within this chapter. The reasons why victims do not report crime to police is also explored. To seek a deeper or 'thicker' description of crime on caravan parks, the observations of police and security guards on the nature and extent of victimisation and security precautions on parks in their district is presented.

6.2 Victimization

The nature and extent of victimisation amongst participants was ascertained by asking park managers, residents and tourists if they had even been a victim of crime. Victims were asked if the incident was reported to police and to describe the experience. The impact of the experience upon victims was also explored.

6.2.1 The tourists

It was not expected that tourists would necessarily report on crime on the park they were staying on – unless an incident had only just occurred. However, it was expected that they would discuss their experiences in other parks, which would provide an insight into the general perceptions of crime and safety within caravan parks in Australia. Of the 40 tourists interviewed, only nine (23%) reported experiencing some type of crime on a caravan park in their lifetime. All reported they had only been victimised on one occasion. Of these, only three reported that a crime had occurred in the past two years.

There was one account of break-and-enter. A woman, who was holidaying with her extended family, reported that her daughter's family had been a victim of a break-and-enter on a park two years ago. Her family had been asleep in the van when thieves broke into the annex and stole an esky full of alcohol and four surfboards. The park was on a beach and was unfenced. The police were called but she believed that there was little they could do. When asked if the experience had changed her attitude to staying on parks, she responded that the family was still on caravan holidays but she would definitely not return to the park where the offence had occurred. She was particularly annoyed that the park manager had not pre-warned them about previous incidences of theft on the park. Had they been warned, they would have taken more care. She described the experience as "disappointing".

Most of the offences reported were petty theft. The types of items reported stolen included clothing from clotheslines or washing machines, alcohol and food from eskies, bicycles, surf-boards, wetsuits, fishing rods and other sporting equipment, mobile phones, laptop computers, wallets and handbags, generators, tools, barbecues and gas bottles. One British couple, who were backpacking around Australia, were annoyed by the theft of food from a camp kitchen refrigerator. The offence was not reported to police because of its trivial nature but the loss still amounted to \$100.

One continued:

I think they've walked in the kitchen and gone: 'Oh, yeah, I'll have that,' and taken it. And nobody's ever going to know who it is. It's just an annoyance. We had meat pies in fridge – someone ate half a meat pie and put the other half back in fridge.

They were convinced the culprit was another backpacker. They reported that they would definitely not go back to that park. They suggested that key-cards should be issued for refrigerators on parks.

It was interesting to note that the majority of tourists who had been victims of theft remained unconcerned about crime while on holiday. Some were happy to go back to the park where the offence occurred. One couple described their experience.

We've been right round Australia. I had clothes stolen off the line in one place. All my underwear. Expensive they were – gorgeous. I'd done all my washing, and I'm going along the line, thinking: 'Oh, there's nothing here.' The whole lot was gone.

The clothesline was around the corner of the building from where we were parked, so we couldn't see the clothesline. We always did bring the clothes in at night. This was in the day. We never leave them out at night anywhere.

They chose not to report the incident to police as they were moving on and believed little could be done to retrieve the clothing. Yet their experience demonstrated how bad news can travel via the "tourist grapevine".

We reported it to the caravan manager, and they had an idea who it was, but there wasn't much they could do. And three weeks later when we were in a different state, somebody came and told us this story about this lady who got all her knickers stolen in Queensland. And it was me. That's how the stories travel around caravan parks. Three weeks later! It happened in Queensland and we were in the Northern Territory.

When asked if they were affected in any way by the incident, she replied:

Oh, yeah. I'm careful now. I had to go out and buy all new underwear, which was pretty expensive. So we're always careful, and as soon as we think it's dry, we go and get it. But it was in the day!

And has the experience changed your attitude of staying in parks?

No, not really. We've stayed in so many parks. Apart from the shock of it really, we guess we were just unlucky.

And would stay in that park again?

Well, we did actually. We still went back ... Because it was a nice park, closer to town centre, all the sort of things you look for when you're travelling. You always try and look for proximity to the town centre. That's why we always come here. Of all the caravan parks that there are here – there are quite a few, and there are a lot fancier and flashier ones – this one, because you can walk into town, it's ideal. I mean, the showers and toilets are my main thing. And they are very clean, they're nice. If they weren't, then I wouldn't stay here, because that's the first thing I look at.

Another couple who similarly had clothing stolen from the line, also reported they returned to the park.

Yes, because it was really great for the kids, and we just kind of took extra care. And you don't know who took it – you don't know if it was a local or somebody in the park. We've been back several years in a row.

Another woman had clothing stolen from a washing machine.

You had to have a key to get into the laundry area – it was locked. I had put my washing in, and then gone away and left it. Anybody who was in there was doing their washing, so I thought it was going to be fine. When I went to get my washing out, it had all been rifled through, and a couple of tops were gone – country and western tops they were. It most likely was a backpacker passing through. They haven't got a lot of gear, and they'll often pinch towels off the line and pillow cases apparently too, because they're things they use in their tents.

One tourist noted that petty thefts from parks regularly occurred when tourists souvenired park property.

Park managers will tell you about things being pinched, like sink plugs and toilet rolls. It's shocking. And it will be the people in the flashiest caravans that will skite about their collection of plugs that they've got from various caravan parks, or rolls of toilet paper, or how many rolls of toilet paper they've got under the caravan.

Overall, tourists' responses to these questions and their overall attitude clearly demonstrated very little concern about crime. Even victims of crime did not describe crime as serious. Only one victim described crime as *somewhat serious*. As one tourist stated: *We wouldn't be doing this if it wasn't safe and the industry would not be as big as it is.* While this is true, it is impossible to ascertain how many tourists have given up caravan or camping holidays because they have been victims of crime.

6.2.2 The residents

When asked if they had ever been a victim of crime, several of the permanent residents noted that they didn't have much to steal. Nevertheless, 7 (32%) reported one incident of victimisation. Three of the permanent residents had been victims of a break-and-enter.

One lady, who had been living on a park for 15 years, had been a victim of a break-and-enter in the third year of her life on the park. While she was away on holiday, thieves entered her cabin by breaking a window and took a stereo and tape-recorder valued at \$500. She described the incident as just bad luck and that there was nothing she could do to prevent it. Her cabin is in the far corner of the park, farthest from the manager's office. The incident was reported to police and she was satisfied with the response but not with the court decision. The offender received a \$500 fine with a month to pay, which she believed was insufficient.

Her neighbours, who had been living on the park for 20 years, had also experienced one break-in five years ago. Some handicrafts were stolen from their annex and some bathroom products. The incident was not reported to police because the couple did not believe it to be serious enough, but they are now more careful about bringing anything of value inside the cabin at night.

On a coastal park, another woman described a break-and-enter to her onsite caravan and annex.

About 12 months ago we had a lot of stuff on top of the van. One night some boys had obviously been watching the place all day and that night just after I had gone to bed – I noticed a window was open and I sensed something was going on. My husband had left cigarettes and a mobile phone on the outside table and the thieves took them and then they got up on a stool and took some fishing rods and gear from the roof of the van. They had already been up to another places and pinched their fishing gear. We found a couple of things out the back including some bikes. It was well planned. But they got caught out because they used the mobile phone. They were only about 16. We rang the police straight away and they came straight out. We claimed \$600 insurance.

When asked if she was affected by the event at the time she responded that she felt uncomfortable that people were watching her. She reported that they were now more careful and had purchased a lockup garden shed so that they can lock things away.

On another park, a couple whose cabin was situated close to a main highway reported experiencing repeated petty theft.

We have had a couple of things pinched off the veranda. We had two chairs, and one disappeared overnight. Anything what you leave around is liable to walk. So we started tying things to the veranda. A bit of string – you can just see the string hanging there – so at nighttime I'm a pretty light sleeper, you can hear somebody. They take everything. Ashtrays, things like that. One of them we got from a friend. We've had it for ten–fifteen years. I put another one out, and that went. An ashtray, of all things!

6.2.3 The park managers

Crime on parks from the perspective of managers varied from those managers who were understandably a little defensive about such questions through to those who were very open and honest. Figure 6.1 displays the proportions and types of offences that have occurred on parks within the sample.

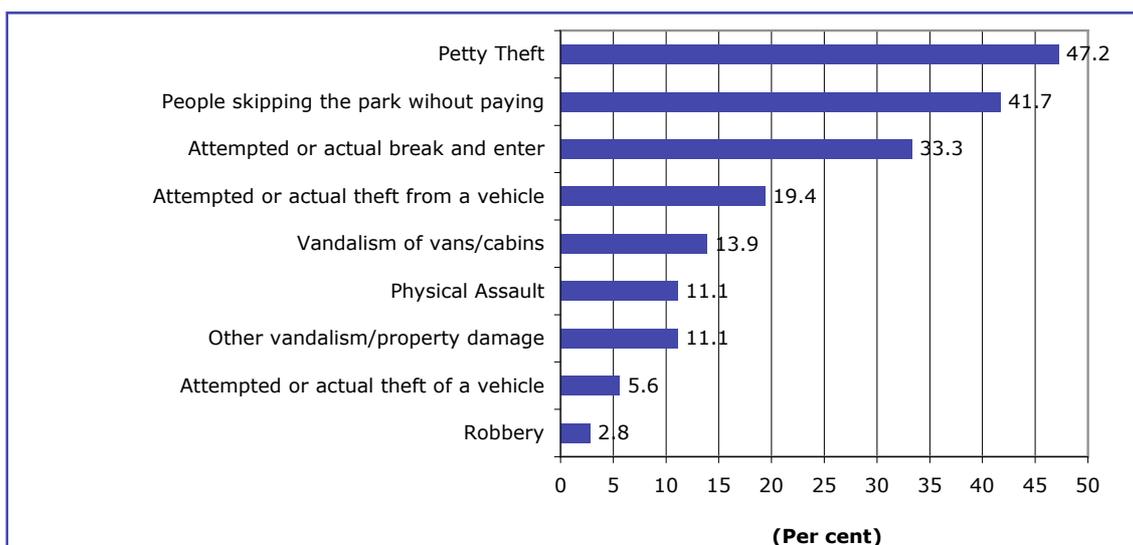


Figure 6.1: Reported crimes on caravan parks by managers.

Petty theft, people defaulting on rent and break-and-enter offences were the most common types of offences reported. The majority of the managers (92%) described crime on their parks as “not serious”. However, nine (25%) reported ongoing problems with property crimes on their parks. The remainder reported isolated incidents in their time on the park or no problems at all. Only three of

those victimised described crime as *somewhat serious* while one considered crime to be a serious problem.

Trespassing on the park by groups of children or teenagers proved to be the most common complaint by managers, particularly on parks located within the centre of a town. Often, these groups were seen as responsible for petty thefts and vandalism on the park. As one manager commented:

It's mainly at Christmas time. The kids walking up the cycle-way, they come in and if you leave your esky out with a beer, they'll knock it off. It's the local kids, not the tourists.

The manager of a five-star tourist resort was exasperated by this persistent problem.

We lose fishing gear, eskies, bikes and designer clothes. We get quite a few bikes stolen if they are not padlocked. When I patrol, if I see bikes left out, I knock and ask if people have a padlock. If they forget one night, the bikes are gone.

One night last year, our security camera footage shows the security finishing at 1am and kids coming in wearing jackets with hoods or hats, walking past the cameras with their heads down – they know where it is. The next thing you see them walking out with fishing rods and eskies and you see them sitting down on the front lawn drinking probably the alcohol. About 2am you see them go back in while the security patrol came around and afterwards the kids came out riding some bikes. What can you do? Even when we have the static patrols on, he can be on the other side of the park.

In a coastal park, the manager believed many of these gangs are quite organised.

One of the major things that we battle with is the people who lock up their house for fifty weeks of the year, like it's a fortress, and they come here and think that they can leave their surfboards, wetsuits out. And if there's one thing the local kids love, is getting into caravan parks and relieving people of their surfboards and wetsuits. They went wild Christmas time, and we had a difficult battle. And unfortunately sometimes it's very organised as well. There's a local gang that has special whistles and balls. And they're very well attuned to avoiding our security guards.

Some managers observed that these problems waxed and waned over time as offenders either matured and changed their ways or were dealt with by the criminal justice system. One manager was concerned that the patterns persisted.

I'm now watching a little kid around the back here who's never caused me any grief ever, and I caught him three times in the park trying to steal, because he was hooking up with these gangs of kids over here of a night-time. So I'm seeing it happen all over again with another generation of kids.

Break-and-enter offences were reported on a third of the parks. In most of these cases, access was gained through an open window or annex.

I've had one, where a wallet had been stolen, and a ring I think. But it was by someone in the cabin next to him. That was also by someone on the park – because they're here for a few days, and they see when people come and go. She went to the shower and her fiancé went to work same time every morning. They had locked the front door, but the back window was still open. We did have another where a laptop was stolen – they left a van window open too. Actually, even the police were puzzled as to how they got through. It was only a small window that was open and the front door was still locked.

On another park, the manager claimed:

When they start breaking into annexes, I consider that serious. Mind you, the people had left their window down about that far, there's a brand-new laptop computer in the backseat, a carton of beer just inside the annex, wallet and spare keys in the glove box of the car. I had an idea who it was and finally on Sunday morning at three o'clock I caught him. But nothing happened to him. It was about \$7,500 worth. We got all the stuff back, the laptop computer, but they didn't get the beer or the cash out of the wallet.

Cash in wallets was a common objective for motivated break-and-enter offenders. On another park the manager reported:

Well generally we've never really had a problem with it. We did about six months ago. Someone did actually go into two vans and get someone's wallet off the table, and both times these tourists had just gone over to the toilets and back. But we think it was someone that just came in off the street; you know, the opportunity, and that type of thing. But there was probably a couple of them keeping an eye on vans, and waiting for someone to go to the 'loo. I mean, there was a lot of other things in the vans that they could have taken, but they didn't touch them. So, yeah, it was just a quick grab and out type of thing.

In one rural town with high rate of crime in the community, proactive solutions for crime prevention by park manager including the installation of strong security lighting, static guards and verbal and written warnings for guests had addressed a spate of break-and-enter crimes.

We haven't had any problem for nearly two years now. About two or three years ago we had a really big problem, where there was groups of kids coming in at all hours of the night, and getting into cars, breaking into vans. Not so much the cabins, but the caravans.

Petty theft was reported on many parks. In such cases, residents/tourists were often victimised, but so were park owners, paralleling the findings from research on hoteliers (Gill et al; Jones and Mawby).

We get more stuff stolen by our tourists than we ever do from the kids in the town. It's incredible. A couple of weeks ago we had a crowd over here. When they left, they took five towels and two blankets. Pillows go, or they'll take a good pillow and leave an old one. One lady, she rang me up the other night because she left her slacks behind. I said, 'Yes, I'll do a swap with you – you bring my towels back.'

She continued:

Shade-cloth is also taken. They'd cut it in half and taken half of the shade-cloth. It'd only been there a week. Must have wanted it to put over the front of their caravan so they didn't get all the bugs all over it. They're the sort of things that go. There's not a thing you can do about it – not a thing. Your insurance doesn't cover it, because you've invited them into your cabins. Besides which, by the time you've got your excess and everything, it's not worth it. You just wear it.

Some days you might lose several hundred dollars' worth – depending on what goes on. It might be blankets out of one cabin, pillows out of another, covers and stuff like that. Funnily, the last one that they took the cover home with, they posted it back to me, with apologies. And occasionally you will get people ring me up and say, 'Sorry, but we took something by accident.' It was a tea towel they sent it back.

Thefts of cash from laundries or games rooms were also reported as minor problems.

Occasionally – it doesn't happen here very often – but occasionally like the other night, some local kids broke into the cash machine in the laundry. It's only the second time in twenty-one years that's happened. They managed to get the lock off the lid. I think they must have got three dollars, if they were lucky, and they did about three hundred dollars' worth of damage. But it only happens in school holidays or something like that, with the ones that are not supervised properly by their parents. We've got a bit of a problem, but nowhere as bad as a lot of other places. I think because we're a little bit out of town, we only sort of cop it occasionally.

People skipping the park without paying was the second most common type of crime experienced. All managers sought to address this problem by ensuring people paid in advance. However, problems occurred when temporary residents and sometimes tourists, asked to extend their stay with the assurance they would pay and then left in the early hours of the morning. Some parks sought a bond for permanent or temporary residents. One explained: *We make people pay prior, and, we take a bond. This ensures most people come in, get their money back.* Another manager reported:

Some people don't want to pay for all people in the car. Some lay on the floor. Doesn't matter whether they are staying in tents or chalets. Young ones are the worst. We had one lot who took one cabin for five people. The next morning we found cars everywhere and there were eight of them there. They were sleeping with no bedding – nothing.

Managers also reported people who enter the park late at night without paying and access the power or alternatively, park on the outskirts of the park and throw an electrical cable over the fence. Some try to use the showers or other amenities without paying. One manager reported that the park 'neighbourhood watch' will alert them to the problem, even if it is the middle of the night. She will stand at the door of the shower and demand \$10 before the offenders can leave. Another annoying problem was unauthorised use of park toilets by people off the street. As one manager explained:

In one way, it's nice that we don't have to have a fence. But in a lot of ways, it lets a lot of people in that shouldn't be in. And also it's open to people using the amenities and laundry and stuff like that. Well with not having security on the amenities, we do have a lot of things get broken, and really disgusting things in the toilets and showers.

There were other reports of vandalism of park amenity blocks, usually at the hands of children staying on the park. Some damage to onsite vans were also noted. Two managers reported occasions where the damage was irreparable.

We have lost two caravans and one cabin, which have been totally trashed, and we had to repair them ourselves because the insurance company won't touch us because it's bad management. This is wrong because it's malicious damage but the insurance claim that malicious damage has to be done over a short period and this is done over three or four months. But if people pay the rent, you can't go in and inspect everyday. And then you open up the door after they have gone...

As noted above, sometimes those seeking crisis housing were responsible for these offences. When asked if one of these incidents were reported to police, the manager responded:

There wasn't really a lot of reason. She's got no money, she's never going to pay. If you took her to court, you're just wasting good money after bad.

Yet, one manager who regularly provided crisis housing, refused to take students because of previous negative experiences.

She explained:

One group I won't have here if I can possibly get away with it, if I know they're coming. When seasonal work used to be on, I had the university kids and the sixth-formers – uh-uh, never again! They are despicable! They really are. They drink, do damage, clear off without paying.

Managers were asked about the impact of crime on their park business. Managers generally were very aware of the fact that bad news travels fast within the tourist population, which can have a detrimental effect upon their business.

Oh, it had a pretty major effect. We still had people coming, but the thing was, particularly caravanners, everyone talks. It's not just the caravan park but also the town that gets that stigma about it: 'Oh, don't go and stay there, you know. This is going to happen, you know.' So, yeah, there was a fair bit of that sort of happening.

One manager was angry with local media for sensationalising an incident of theft of a handbag on another park in her town.

These people were asleep in the back of their car, with their handbag on the front seat. If you stick a handbag in front of anybody, it's tempting. And these people went to the paper and turned it into a real issue. If she had all that stuff in her handbag, well she deserved to lose it. As far as we were concerned it's not major – nobody was hurt, it wasn't break-and-enter. But the paper was our worst enemy. They flashed it over the front page for three days. They could have cost this town's tourist industry. It was really unnecessary. There's bigger news than that.

6.2.4 Anti-social behaviour

Park managers were then asked to rate a list of eleven anti-social behaviours according to the degree to which each was either a major or a minor problem on their parks. Figure 6.2 displays the managers' responses.

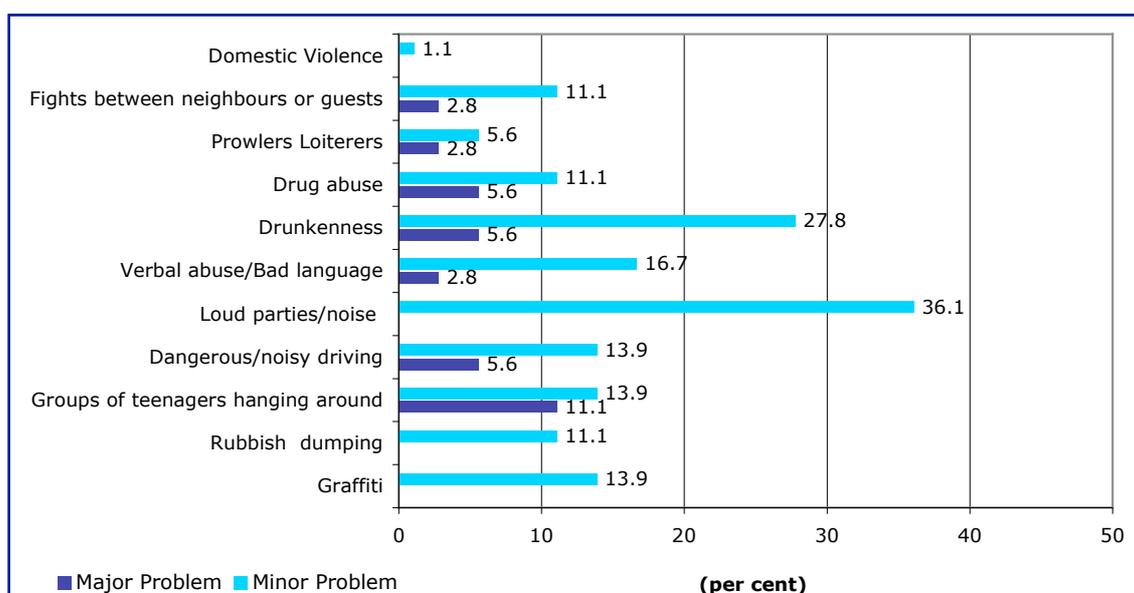


Figure 6.2: Reported anti-social behaviours on caravan parks.

Groups of teenagers hanging around was cited as a major problem. As noted above, these groups are seen as responsible for theft and vandalism on parks. People driving too fast in the park was another frequent complaint. Most parks have an eight or ten kilometre speed limit to contain the speed of traffic. Speed humps are a common feature to emphasise this requirement. Yet several

managers remained concerned about the threat of children being hit by a car. One manager commented:

I'm really amazed that we haven't had a car accident – just the way people zoom in and out of the park, because we don't have boom gates, and people just don't care. Like, with the amount of kids running around and screaming down on their bikes here, and the cars just zoom around. You can tell them, and some of them will listen, and some just do what they want. Because we don't have boom gates, a lot of people are not even staying in the park anyway. And you can't do anything about them, unless you just stand there and stop everyone that comes in and out. So boom gates would be a help.

Unsupervised children within high traffic areas was another concern. One manager reported:

Our major problem is children on bikes without helmets, wandering around of night time with no parental supervision because mum and dad are over the road having a beer with somebody. So I put up a sign to say: 'No bikes, scooters, skateboards, whatever, allowed up the front, because this is an entrance.' But it does not stop them. The other day, I watched a young boy drag one of those big scooters with the four wheels, up to the front up here. And I said, 'Oi! Back! You know you're not permitted up here!' But he went around that corner, at a fast pace, with no breaks, and a car came – just missed him. We had another kid about twelve–thirteen. A lady, just cruising along, very slowly, minding her own business, collected him – buckled his wheels. He was fine. But within half an hour of it happening, he then was back.

Parents in places like this – they just want to do their own thing. They send their children off to play with the neighbour's kids, and half the time they wouldn't know where they were. They want to relax and have a holiday. And we're not babysitters for anybody, and that's what you feel like – you feel like they sort of expect it but I can't watch them twenty-four hours a day.

A solution to this problem on one park was a “park road licence” for all children with bicycles. Using a system of rewards and restrictions if there was an infringement of road rules such as not wearing a helmet, had reduced concern about safety and children on park roads.

Loud parties and noise, and bad language were the most frequently reported minor problem on caravan parks but managers were effective in addressing these issues. One stated:

We'll have that occasionally, but we normally stamp on it straight away. We don't tolerate any of that sort of thing at all. The 10pm curfew is virtually law anyway. Even with air-conditioners now. If someone complains about your air-conditioner, you are obliged now under The Act to have it shut off by ten o'clock at night. It's already in, in this shire anyway.

Another manager described the problems coping with intoxicated people.

When I do confront a problem, I've worked out there's no going softly. People are trying to sleep. Once they've had a few drinks, it's very hard to handle. So I go in with my guns blazing. There's no nicety about it. I read them the riot act straight away, so they know. And if I'm back in half an hour and they're still going, the police will be called. I've tried the nice way – it doesn't work when someone's drunk, especially women. You cannot get through. It ruffles them up, but at the same time it jolts them. And I found I get more results – quicker results – doing it like that, rather than pandering around.

He continued:

I let a soccer team slip under my guard. They got very cunning – they booked in singly –and all of a sudden they all got here. At one o'clock they were going hammer-and-tong. And there's about eight guys, and there's me. And I just went straight in – bang – and I said: 'Look guys, if I come back here in five minutes and you're still going,' I said: 'The police will be here.' And I said: 'If I have to haul you off one by one, that's what's going to happen.' Because you've got a duty-of-care to them, you just can't put them in their car and send them on their way. So I said: 'I can't let you drive. The police can certainly sort you out,' and within five minutes they had gone to bed. So there's ways of handling it. This business is basically old people because we're so close to town and they can walk everywhere. So you protect them with your life. They're your heart and soul of your business. I would sooner have five thousand old people than two kids. It's so much easier to handle.

Alcohol and drug abuse generally was also regarded as a common but minor problem on parks. One manager remarked:

It's a combination of both, which is a deadly cocktail anyway. We have it for weeks and then all of a sudden it will disappear, but it's always there. It goes underground for a little while. And you will find it changes, when your people change. As the semi-permanents or whatever come and go, that sort of thing changes. But it's not an overly big problem [here].

Managers were also asked about fights between neighbours or domestic violence. One reported he had learnt ways to manage such problems.

I've had a bloke bashing his wife up a couple of times. I've had a woman who actually bashed her husband up. She was the drunk and he was the sober one. So I had to separate them. So you learn how to handle that. You've got to separate them straight away, you get them apart and if there's children involved, you get someone to get them out of it. At two or three o'clock in the morning, the last thing the police want you to do is bring them into a domestic. You've sort of got to wait until one of them go to sleep. You get pretty heavy-handed and say: 'Look, if I hear any more trouble from you, they're be trouble, and I'll bring the police in,' and he won't want that. I've never had to get the police yet. They've all settled down, and they've all gone first thing in the morning.

Another manager preferred to let the police handle such matters.

We've had one domestic violence thing. We just hand it straight over to the police. We just ring the police and tell them to come and sort it out, just like you would if it was domestic violence in the street. If somebody was beating his wife up in the street, if you live in suburbia, you ring the police. I just don't get involved. It's really a civil thing to sort it out, and the police can sort it out.

A major concern raised was the threat of child abuse. One couple revealed that one of their permanent residents had been accused of molesting a child. They were alerted to the problem when the man approached two children on the park. They reported the incident to local police and sought information on whether the person was a known paedophile but received little support. They explained:

I asked the police: 'Is this person a paedophile?' And he said: 'I can't answer that.' And I said: 'Well I believe there's a duty-of-care there where you should answer that because I've got children in this park, and I need to know how careful I have to be.' They would not give me one bit of information. That really made me cranky. I pleaded with them – we both did. We said, 'Please, just tell us. We don't want to do the man an injustice. If he's not a paedophile we don't want to be looking at him like he is, and keeping people away.'

However, their fears were realised when later the man was charged with an offence. The manager continued:

People think they're in a safe haven here and they let their kids run around. I have to say to them all now: 'Watch your children. Don't let them go to the toilets on their own.'

When asked if they informed all tourists entering the park, they replied:

If we said it to everyone, you'd never have anyone come here. It's a bad situation in that he's still here. Hopefully he'll be gone after court next week. We wouldn't be the only park in Australia with a paedophile. I'll guarantee every caravan park up and down this coast has got a paedophile in it. There's thirty-five paedophiles I think registered in this town, I was told.

Asked why they did not evict him, they replied:

Because he hasn't been processed yet through the courts, we have to keep him in the park – we're not allowed to just chuck him out. When we got here he was already here. You have to have three warnings and a system in place. He's got no money. He's got nowhere to go. If we went to the tribunal, we'd be in trouble. Most of the people in the park avoid him. He's got some pretty bad deformities. He can hardly walk. He does nothing really. It's a sad situation. You really don't know how to handle those situations. You just sort of live with it.

Clearly there is a need for clear management guidelines for all managers concerning this situation as well as other potentially serious crimes on parks.

6.2.5 Schoolies

Park managers in coastal holiday regions were also asked if they experienced any increase in crime or anti-social behaviour in *Schoolies Week*. Following high school graduation in Australia, school students observe a traditional weeklong celebration holiday at holiday destinations around Australia, known as "Schoolies" or "Leavers" Week in Western Australia. However, large groups of celebrating teenagers can lead to problems (Homel et al 1997). Often, older youths (commonly known as Toolies) will seek to join the celebrations and they can be the primary source of trouble. Local community organisations therefore plan special events and activities to ensure school-leavers celebrations are as safe as possible. As caravan park accommodation is often utilised by these groups, park managers in coastal holiday regions were asked about their experiences with Schoolies.

Several managers reported that they refused to take Schoolies based upon past negative experiences. One manager would not take any new bookings for the Schoolies break to remove any possibility of problems, although he noted that the park was indirectly affected by Schoolies because of their presence on neighbouring parks. He added that he still took some groups of school leavers prior and after the defined Schoolies Week. He explained:

Kids can come before Schoolies, and come after Schoolies, but not during Schoolies. That's the way I see it – the ones that want to come during that week are the ratbags. The ones that want to come just to enjoy their own friends come before and come after.

Another manager reported:

We had Schoolies here a few years ago in the chalets and they wrecked them. Schoolies are good money but we don't have them any more. This mother rang and requested a cabin for five people and five 16-year-old girls turned up. There were problems with loud parties and noise and abuse. On four occasions we threw out these older men. Its not only the kids, it's the parents too. They dump the kids and provide them with alcohol. They caused us so much grief when we kicked the kids out – they were going to sue us.

Similarly, another manager stated:

We won't take them. We have had 300 requests this year. We get ten or twelve calls a day. If people try to book for the week of Schoolies, we ask if they are Schoolies. If they will say no, we tell them that we require one night's deposit and if Schoolies show up, they won't get the deposit back and won't be admitted to the park. The mothers try to get them in.

In the midst of this interview, one mother rang up and tried to organise a cabin for three adults. After some discussion, she admitted it was for Schoolies and her request for accommodation was denied.

On another park, although the manager refused to accommodate Schoolies, he found several entered the park when the owners of stored vans allowed them to use the site.

No we don't take Schoolies, but sometimes we do get them because of vans in storage on the park, and they'll let their friends use them. We haven't got a say about who can use them. So we don't really take them unless we know them personally. And they come with strict supervision orders. 'One complaint and you're out.' There's one warning as they're going in the door, there's a second warning when they're leaving and out the door.

However, other managers worked closely with community groups organising events and acknowledged the financial benefits from hosting Schoolies.

We watch Schoolies very, very closely. We have a few policies in place. I guess one of the key ones is that if they want to come in, they have to pay premium price for it. The first time with Schoolies we were a bit green, and they were taking six kids into a cabin without a toilet. And we had more problems with them than the ones who paid more money, to the point where they actually complained that they felt they were under the thumb. But we now have the one warning system. We stay on top of it, and we allocate how many we want here. If you opened the park to them, I doubt if you could control them. We section off an area to keep them away from the other paying customers. So they've got their own area, and essentially a revised set of rules for them, and we keep a close eye on them. It's not really a problem.

On the other coastline, similar policies were in place.

They all get a wristband. I patrol or security guards walk around and if they don't have a wristband on they are asked to leave. I threaten the group that if they play up they will all have to go. When they pay their money, rules and regulations are sent out prior to their arrival. The parents sign a consent that they know they are coming here and if I have to call them at 3 o'clock in the morning they will come and get them. This all goes through the [local community group], which is trying to get standard rules and regulations across the district.

These comments indicate that if properly managed, groups of teenagers can be accommodated on caravan parks. There are clear financial benefits for parks in hosting these groups. Several managers noted that static guards have proven to be the most effective means of maintaining control.

6.3 Reporting crime

As noted in Chapter 2, previous studies have found that tourists do not always report crimes to police. Jobes *et al* (2001), found police and local residents in a major tourist area were concerned that there was much under-reporting of crimes amongst the tourists. Even offences as serious as sexual assault were under-reported by international tourists as incidents were likely to occur the night before the victim or offender was leaving. Reporting such crimes would mean remaining within the community to see through the process of law.

Of those who reported they had been victims of crime, only three (33%) of the tourists and three (43%) of the residents had reported the incident to police. All break and enter crimes were reported. The main reason given for not reporting crimes was that the incident of petty theft was not serious enough.

To examine this issue further, all tourists and park residents were asked if there was anything that would stop them reporting an incident to police. Figure 6.3 displays the range and proportion of respondents' reasons for not reporting a crime to police.

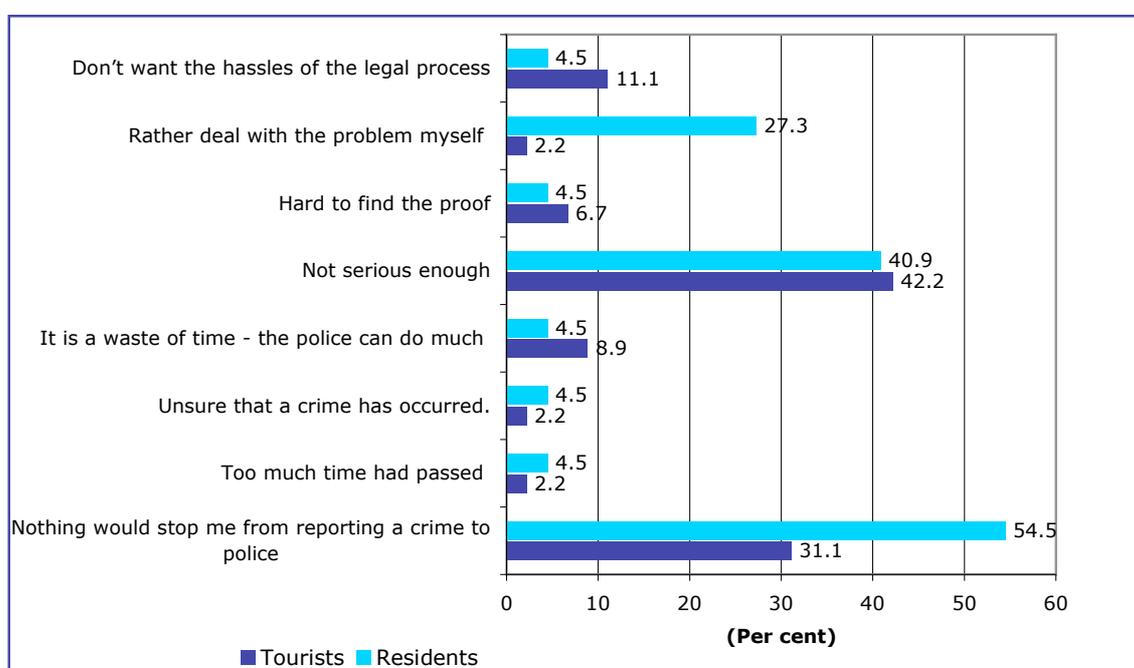


Figure 6.3: Reasons for not reporting crimes on caravan parks.

All of the participants said they would report to the park manager first and then the police if it was a police matter. The police would be called directly if the incident was serious and the manager was unavailable. Yet one permanent resident believed contacting the police was the responsibility of management.

You'd tell the manager first, if the manager was here, because it's his responsibility for what's happening. It's up to him then if he wants to call the police.

Meanwhile, one of the managers believed reporting was the individual's responsibility. She stated:

If they want to, they can follow through. I give them the option: 'Do you want to ring the police?' and mostly they say: 'No, not worried about it.'

Another manager maintained it was important to report all incidences to maintain sufficient police numbers in an area.

I tell everybody: 'You should report it. Because if you don't report it then we've got no crime and then we don't get the police that are required.

It was interesting to note that 33% of the tourists and 55% of residents said there was nothing that would stop them reporting something to police. As Jobs et al (2000) found, tourists on tight travel schedules may prefer not to report incidences to police. However, there also appears to be a certain acceptance amongst the tourists of a degree of deviant behaviour within the public domain of caravan parks. As one commented: *This is the risk of staying in caravan parks. There is no fenced back yard like at home. Everyone has access to clothes hanging on the line.* For permanent residents, the park is their home. Any infringement is a violation of their personal space and they have more interest in reporting it to police.

The main reason for not reporting a crime was that an incident was not serious enough. As one tourist explained:

If somebody stole the kettle, I wouldn't bother reporting. If I rang the police up, they would say, 'What's gone missing?' 'An old kettle.' 'Have you got a tent, have you? Well, what do you expect?' I think that's the whole tent-caravan thing – how do you lock up a tent? You can't.

However, several noted they would still report the incident to the manager, especially if the problem would affect others on the park. An international tourist commented:

All depends on the seriousness of the crime. If it was just a very minor thing, which really wouldn't harm me, if you reported it, that you would have to go through a lot of red-tape, and show up in court or whatever, which would take time away from us and so on. But on the other hand, justice has to be fulfilled.

Managers observed that tourists on a tight schedule may not report. However, some tourists still report an incident to police while travelling.

If they're an overnight traveller, and they're heading off the next day, if something did happen to them generally what they'd do is they ring the police on their way. I've noticed a couple of times that's happened. But they haven't sort of hung around here to let us know, or given us a description or anything. They're just pretty keen to get away.

Some of the permanent residents (28%) said they would rather deal with the issue themselves. One of the permanent residents continued:

Gary had something stolen, see, and the police come out. He told the police who he thought. They said: 'Oh, we can't do nothing. We've got to catch him with it.' What's the use of ringing them?

6.4 Perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour on parks

To seek a further understanding of the extent and nature of crime and anti-social behaviour on parks, tourists and park residents were asked to rate a list of eleven anti-social behaviours and ten crimes according to the degree each was a problem. Response categories for the crime ratings were: *Big problem, some problem, not a problem or don't know.* Figure 6.4 presents their opinions on the incidence of anti-social behaviour.

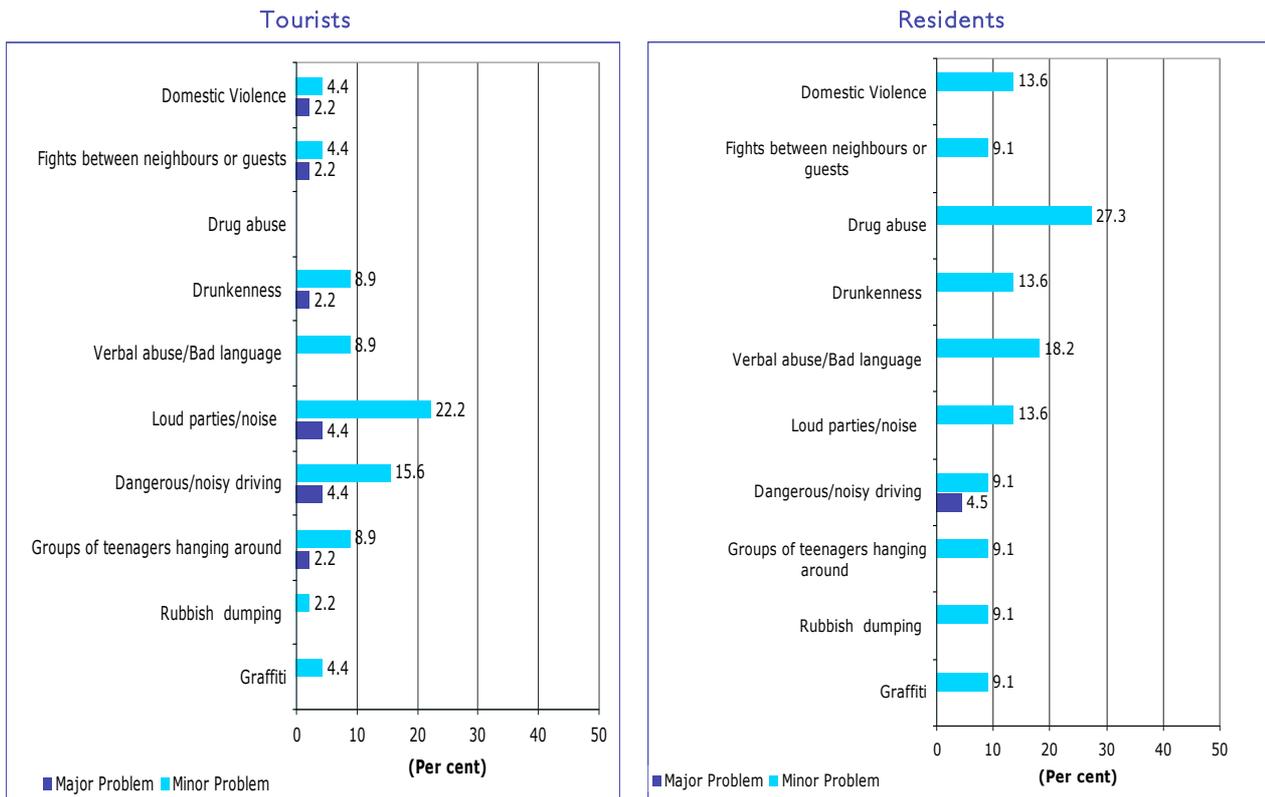


Figure 6.4: Tourists and Residents ratings of anti-social problems on parks.

Permanent residents were more likely to site drug abuse as *some problem* than were tourists. One resident claimed people accept such behaviour as a fact of life.

There's a bit of that in all caravan parks. That's the way things go, and you just accept it. Well, there's no sense in complaining about it. Most people keep it to themselves, and as long as they keep it in their own place that's fine, you know, nobody bothers. But it's when it starts to get out of hand or you start to get quarrels between people, which sometimes does happen.

Loud parties and noise was the main concern for tourists. One stated: *You don't go where the backpackers are. You stay clear of those parks.*

Another tourist appeared to accept parties as a part of life on a caravan park.

There's rules and regulations that tell you if there are some people are noisy, you just report it to the manager and he'll talk to them the next day. But I've never reported anybody. It's usually just one night and they're gone the next.

Fights and domestic violence was noted, but most people remarked that managers were effective in managing such problems. One resident observed that offenders received a warning, but if the problem persisted, they would be moved to the front of the park adjacent to the office. Any further problems would result in their eviction. Another resident noted:

There have been a few occasions of squabbles between people in the park, but management are been fairly quick in sorting it out. And they quickly weed out the people who are a problem. It's a minor problem overall, when you consider it's probably happened about five or six occasions over a period of a year – six or seven at most. There hasn't been much.

Tourists and residents alike were concerned with dangerous and noisy driving on the park. One seasonal worker who has stayed in caravan parks for most of his working life stated:

We've been to a few parks where they drive fast inside the park. If you get an old person walking there, or a child – and they'll run out from anywhere ... When they drive in, they should be able to read a sign: 'Shared zone.' That means they've got to share the road with a walker, with the kids and everyone. In other words, they go slow.

A mother of three small children had to maintain a constant watch over her children playing outside their onsite van. She commented:

There's not much traffic through here, but you just never know. Even if there was just a little fenced-in park area that could be seen by most caravans or cabins, it would make a holiday a little bit more peaceful. I know now that I wouldn't go for a holiday in a place that wasn't fenced because I wouldn't enjoy it.

Vandalism, graffiti or rubbish dumping were noted but not considered to be a major concern. One permanent resident commented that residents would not tolerate such behaviours on their park as they had to use the facilities. If caught in the act, offenders would be stopped. He added: *We would defend our ground because we have to live here.*

Other complaints included hawkers on parks. One tourist did not believe managers should allow such people on a park, as it was annoying to be approached while trying to relax and enjoy a holiday.

Overall, residents were aware of and reported more problems with anti-social behaviour on parks than tourists. Residents would have more local knowledge of parks that tourists would not be privy to. This is also evidence of the ability permanent residents' to be the eyes and ears of park environments.

As for crime, both tourists and residents viewed petty theft as a major problem. (See Figure 6.5)

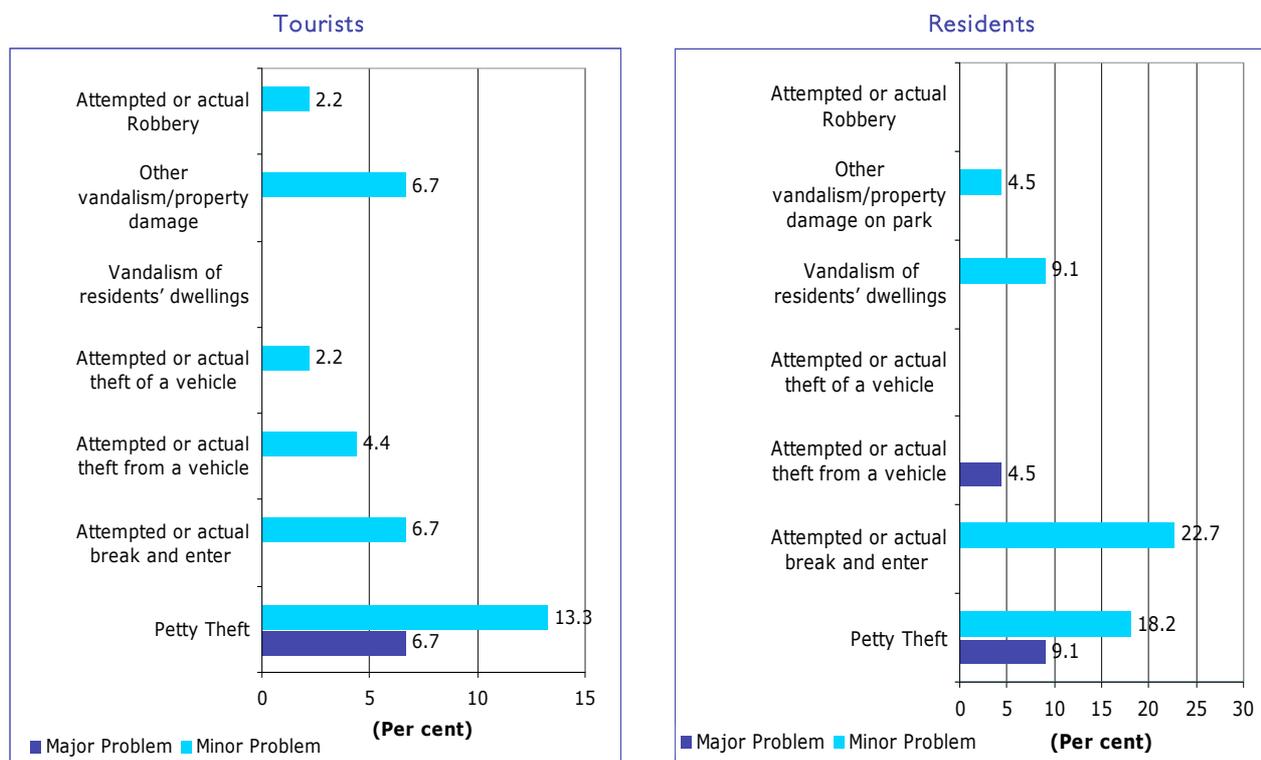


Figure 6.5: Tourists and Residents ratings of the incidents of crime on parks.

One tourist reported:

I was talking to a chap one night, both pulled into a park, and they had three fridges sitting down there beside their van where they'd left them. And they got up in the morning and they were gone.

Another illustrated the types of problems that occur.

Our friend had his front-end load-leveler pinched out from underneath his van a couple of years ago when he was travelling around. And he broke out his generator, and it got swapped! He had a big one, and when he got up in the morning he only had a small one. They'd swapped his generator over! Comparisons of these data indicate that residents and tourists were both aware of petty theft, burglary and vandalism on parks. Residents were more aware of vandalism of vans by virtue of the fact that they would have more "inside knowledge" of park events.

6.5 Conclusion

These findings have demonstrated that crime and anti-social behaviour was not a major problem for caravan parks in this study. While 23% of tourists and 32% of residents reported being a victim of crime, there were no reports of repeat victimisation amongst the mostly older aged group of victims. Furthermore, participants' attitudes towards crime and safety demonstrated a lack of concern. Most accounts were of petty theft. Offences were not reported to police because they were considered to be not serious. The degree of seriousness of a crime has been found to be the strongest indicator of reporting crime to police (Gottfredson and Hindelang 1979; Skogan 1984). There appears to be a certain level of acceptance that crime and anti-social behaviour is a part of life and the benefits and enjoyment of caravan park holidays and lifestyle far outweigh any of these 'annoyances'. However, it is impossible to assess how many tourists have given up camping holidays because of negative experiences with crime.

Many of the anti-social behaviours reported by managers were characteristic of difficulties that can be experienced with managing the public, such as drunkenness and loud parties. A quarter of the parks within the study were experiencing problems with gangs of youths and associated petty theft and vandalism. There is an expectation amongst tourists and residents that managers will strive to maintain a safe and secure environment. Some parks were more vulnerable to victimisation by virtue of their physical location and layout. Crime prevention on parks is therefore examined in the next chapter.

7.1 Introduction

Victimisation and the type and extent of guardianship on caravan parks was analysed using the concept of *place*. Routine Activities Theory was selected to guide the analyses because it suggests that the occurrence of crime within caravan parks in Australia will be associated with place-specific characteristics of the environment within the park and within the surrounding community. The Theory is particularly relevant for explaining the practical reasons why crimes occur within caravan parks, because the Theory aims to describe crime according to the everyday activities and lifestyles of those at risk of victimisation. Therefore, victimisation within the environment of caravan parks is examined according to the identified predictors of crime: suitable targets, motivated offenders and lack of effective guardianship.

The level of guardianship maintained through target hardening on parks was investigated by asking park managers about the type of security measures they employed on their parks. They were further asked if there were any additional features they would like to have on their park. Tourists and park residents were asked a series of questions to ascertain the lengths they would go to protect themselves and their property from crime victimisation.

7.2 Precautionary Behaviours

7.2.1 The managers

The most common security features on parks within the study was security lighting, regular patrols by the managers at 10pm each evening, key-card entry to amenity buildings, the screening of possible trouble makers by managers, and the vigilance of permanent residents. As one manager noted: *Most parks have permanents and they're your eyes and ears. If anything is going on, they will let you know.*

For some parks, this was the extent of the security provided. Other parks had security fencing (42%), security cameras (14%), boom gates (14%), security guards (31%) or regular police patrols (8%). On parks in outback areas where crime rates within the surrounding community were high, patrons were locked in at night to ensure their safety.

One couple had police officers regularly visit their park for annual holidays, which provided added security over the busy holiday period. Several parks displayed crime prevention signs provided by local police. On one tourist-only park, several strategically placed security cameras, provided surveillance of the park entry, children's play area and camp kitchen for management, but the surveillance was also relayed to the cabins on the park that had a television. This allowed parents to remain in their cabins or vans and watch their children playing on the park.

It is evident that one of the reasons crime is not an issue on the average park is the quality of park management, particularly their diligence in patrolling their parks, screening for and preventing potential trouble makers from entering the park, and generally going to great lengths to ensure the safety and

security of their guests. Most managers policed a 10pm curfew for noise on their park. As one explained:

We always jump on them. The curfew is ten o'clock. It has to be, because you've got other people that are getting up early in the morning, other people – some of the ones that are here, that live here – they're getting up and going to work. Others want to get up at six o'clock and travel along each day. There's no reason why they should have to put up with that sort of thing.

It became evident that at least one of the management team (more often than not, the wife) was the security guard. Although they presented as warm friendly people, they also possessed a presence that suggested that they could be quite formidable when necessary. When some managers were asked what security features they had on the park, they responded: *My wife!* One added: *She hears, sees, smells tastes everything – without being rude. Nothing gets past her. She sees things I don't.* Another believed troublemakers would often respond more readily to a rebuke from a woman than from a man. One woman reported:

I warn them about noise when they come. I say: 'If I come down and can't handle it, look out if my husband has to come down.' Some of the workers here have a few beers at the end of the week and sometimes if it's just starting to get a little bit loud, I get to the end of the camp there and they scatter. One of the workers said: 'You don't have to say anything.' You just have to walk down to the corner and the blokes say: 'Time to go to bed.' It's our park, our rules. If they don't like it, they can go.

A good watch dog is the cheapest and most effective security (Barclay et al 2002). Two managers reported the value of their watch dog that alerted them to potential trouble on the park. One of the permanent residents on this park also had a dog. A small fenced enclosure around her on site van contained the dog from straying on the park. This lady had previously been a victim of a break and enter to her van and believed that although the dog was not the best watch dog, he would alert them if a person approached the van. Dogs are aware often before their owners of the presence of strangers. Thieves will be less likely to break into a caravan or annex when they know a dog is present. Although most dogs function primarily as pets and secondarily for security (if at all), even an ordinary dog can have a deterrent effect.

When asked if there were any additional security they would like to have on the park if they had the time or money, 13 (36%) of the managers responded that they were satisfied with the level of security on their park. As one explained:

No. I just think the more you put on, it becomes uncomfortable. We don't have gates – we don't have the need to have gates, and we don't have locks on the toilets. I think when you start to do all that, you lose the park's casual atmosphere. The only problems we ever have is if you leave your washing out, or you leave a handbag in an unlocked van or an unlocked car, you're going to lose it. It doesn't happen all the time. It might happen seven or eight times a year. The problems aren't that bad that we need to have extra security.

Of the remainder, additional security required was boom gates to prevent unauthorised entry to the park (31%), more security cameras (19%) security fencing (11%) and more lighting (10%).

One park increased the amount of security lighting to address problems with break and enters on the park.

I think lighting is a major thing. Every now and then you'll get a complaint from caravaners saying they're too bright. But we just basically say to them: 'if you could just put a sheet up at your window, you could sleep better.' But to us, it's more important for people to see where they're going, and who's about.

One manager believed it was important to encourage tourists/residents to leave lights on in their van or cabin if they go out in the evenings to create signs of life. The relatively low cost of keeping a few lights on is a good investment in security.

Another manager remarked:

The only thing I've got left to do is put boom gates on. But it makes it a bit harder, because then everyone has to have a tag, or an e-tag, or they've got to have a code. But basically you've got to be on-deck all the time if they forget their number, so that makes your time not your time any more. That's the only downside of it. But at night-time it's great because then you know who's going in and out all the time.

Only four managers had local police or security firms conduct a security audit of their park. While local police are happy to conduct audits, this opportunity could be encouraged through the caravan park industry. Managers were also asked how they monitored people entering the park. Most (70%) relied upon visual monitoring from the office which is located adjacent to the main road entrance on most parks. One added that having one entrance was important for maintaining control. Another 20% had boom gates and another 22% monitored security cameras at the front entrance. One manager of an open park acknowledged that it was impossible to monitor people coming onto the park area. Two relied upon their permanent residents to let them know if there was anyone on the park that should not be.

7.2.1.1 Security notices

Only 19 (52%) of the managers provided or offered any crime prevention information to existing residents or tourists entering the park. Most parks had a warning about taking care about securing property as part of the general set of rules (See Table 7.1). As well as providing written rules, several managers also verbally warned people. One explained:

I verbally tell them. We do have signs up all over the place, in the toilets and around the amenities and the laundry and everything: 'Lock it up or lose it.' And I tell every single person that comes in here to lock up all of the time. They don't read what you give them, so I tell them.

One manager who warned every tourist that theft had been a problem was asked if she received any negative reaction. She responded:

Yes. I had a couple of people leave. And I said: 'Fine. If you haven't been locking up and you haven't been robbed, you're very lucky.' But there's no problem so long as you lock your door, you don't have any dramas. It's commonsense that you just tell people. I mean, we just travelled around Tasmania for three weeks, and were never once told to lock up. There were no signs anywhere until we got to [a town in the north], and then there were signs in the cabin saying: 'Thieves are alive and well. Please lock your door,' or something like that.

Table 7.1: Park Rules.

UNFORTUNATE RULES

**We don't like the word rules.
Regretfully there have to be a few.**

Early Birds: Not all our guests like to get up early while on holidays, so be courteous and allow them to have a sleep-in.

Quiet time: Our quiet time is from 10pm. So remember, if we call in, it's time to quieten down.

Recycling: Please place your recycling and smelly rubbish in bins at the recycling stations. They are situated at the amenity block, campers' kitchen, fish-cleaning area, near sites 59, 94 and 147.

Lawn-mowing: Tuesday is our lawn-mowing day. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause. At times this may vary due to unforeseen circumstances.

Security: Keep your valuables out of sight and ensure cars, bikes, eskies, boat and fishing gear are secure. Bikes and eskies are at a high risk of being stolen, so we do strongly recommend using bike locks and putting eskies out of sight. **Be security-conscious and look after your possessions.**

Extra cars and visitors' cars: As parking is at a premium over our busy peak seasons, it is very disturbing to surrounding guests to have extra cars parked around their site. All extra cars and visitors' cars are to be parked in the visitors' car-parking area or in the car-park on the beachfront reserve. We apologise for this, but we cannot cater for all extra cars and visitors.

Washing: Is only to be hung on the park's line. **NO CLOTHES BETWEEN SITES.**

Boats, dinghies and trailers: Are to be parked in the boat-parking area. Please remove valuables from boats and trailers. When going fishing early in the morning, please keep the noise to a minimum so as not to disturb guests. We have provided a fish-cleaning facility in the boat-parking area. Please use this facility and **wrap** all fish scraps and leave area clean.

Motorists: A strict walking-pace speed limit at all times. Keep an eye out for children walking, playing or riding around the park. Be patient and courteous as our kids are precious. **Extreme care must be taken when reversing your car or caravan.**

Cyclists: The wearing of bicycle helmets is the responsibility of parents or guardians. Walking-pace speed limit applies to bikes at all times. Small children must be supervised. Be courteous and watch where you are riding. Look out for people walking on the roads. Please **NO** riding around the **toilet blocks or footpaths. Definitely no bike riding after sunset.** Bikes WILL be confiscated in the case of **speeding or misbehaviour.**

Roller blades, skates, skateboards, scooters and electric scooters cannot be used.

Wood-fired barbecues: Wood-fired barbecues are not to be used in the resort.

Amenity block: As cleaning up mishaps is not a pleasant task for our cleaners or us, we do ask that you accompany your children to the amenity blocks.

Chemical toilets: Please **DO NOT** empty chemicals toilets at the amenity block. A dump station is located near the campers' kitchen.

Underage drinking within the park or on the front lawns will not be tolerated.

Parents and guardians: You are responsible for your children's actions and behaviour at all times. Remember that all children do need constant supervision when playing, cycling and swimming. **We are never on holidays from family duties.**

One manager in a town with high crime emphasised warnings and provided emergency contact numbers for parks residents and guests (See Table 7.2).

We hand this out to everyone that comes in – the rules and regulations. But the main thing is the security notice at the top, just to let people know that they can contact us at any time of the day or night – it doesn't matter. All they have to do is ring any one of these numbers, and we come straight up, and then have a look around to make sure that it's not someone that's actually living in the park that's wandering around. And then if it's someone that's suspicious or doing something wrong, we contact the police. But we find this is a good deterrent.

Table 7.2: Park Security.

<p style="text-align: center;">Security Notice</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Please make sure you conceal all valuables.</p> <p>We feel that our security is as good as it can be in today's conditions. However, for your protection we need your help by reporting any unusual/suspicious events/persons at any time of day or night.</p> <p>Our contact phone numbers are: -----</p>

One manager reported some tourists ask about security on the park.

If people ask me what it's like, I say: 'Ninety-nine point nine percent safe. But if you're going out for the day or night, don't leave your caravan doors open. Lock them.' I'll tell them, only if they ask. Quite a few do ask about chairs and their little tables, and their eskies and that, and I say: 'It's safe outside.'

On an inland park, the manager commented that they only alerted people when a theft occurred.

We wouldn't just say it to everybody that came in. A lot of people that come here come here all the time. I suppose if we do get an incident where something is stolen, we'd sort of go around and mention it to everybody: 'Be on the lookout.' But it happens so rarely, not people's property anyway. It would be just the park stuff, not so much the people that live here.

Another manager had no hesitation in warning people about a recent theft.

We came straight out and told people: 'Look, this is what's happened. So, you know, just keep an eye out. We didn't want to upset the tourists and make them think it's a bad place.' But I thought: 'No, everyone has a right to know, because in a little community like this is, if you leave your door unlocked and go to the toilet or whatever.' So yeah, we just had to make them aware. We put a notice on the message board and that would make whoever did it, if they're in the park, aware that we know what's happened and we're letting everyone know, so people will be watching.

Some parks had specific warnings:

We're very strict on not leaving eskies outside. And that has worked really well for us because they are not coming in to steal things, because obviously alcohol was the main thing that they were looking for. Since that's been eliminated, our theft has just dropped right off. The first thing when people walk in that door I give them a sheet of rules, and say: 'The one thing I ask you not to do is leave an esky outside.' It might sound a bit off, but it is working really well.

On an outback park, managers were concerned about warnings regarding safety for tourists travelling in outback areas.

We do tell them for their own safety what to do, and try to advise them about where they drive, and where they don't drive. We're talking about people that think they can drive out in the desert with half a glass of water. You've got to try and get it through their heads that there's certain things you don't do. There are a whole lot of people that are very adventurous, and don't understand how dangerous it can be.

Others enforced warnings about parental responsibility.

I emphasise to the regulars here that it is a caravan park, and the management doesn't intimately know everybody that stays here. And a lot of people that come to parks just let their kids run wild. And I say: 'They're your kids, they're in a strange area, they're going to public toilets.' I said: 'It's your responsibility to keep an eye on you kids. It's not our responsibility.'

Yet managers despaired that problems still occurred even though people had been warned.

I had a lady – she asked me about security, whether we had things pinched and that. And I said, 'Well it's like all places – you have them pinched from houses.' You can go for months and months and we don't have any problem. And of course they had a boat, and they left all their gear in the boat. And they were told by myself, and my husband: 'Don't leave your gear in the boat.' You're only asking for trouble because a park up north had been totally wiped out by people leaving stuff in boats. What happened? He got his gear pinched. It's like the old saying – you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink, can you?

On some parks, the managers were adamant that it was not necessary to warn people as crime was not an issue and it would be unproductive to unnecessarily create fear and suspicion. One insisted:

Because I don't have to, I don't tell them. Everyone locks up anyway. There are so many places on the coast where it is shocking. Some of the bigger towns there have a lot of undesirables and tell everyone as they come in to please lock up. But we don't have it here so I'm not going to worry people. It was quite few years before we put a fence up but because of security lighting we used to have all our building stuff out the back and never lost a thing.

In the coastal areas, both these perspectives were heard from park managers irrespective of the problems in the area. Managers face a quandary of the necessity to encourage crime prevention practices amongst their guests versus the need not to raise alarm and provide a relaxed holiday environment. Furthermore, the tourists interviewed reported that they were deterred by parks where there are high levels of security as it suggests there are problems in the area. They particularly dislike being locked in – which appears to be a necessity in some outback places. One manager explained:

The less success that people have when they come to steal things, it deters them. It's a waste of time coming here if they're not successful, then they won't come. So if we can educate the people to lock up, and when the thieves do pass through, they will have no luck. But you don't want to over-educate to the point where people feel threatened that they won't come on this park. I checked into a park up north, and heavily-booked, it was like: 'Lock up. Lock this, lock that. Thieves are around.' And when you checked in, you got a letter from the local area commander, saying: 'Thieves have been active in the area.' And it's like: 'Do I want to be here?' Good of them to let you know, but you also feel like you're a bit under threat as well. It's a fine line.

Another agreed,

A lot of caravan parks now are completely fenced – with security gates that come across and you can't climb over. But to get to that stage, it'd be like living in a jail. You've got to try and keep your regulars happy, and keep your tourists happy, and also look at the safety angle. I say to all the people as they come in: 'Lock up all your valuables.' Half the time we hand them park rules; they don't even look at them. You've got to explain everything to them.

Apart from getting regimented which some parks do we want to maintain a casual atmosphere. We don't want to lock them up at 10.30pm – we want to keep a relaxed atmosphere. That's the payoff – if you want to high security and have no anti-social behaviour or crime you put in boom gate and have no visitors, but you then lose your carefree atmosphere.

7.2.2 Guardianship between parks

It became evident that a degree of guardianship was practiced between caravan parks within a community as well as between parks in neighbouring communities. The community of caravan parks in a town ensured information on any tourist or resident who was evicted for bad behaviour or for not paying rent was shared between park managers to ensure that the offenders were unable to find accommodation on any park in town. The community was also extended to parks in the region and details on “skippers” (tourists or residents of parks who leave without paying) were relayed to each park. If offenders tried to enter another park, the managers would insist on payment for the arrears incurred at the previous park. The managers interviewed reported that people always paid up when confronted. Park chains also provided similar “community guardianship”. One member explained.

This park is part of the Top Tourist Park Group – they look after themselves. It is a community. They will let you know if people have skipped a park. They will let you know if a person has trashed a van and they are heading your way.

Park managers also have access to the TICA Default Tenancy Control System, a default tenancy database operating in Australia and New Zealand. The system fully complies with the Australian National Privacy Principles. Managers can enquire if a tenancy applicant has previously defaulted prior to accommodating them.

7.2.3 Formal guardianship

Park managers were asked if they used security guards or requested police patrols of their parks. There were quite disparate views on the effectiveness of security guards. One stated:

The first year we had Schoolies, I did all the security myself and I had trouble. Now I get security guards. As soon as a bloke comes along in a uniform and a badge they stand back and take notice. I could yell till I was blue in the face and the kids just ignored me. I was just the park manager. They do respect a bit of authority.

Yet others were unconvinced:

It's no use having an armed guard here – that's a waste of time. If the guard's up this end of the park, the hoodlums are down the back of the park. By the time you get to the back of the park, they're down the side of the park.

Some had tried guards and found them a waste of money, preferring to conduct security patrols themselves.

They've got to know what they are looking for. They don't know whether a person is staying here or not, and kids that are stealing things are as quick as quick – they've got an answer just like that, and they can pull the wool over a security guard's eyes just like that. Whereas if I'm down there, I know straight away whether the kid belongs on the park and straight away what he does. So I do it myself now.

Relationships with police varied between and within regions. In the rural areas, park managers reported a strong working relationship with police. One stated:

If I'm really full, I'll ring them and tell them that I've got a lot in and can they do extra tonight. So they will put us on the list for an extra patrol.

Another reported:

Our local police are really good. We have a patrol every three hours, twenty-four–seven, so they're excellent. And they'll walk the beat in the busy time, and they'll come in, talk to people about security. We only have to ring a certain sergeant, and they act on it. They're educating the tourists that it's not safe to travel any more. And they've actually got a crime prevention program running here at the moment for tourists. So they are really good.

In the larger coastal areas, greater demands upon police time was blamed by managers for the reason police did not respond as quickly as they would like.

They just take their time. They mightn't even arrive today; they might come tomorrow. They asked me years ago to report every crime – to report everything – because it shows on their statistics, and it might also help to get more police here, or more hours. There's only four police here and they work twelve-hour shifts. Sometimes we have to have them come from [a neighbouring town]. By the time the bloke gets here, it's half an hour's drive to get here. Bloody ridiculous.

One manager who experienced significant trouble with youths on the park was concerned that he had become a nuisance to police because he repeatedly called them.

I've got an interest to make sure my guests at least get a reasonable night's sleep, and don't get disturbed. I'm at my wit's end as to what to do. I ring the police, I'm sure I annoy them more times than enough with phone calls. And I think they get sick of it, but what do you do? How do you fix this? And as one sergeant said to me: 'What do we do? We take them to court, so they get a slap over the wrist and they're back out and doing it the next night?' So I guess the problem – there's got to be some sort of different way of handling it – getting tougher with them, I don't know. It's just beyond me.

It was interesting to note that in the eyes of some tourists, police patrols on parks were more assuring than private security patrols. One stated:

I would be very concerned going into a park that had a security company hired to patrol the park. I would think: 'What has happened here?' I would be very concerned about the need for their presence.

When asked about police patrols, she responded:

No, I think if they drove around the park, and if there were two of them in the car and they said: 'How're you goin?', and they were obviously very friendly – a welcoming kind of thing, I wouldn't be worried about that. But security guards walking around might be. I think the police are in, they have a look, and they go. And I don't think security guards do that, not unless that's what they're hired to do.

7.2.4 The tourists

To examine the level of guardianship amongst tourists and park residents, participants were asked how important safety and security was in their choice of park and if there were places in Australia or types of caravan parks where they would not go because they would feel unsafe. Only half of the tourists reported that crime and safety an important consideration in where they chose to go. Figure 7.1 shows that many never thought about it. These findings parallel those from Mawby et al.'s (1999) findings for British tourists' priorities in choosing a holiday destination.

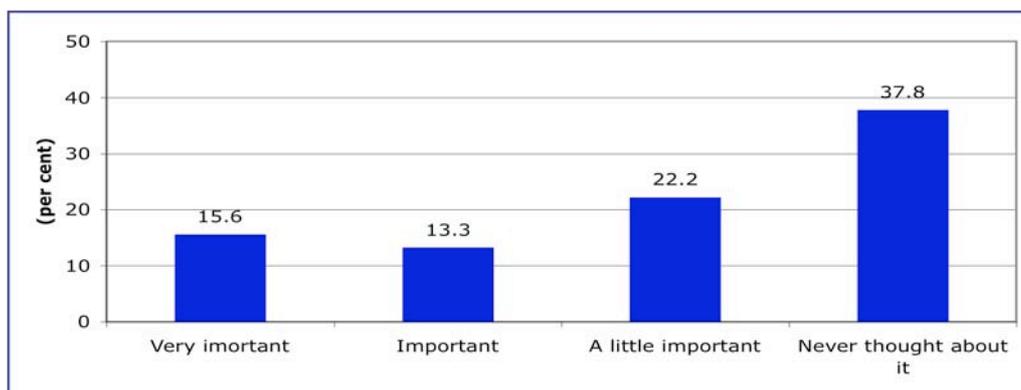


Figure 7.1: Degree of importance of safety and security in choice of holiday destination.

Thirty-six per cent of tourists and 14% of residents reported there were places in Australia where they would not stay because they would feel unsafe. Eleven tourists cited parks in towns or cities where they felt unsafe. Others always avoided parks located adjacent to hotels and roadside stops particularly those in outback areas. Some tourists were aware of security warnings when using these facilities. Some tourists reported they only used roadside stops when they had no other option.

When we had our dog sometimes we'd have no other choice. If I had to stay – for any reason I had to stay on the roadside – I would make sure it was always where the truckies pull over – at a truck stop or like a truck-bay area where they stop.

Caravan parks in some outback towns that had high crime rates were identified by some tourists as places where they would not stay. Yet there was an acceptance that this was the way things were if you wanted to see outback Australia, and you would be better off in a park than on the side of the road. Although many did not like being locked in, as is the case in many of these parks, it was accepted as necessary.

Some viewed parks with high proportions of permanent residents particularly in cities, as undesirable. As one tourist commented:

Most caravaners dislike staying in caravan parks where it's mainly permanents. They try and avoid them like the plague if they can. I'm not going to say anything against them, but they're just different to other people.

Others reported that they used their commonsense. If a park appeared to be poorly maintained or in an unsavoury area, they would elect to move on.

We don't stay in towns where crime would occur. There's no reason to, if there's another town just down the road, which is fine. It's like if you come into a caravan park and you get noisy rotten neighbours, you move. Or have them move, depends on how rude you are.

Some tourists did make a practice of asking park managers about any safety and security issues when making a booking. However, even if they were advised that petty theft was an issue, this would not dissuade them from staying on the park; they would just be a little more aware.

Whenever I pull into a caravan park, the first time I always ask: 'What is your security like?' If they've had a bit of trouble, you hope that they will tell you, and they usually will, and then you don't leave things lying around in the car.

Tourists rely strongly upon the recommendations of others. One couple reported that they would never stay in places that had not been recommended. However, others noted that a bad reputation would not necessarily stop them from staying in a park. They would just take more care. One added:

We only pay for one night, first-up, to see what it's like -, if we've never been there before. And if we like it, then we might stay a few days, a week or a fortnight, or whatever. But if you go in and you pay for a week and you don't like it, you've done your money. If you don't like your neighbours, you can move on.

While, a greater proportion of tourists considered security when choosing a park, it was not the deciding factor (See Figure 7.2). As noted in Chapter 5, a park's location and the quality of the facilities were far more important features than was safety and security.

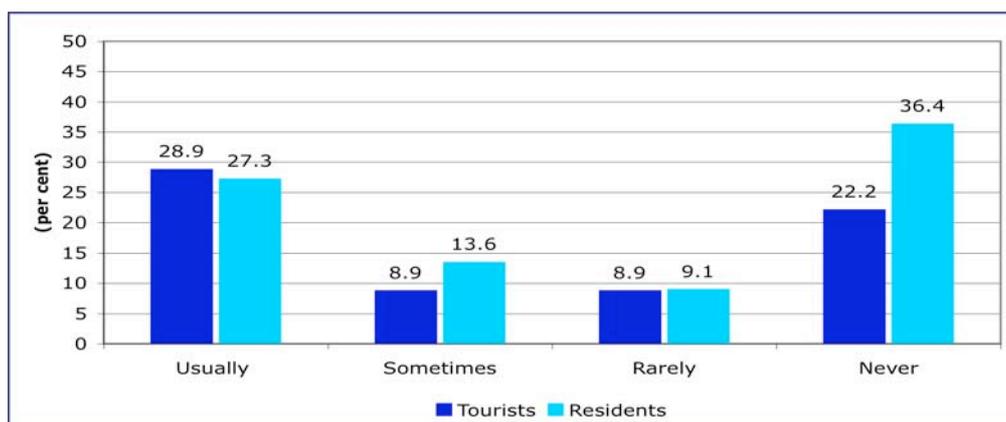


Figure 7.2: Degree safety and security was considered when choosing a caravan park.

The degree that tourists were aware of any security features on the park they were currently on was also ascertained. Responses varied according to the length of time they had been on the park, but the information provided an indication of the types of security features that were the most salient and more often observed. Security lighting (10%), boom gates (5%), security cameras (5%), key-cards to amenities (18%), security patrols (13%) and fencing (18%) were the security features identified.

When asked what security features they **liked** to see on a park, most tourists reported: *Lots of lighting!* – particularly around ablution blocks, and boom gates – *to keep the riff-raff out!*, as one tourist claimed. Yet two British tourists commented:

Boom gates are kind of off-putting. I always feel like: 'Why have they got them there? Is there a really high crime here?' If people don't have them, you're a lot safer. They're not going to stop anybody getting into your tent. They're just going to pass them, and walk in.

Figure 7.3 displays comparisons of the security features noted by tourists and the security features that they prefer to see on parks.

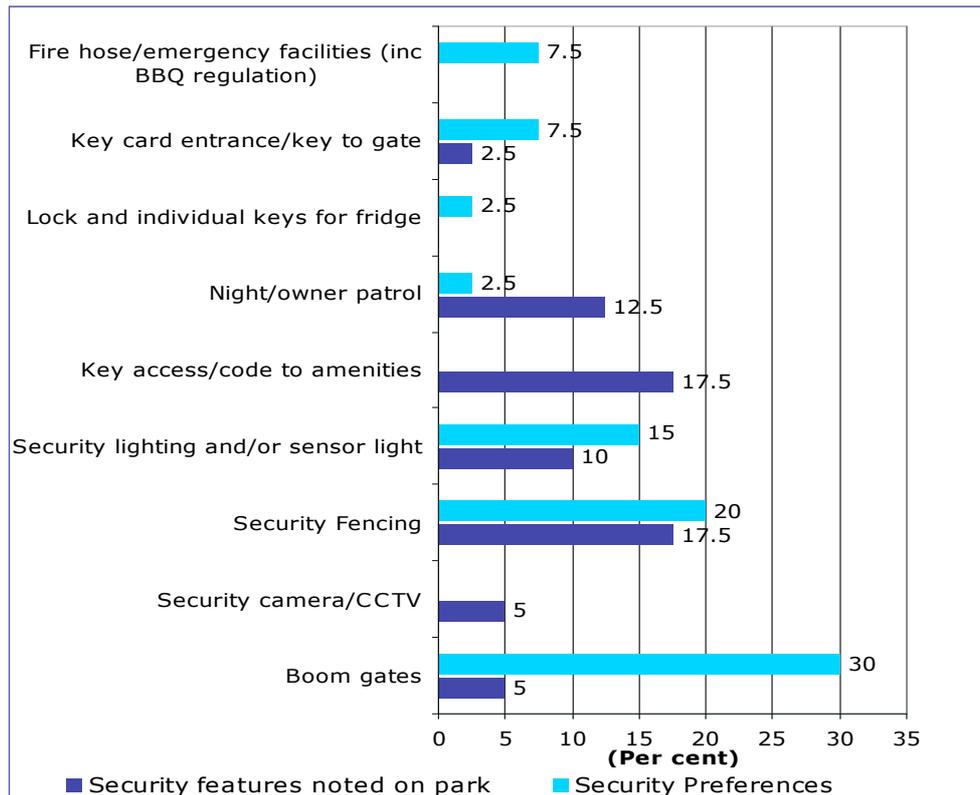


Figure 7.3: Security features noted on parks and security preferences (Tourists N=40).

Some liked a night patrol: *If people know there is a patrol with a dog, they feel safer.* An older couple agreed:

We like to see a fence. And we like to see some sort of control on the gate. We like night patrols done. At [another park], they do a patrol with a dog of a night, every couple of hours. And I think if people know that that happens, then the security is better. You wouldn't have wanted to look twice at the dog in the dark or you wouldn't have been alive – it would have taken you to pieces – but during the day it walked around with the guy at the park. You could talk to him during the day, but don't try to talk to him in the dark.

One tourist raised the issue of emergency equipment on parks.

One of my main concerns is fire security. I'm talking about fire-fighting equipment and stuff like that. And we have regulations in Western Australia that allows so much space per caravan and all that sort of thing. But we've been to some parks in the eastern states where there's overcrowding, there's a lack of those sorts of fire-fighting and emergency facilities. I'm talking particularly about big, shire-owned parks that have hundreds of sites. We got caught up there around Christmas, around school holidays, and it was just a nightmare – people were just piled on top of each other, and there were six hundred sites in this park. It was like a mini-city. And as soon as I drove in there and we squeezed into a spot, I thought: 'If there's an emergency here, we'll never get out of the place in one piece.' And there was a sign that said you had to have a bucket of water standing by in case of fire – I'm talking about mid-summer when it's hot – when people are barbecuing and people are cooking. And the caravans are that close together. But as I say, here, and possibly in other states, there's regulations they have to have. There's a fire-fighting hose-reel just here and they're every so many metres.

One tourist did not think high security was necessary in this day of mobile telephones. However, she did note that not all of Australia has mobile phone coverage. Clearly people do want to feel safe on a park and expect that they will be. One tourist stated that entering the park they were staying on

gave them a sense of feeling safe. The office was a cottage and there were gum trees and gardens and it had a homely feel. However, such perceptions do little to encourage precautionary behaviours amongst tourists.

7.2.4.1 Precautionary behaviours

Tourists were asked to indicate from a list of sixteen security measures, how often each practice was employed. Response categories for the behaviours were: *Usually*, *Sometimes*, *Rarely*, and *Never*. Having insurance cover on the van/motorhome, locking up before going out, and asking someone to watch the site while away were the most common practices reported (see Figure 7.4).

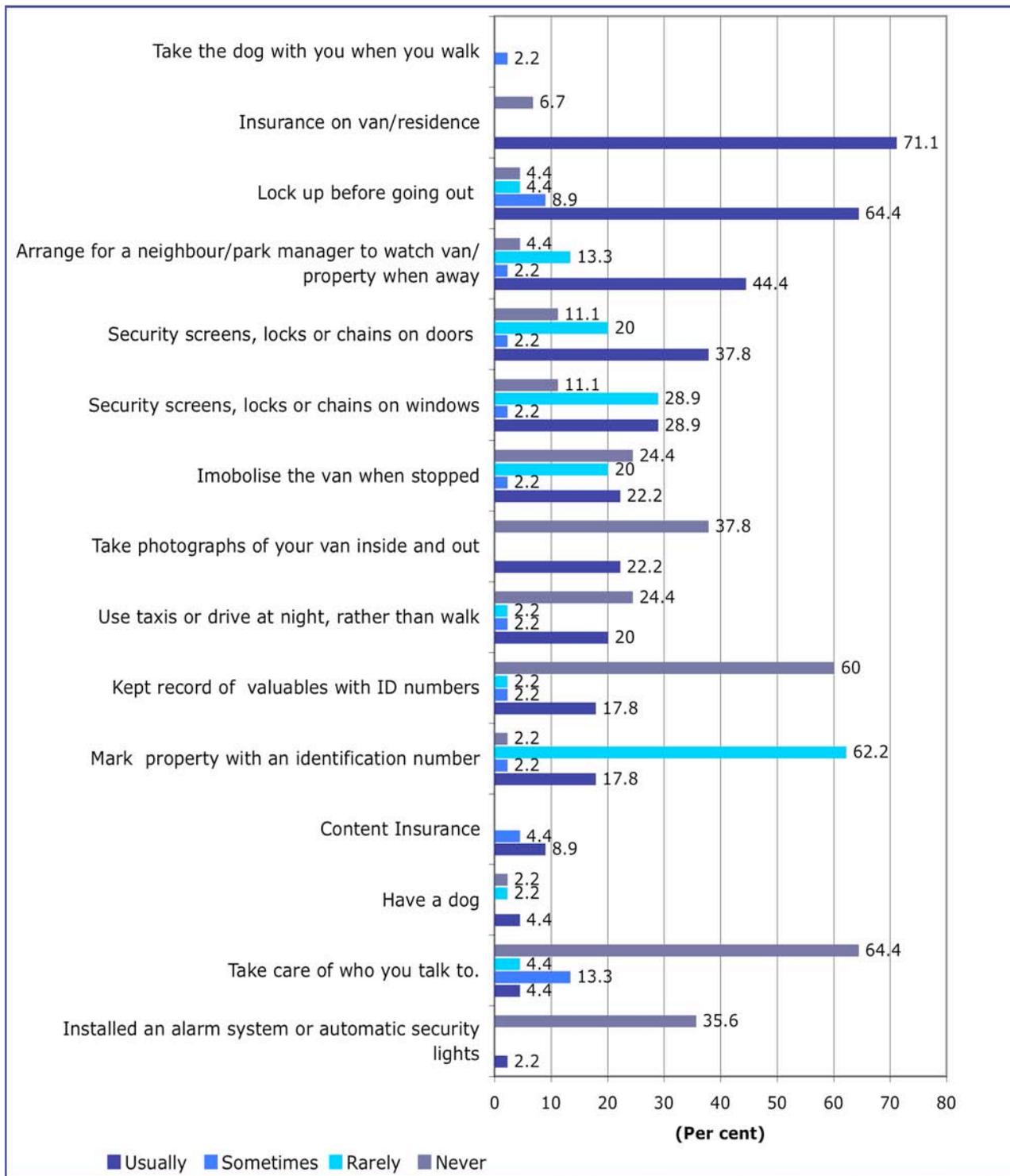


Figure 7.4: Tourists precautionary behaviours on parks.

One tourist maintained that security on parks was all about commonsense.

I think the average caravaners are all pretty responsible, and they lock their vans. And I don't think there's a lot else you can do. But what you do too depends on where you are, doesn't it? It's commonsense. You really can't legislate for commonsense.

Those in tents remarked that it was impossible to secure a tent. Thus, they always took their valuables with them when they went out. However, one remarked that this could be inconvenient. Yet one couple noted that they had never had their campsite disturbed on a park, stating: *People leave tents all the time and nobody touches them.*

It was notable that the overseas tourists interviewed were more likely to take their valuables with them when they went out. One Danish couple reported:

Of course it's sort of a nuisance, you always have to carry anything important – your passport, your airfare tickets and your health insurance policy, and the whole works. So if that's gone, you're really lost. And your credit cards, and whatever. You have to carry that with you all the time.

Several tourists noted that they never travelled with valuables. One said: *Wear them or leave them at home!* Another agreed:

Well, the good news is we don't have valuables. I mean, people in vans don't. Why would you be carting the family jewels around with you? You see, once you start doing all that, it's like some of the new vans now – the really big \$70,000 vans – have got everything – washing machines, fridges, microwaves, huge sound systems, two televisions, two air-conditioners. If you need all that, stay home, because you're defeating the object of what you're doing, of camping it, so why do it?

Although most reported they locked up, 36% did not.

No, we don't lock up at night. Last night was a bad. I left the keys in the car, and the driver's door wide open. I got up about twelve o'clock—one o'clock in the morning, the door was wide open and the keys were in the ute.

Another reported:

We don't really lock things away. Like you don't lock the caravan, and you don't secure your annex or whatever's in there. I mean, we have a big setup inside for the kids – we have DVD players and TVs and stuff. We go away for the day. There was one incident –the year before last I think it was – where some kids' bikes got stolen. I think now when the older kids have the nicer, more expensive bikes, they now chain them to the caravans. But other than that, no, not really.

Another tourist reported similar beliefs.

We like places closer to the beach, so it's more the reason we choose parks. And the facilities and how nice it looks really. There seems to be almost like a caravan park ethic, but you can just leave stuff out in the open and no-one's going to come and steal it. We've just leave everything lying out, and we just go off, and come back. We've never had anything stolen. I've never really thought about it.

One tourist explained that they always locked their car and campervan but would leave their chairs outside if it seemed to be the norm on the park to do so. *“We look around – if the permanent residents leave things out, it's usually okay.”*

Other tourists were in the practice of chaining washing machines, fridges and barbeques to their vans when parked.

We have our own safety measures – we chain our tables and fridge and things to the van if we go away and leave them. But it's like everything else. It's like putting a padlock on your shed. A padlock's only going to keep an honest thief out.

One had an inbuilt safe in his van hidden in a discrete place. Some had taken photographs of their van but had not as a security precaution. One had a painting of his caravan. Only 18% had marked their property with an ID number. However, one tourist had marked his van and car (including motor and parts) as well.

Even all the windows on my truck have all got my code numbers on them, so if the truck ever gets stolen, they can trace it.

Twenty-two percent always immobilised their van when parked. Most used a hitch-lock, which was a cheap and effective deterrent. A tourist with a four-wheel-drive, caravan and boat explained:

I've got a bulldog trailer on the back for the boat. I've got a security device around that, so I just use that. That's exposed. They can see that they're going to have to have more than a hacksaw to get at it, if somebody wants to. It's not worth their while.

Other had the facilities but did not always bother to lock the hitch. One tourist reported being on a Queensland park where thieves hooked up a van and attempted to drive off. He explained:

Only a few months ago, in Queensland – these people went to bed at night. And they'd only just pulled in for the night, so they hadn't put any wheels down and legs down, so this van was absolutely mobile. A thief had the van hooked on, and took off, with them in it! They didn't get very far. The people who took the van didn't know they were in it. They just assumed that it was sitting there because the legs weren't down. If you stop, you put legs down to stabilise it.

Hitch locks range from \$35 to \$350. However, the cheaper and the simplest coupling hitch is very effective according to one manufacturer interviewed. This lock links the caravan to the towing vehicle and is locked by a strong padlock. He noted that many caravanners do improvise for hitch locks using chains. Very few people request additional security such as alarms or sensors. Some request a smaller chassis size to allow room for a safe to be fitted. Wheel locks are available but few are sold in Australia. As a dealer in used vans, he is advised of caravan vehicle thefts in Australia. Such thefts do not appear to be as big a concern as it is in the UK where about 4000 are stolen annually.



In his opinion, caravans are easy targets for break and enter. There are triple lock security doors and locked front and rear boots but many of the fittings

are plastic. Roof hatches on pop top caravans and camper-trailers and the like are canvas and vinyl, which can easily be slashed with a knife. Older style vans have been manufactured with external screws although newer models are now fitted from the inside. He noted that caravans are manufactured to be as light as possible for ease of towing and fuel economy. Thus metal locks and other security measures are not practical in the manufacturers point of view. Buyers will always

choose a lighter model over a heavier vehicle. Security features are consistent across all sizes of caravans. In his opinion, most security features are added after purchase. More often than not, victimisation will prompt a caravan owner to install some additional security.

Several tourists interviewed were travelling with their dogs. This appears to be a growing trend as more of the baby boom generation who like to travel with their animals, retire and join the *Grey Nomad* tours around the country. More parks are becoming dog friendly to meet the needs of the market. While some object to problems with too many barking dogs or dogs left off a leash, dogs are a cheap and effective means of security. One tourist travelling with a large Rottweiler and a Blue Cattle dog reported he never had ANY problem with crime.

Yet another tourist objected to animals.

I love the parks with no animals. Like, no dogs or cats, or anything like that. I reckon all parks or all public places in Australia – including caravan parks where there's paying public – there should be no dogs or anything like that – not even on a leash. There's no dogs here and if you go for a walk around, I bet you've never seen so much wildlife in your life. It's lovely to see. I just had two big frill-neck lizards down there – and I feed them – they come right up to your hand. There's ducks, lorikeets and pigeons, and possums here of a nighttime. You can't have dogs and cats with wildlife like this. I find a lot of the parks where they are allowed; their owners are not too keen in picking up the mess they leave behind. You're walking along, and the next thing you're in the middle of it.

7.2.5 The park residents

Permanent residents were also asked to indicate how often they instigated any of the same sixteen security measures. Figure 7.5 presents their responses. Like the tourists, locking their doors when they went out was the most common behaviour. Yet while on the park, locking up was rarely observed:

One resident stated:

I never give security a thought. It has never been an issue for me, because I walk out and leave my van open, and wander down to my mates and wander back, and I might be away for three or four hours. The place is wide open. The only time I lock it is when I'm going into town. I have not heard of any major problem with people losing anything from their property on the park.

Residents' awareness of security features on their park was also assessed. They particularly noted and appreciated the night patrols that most managers conduct in the evenings. As one said:

I think it's mainly up to the owner or the manager or whatever to make sure that everybody's safe. Security must start at the front gate.

One noted that the residents themselves provided the best security on parks.

I think the permanents here are your best security, because there's a permanent there, a permanent there ... a permanent there, and there's a permanent behind us, so you're more or less covered.

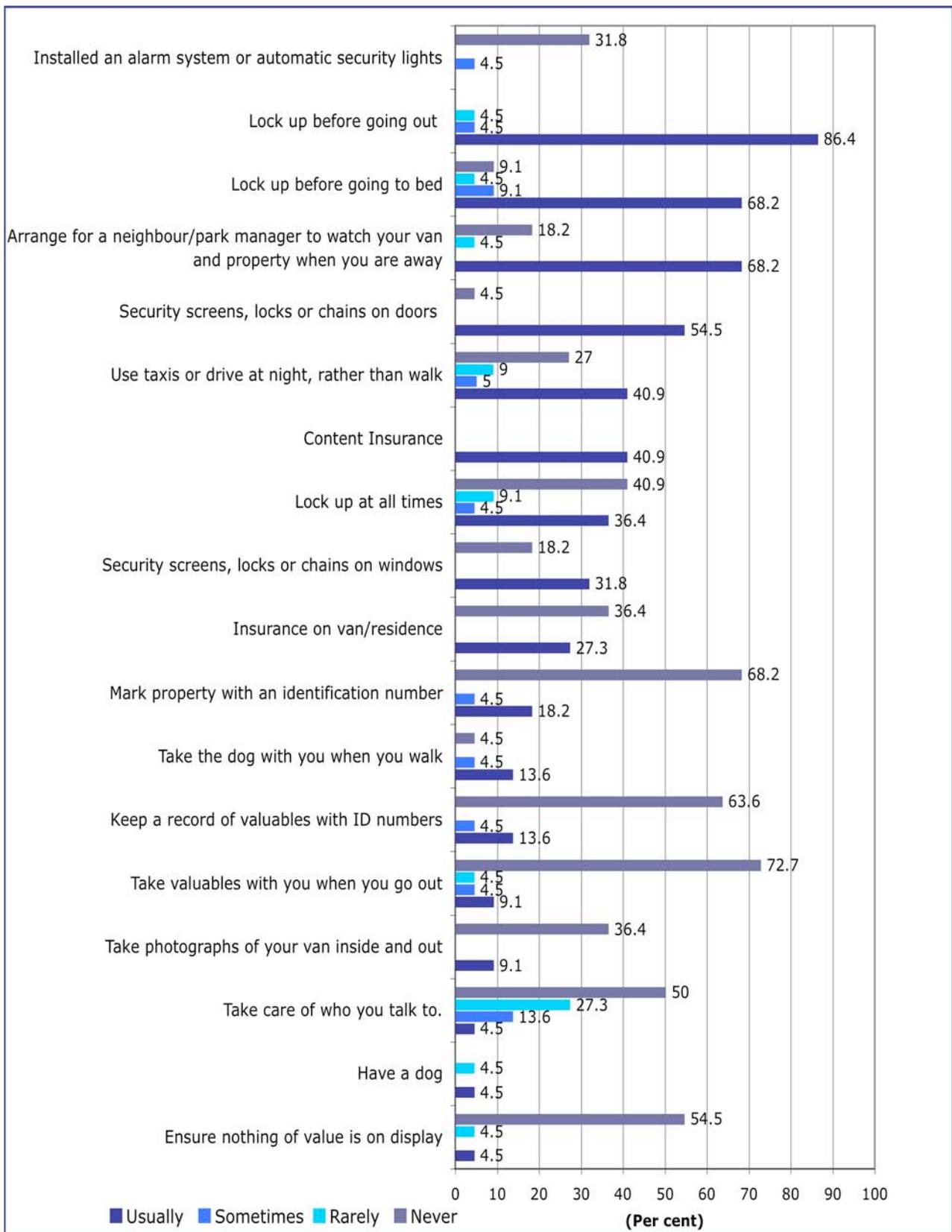


Figure 7.5: Residents' precautionary behaviours on parks.

Residents were also asked what additional security they would like on their park. Figure 7.6 shows that sufficient lighting on a park was very necessary. Residents preferred security cameras as well as security lighting.

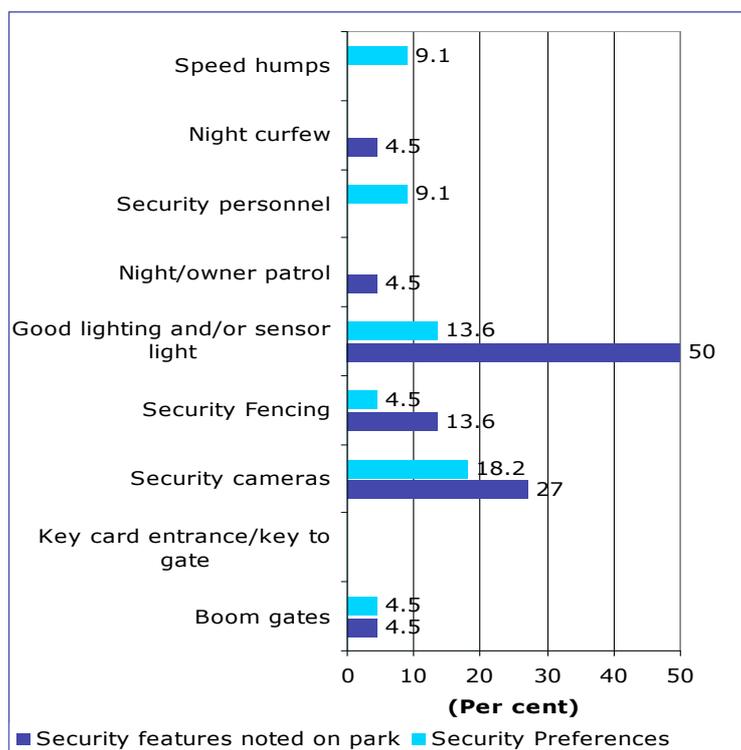


Figure 7.6: Security features noted on parks and security preferences (Residents N=22).

7.3 Information

Tourists and residents were also asked where they accessed information on crime or safety issues when they are travelling. For tourists, other travellers and friends were the most common sources of information. As one explained: *Its word-of-mouth. Somebody will say: 'Don't go there.'*

Tourist Information Bureaus were identified as the best source of information. Others noted the NRMA and the Caravan Industry of Australia web site as good sources of information. One tourist commented: *We read the Lonely Planet quite a lot – get the low-down on areas. Western Australia has the most brilliant brochures that we've found.*

UHF radio was used by two of the Grey Nomad group.

We use a two-way, with a UHF. People call you up and tell you where to go to parks. The tourists are the ones that'll tell you where to go. They'll say: 'Don't go in that park. Go in the other park.'

For the residents most received information from the manager and their neighbours 29% (see Figure 7.7).

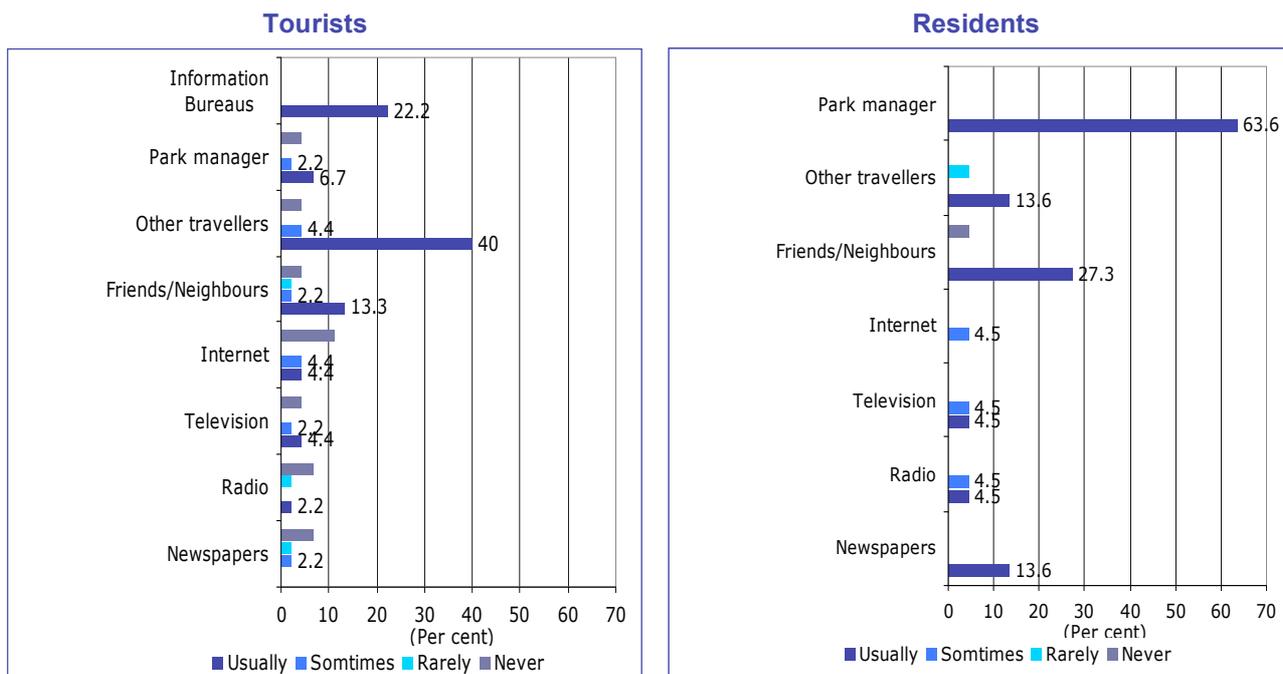


Figure 7.7: Tourists and Residents sources of information

7.4 Collective Efficacy

To further assess collective efficacy within parks, tourists and park residents were asked if they noticed someone acting suspiciously on the park, if they would report it to the park manager or to the local police or to other residents, and secondly, if they thought others would do the same if they observed some suspicious activities on their site. Park managers were also asked if and how their patrons would report crime.

Most managers (89%) believed people on their parks would report to them while three thought *some* people would report to them. Only eight (22%) thought people would report to police while another five (14%) thought *some* people would go to the police. One manager did not think people would go to the police at all. Seven managers (19%) thought people on the park would let other residents know.

All of the tourists were assured that neighbours on the park would inform the manager if they saw something suspicious. Only four believed other people would call the police, while four thought some people might call the police. Nine (24%) thought other people would let them know if they had seen anything suspicious. Several tourists noted that they made a point of making themselves known to their neighbours when they arrived on a park. Not only did they enjoy meeting people, it was also a security precaution. They knew who was around them and others were aware of their presence. One tourist added:

Because we get to know people in parks, they'd probably approach strangers themselves actually and say, 'What do you want?' Or, 'Look, they've gone away – can I take a message?', or, 'They've taken off for the day.

All of the park residents believed that their neighbours would tell the manager or let them know if there was a problem. Some maintained they would initially approach a stranger on the park before alerting anyone else. *I'd bail them up first; stop people before they get there ask them who they are you looking for.* This is clearly a common occurrence as on more than one occasion on the case study caravan parks, a permanent resident approached the investigator to ask who she was looking for.

Only five (23%) residents were assured their neighbours would contact the police while three (37%) thought some of their neighbours may call the police.

When asked if some type of crime prevention program such as *Neighbourhood Watch* or *Safety Watch* groups could be implemented on caravan parks, most tourists and residents argued that organised groups would be irrelevant as neighbourhood watch operates informally within the regular tourist touring community and between permanent residents on parks. As one resident stated: *I think we have it in place without realising that we have.*

7.5 Crime and place

The physical location of parks and the location of sites within parks were found to be clearly related to victimisation. As noted in Chapter Four, official crime statistics suggest that caravans are safer within a park than outside. One rural town had hosted a Winnebago conference and the Council had allowed 100 caravans to camp along the riverbank within the centre of town. The area was not fenced so security patrols were hired for the duration of the event. Never the less, several caravans were broken into.

Most of the parks surveyed were located on the outskirts of towns. Ten were located in the centre of town. The study found that parks within towns or that were easily accessible from town were more vulnerable to crime. Several of the parks used environmental features such as rivers, national parks, beaches or railway lines as natural boundaries. Tourists and residents on all parks were asked if they could identify any areas of the park that they believed would be most vulnerable to crime. Their responses revealed that most were very aware of the types of places that could be targeted. The most common response from residents (18%) was that the entire park was vulnerable as it was so open especially if the parks were not completely fenced. Another 10% identified the rear of parks where the boundary could be easily and covertly accessed. Of the tourists, 10% also responded that the whole park was vulnerable because it was not securely fenced. Another thirteen percent identified the front of the park bordered by a road as the area most vulnerable. Yet another observed that even fenced parks were vulnerable.

This one park we went to has barbed wire all around the place and they still get in and it's a big park. They climb over the fence. There's one area of the fence they're not allowed to put barbed wire along the top, because if the river floods they won't be able to get everybody out. So apparently they can take those bits of fence out. They just go up and over. People get their cars broken into. We've never experienced any problem ourselves, but other people, yes. We'll often pull into the park and people come up and say, 'Oh, be careful. Don't leave anything in your car.' We still stayed there, but we know not to leave anything in vehicles.

Eight per cent of managers on parks that were not completely fenced acknowledged that the whole park was vulnerable. Another 8% responded that anywhere in the community was vulnerable to crime, not just caravan parks. As one stated:

I think the crime rate in any area has direct influence on any facility, whether it be a caravan park, or an amusement park, or a playground. If they think there's something there to be had or to be wrecked, then everyone's open prey. If they can't drive into it they walk into it. And you can't stop them walking. I wholly believe it falls back on the crime rate of the area.

However, 14% of the managers identified the rear of their parks, which could be easily accessed from a beach, creek or bushland as the most vulnerable areas.



This park was located on a main highway approximately a kilometre from the town centre. It was surrounded by a creek and heavy vegetation. There was a low-level wire fence along the front off the park facing the highway. Minor thefts had occurred at the office and at one of the park homes at the front of the park. Yet when asked what sections of the park would be most vulnerable to crime, participants cited the rear of the park along the creek land.

With Australia's climate, an abundance of trees was a common feature on parks. Shade was a deciding factor for tourists when choosing a park. Yet heavy vegetation can also provide a screen for thieves.



Figure 7.8: Park location 1.
Source: www.googleearth.com

This large park was also bordered by a main highway. Break-and-enters had occurred at a caravan and annex site located on the fence-line and farthest from the office. The manager explained:

They just cut the annex – They were obviously setting up a house. They took pillows dooners, sheets posters, kettles, microwaves etc. At that stage there was a group targeting caravan parks.

The fence was a simple wire construction, which would not be a sufficient barrier to thieves. However, as managers of large parks noted, the financial costs of fencing such a large area would be an astronomical.

One stated:



Figure 7.9: Park location 2.
Source: www.googleearth.com

No, it's not fenced around – it's too big an area, and we've got bush land, which we lease. But then you go right down to the river. When the river drops, so they can walk across there anyway. It's just too impossible to do. Plus I don't want to live in a prison.

Although this park was four kilometres from town, it experienced ongoing problems with trespassing and thefts by groups of youths. A road and cycle way linking the town and park allowed groups of youths to congregate at a public car park opposite the park.

The local kids are aware there are teenagers here and get to know the park kids as well and that's where we get problems with teenagers gathering across the road. We have a public car park across the road and the local kids tend to hang around and show off in their cars. A lot of the problems would be alleviated if it was bituminised and lit properly. We have been at the shire to do something about the car park, but I guess it's a funding problem.

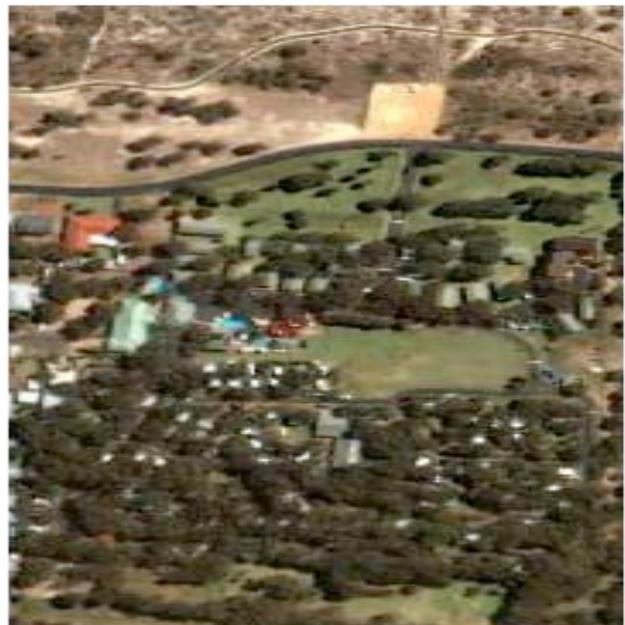


Figure 7.10: Park location 3.
Source: www.googleearth.com

In one of the rural communities surveyed, the caravan park was located 3km from the centre of town. There were many trees and gardens and the park retained a very rural and peaceful aspect. It was bordered on three sides by a highway, a rail track, and a river, but the rear of the park opened onto farmland. The nearest building was the showground opposite the park, but the majority of the surround was open land. It had an iron fence along the front of the park facing the highway, and a wire fence on two other sides. There was one vehicle entrance and one pedestrian entrance, which allowed access to a public telephone box. Although this park had a very low crime rate, two break-and-enters had occurred at a site at the rear of the park. The offender had accessed the park from the riverbank.



Figure 7.11: Pedestrian entrance.

When participants were asked if they could identify any areas of the park that they believed would be most vulnerable to crime, several participants on this park noted the pedestrian access to a public telephone was ungated and could be an access point.

Parks without fencing do provide a pleasant environment but are very difficult to control, particularly if they are located within a town. The park in Figure 7.12 is one example. It is on the foreshore, adjacent to the centre of town, next to a hotel, and is set in three separate blocks – the third one is only used in peak season. Caravans parked in the front right hand corner of the park, closest to the hotel were subject to break and enter offences. There is no fence and the manager spends most Friday and Saturday nights patrolling his park. Yet the people interviewed on the park praised the standard and qualities of the park. They appreciated the central location; the openness of the park and the cleanliness and standard of the facilities, the fact that it allowed dogs and the manager was well liked. In fact, one seasoned traveller described it as one of the best parks in Australia. The manager had warned him about security and he had been aware of an incident the previous evening, he accepted it as part of life and was not deterred.



Figure 7.12 Location of park in relation to central business district

Local police urged the owners to fence this park, but the physical location and narrow streets made access difficult. Furthermore, much of the park's appeal was its accessibility and location. The manager explained.

Well, they've talked about fencing, and the police want us to fence, and ironically a lot of the old-timers don't want us to fence. And I'm a bit anti-fencing, purely because we load from the road, and I've got to find a fence that will suit – how would I build a fence that I could open the gates and shut it? It would be a logistical nightmare. But the people that I've spoken to about a fence feel like they've been in prison, and they don't like that.

A manager on another coastal park some distance from the centre of town observed that location is everything.

If you're not in walking distance to a hotel, you're a lot safer. Probably the biggest advantage this park has over others that have security problems is the fact that there's no beach or anything down the back that attracts people. There's a creek down the back, and people come and they might go fishing down the back. They're usually the people that want to do that anyhow because there's not the general access to a beach or other areas that this park stands in the way of. Whereas some of those parks in town, there's people walking across them all the while, taking shortcuts to the beach. And they're the ones that will lose a lot of things. We have people come here and they put their fishing rods under their cabin, and they'll be here for a couple of weeks and they just never lose anything. Nothing ever seems to disappear in this park. I'm not saying we don't get theft – we do. You know, someone will lose something off the clothesline occasionally or something like that, but it's a very rare occasion when that happens.

7.6 The perspective of police

Police within each of the case-study areas were interviewed to seek an understanding of their perspective of crime and the level of security on local caravan parks. Officers were asked many of the same questions that were put to other participants in the study. They were asked to rate the seriousness of crime in caravan parks in their area, the level of security on local parks, and whether there were any particular problems policing parks in the area. Officers were asked if they believed people in caravan parks could be relied upon to call the police in the event of a criminal incident and whether they were aware of any factors that may cause people to not report a crime to the police. They were also asked if they had ever conducted a security audit of local parks or initiated any specific crime prevention programs/services specifically designed for caravan parks or tourists within their community.

In all six case-study areas, police confirmed that crime and anti-social behaviour on caravan parks was not a concern. It was certainly not an issue in relation to the level of crime in the surrounding community. Furthermore, security on most parks was considered to be adequate. In one rural community, the local Community Safety Officer described the park security as *very satisfactory*. She explained:

The park is fenced, it's out of town – the position is perfect. Even if there was a party there, it's not near homes in town. The distance from town is far enough to ensure the park is not targeted by kids. Lighting is good and the pool is locked. The park works closely with the roadhouse next door. They seem to look out for each other. The park provides vouchers for meals at the roadhouse. The manager's approach is very controlled and the police are not called there. Yet we maintain a presence – do an occasional patrol. It's good to do that but it's not necessary.

The officer reported that some tourists passing through town had reported thefts of cameras and wallets, but these offences were not associated with caravan parks. There had been no international

tourists amongst this group although the officer suspected that some people, particularly those from non-English-speaking backgrounds, might not know how to report crimes to police in a foreign place.

The officer reported that the town lacked sufficient entertainment and activities for young people, which contributed to an increase in burglary and assault. A local tavern was the only outlet.

Boredom is a major factor here. There is a problem with underage drinking because there is nothing for kids to do. There are no taxis or buses in town. The skate-park is not maintained. There is no theatre; no pool and the summers are hot. Kids, particularly indigenous kids, need to swim. The YMCA only visits the town once a month.

The officer was also concerned with recent moves to discontinue unemployment benefits if a recipient is not actively seeking work will have consequences for small country towns where access to job opportunities are extremely limited. Loss of benefits would increase anger and the incidence of crime.

In the neighbouring town, local police also reported there were no problems at the local caravan park and officers had never been called. The level of security on the park was sufficient for the location being three kilometres from the town centre. He also noted that the town was *not a tourist mecca being more of an overnight stop*. He believed tourists would not report crime either because it was not serious enough or they did not believe the police could do much about it.

Conversely, in a coastal region, the officer interviewed reported that offences did occur on local caravan parks. Petty thefts of small items: eskies, bikes, fishing gear, as well as vandalism, break-and-enters and theft from a vehicle had been reported to police over the December–January holiday period. Petty theft was the most common offence committed by small groups of offenders that target parks. He described the incidences as opportunistic crime by kids taking a short cut through the park. He added:

Tourists tend to pull things out of a van and leave them lying about. There is a need for simple security measures to stop opportunistic crime – better ways to secure equipment such as, bikes on bike racks. The police bike shed is swollen with stolen bikes by the end of the summer holidays. We often get ten a day. It's annoying – there is a lot of paperwork and a loss of officer hours.

He noted that there was a seasonal trend in the crime rate with incidents increasing over the summer holiday period. The town's population swells from 25,000 to 60,000. Assaults and break-and-enter increase. Thefts from holiday flats were a concern. He maintained that crime on caravan parks was not serious and was certainly not as serious as crime in the wider community. Furthermore, he considered the security on all but one of the caravan parks in the area to be of a high standard. He explained:

The parks are of a high standard. The lighting is good and over the December–January period, several parks hire security. All have onsite managers. Park security is complicated by the fact that they have to be open, you can't lock them down. There has to be a free flow of people and they have an extremely diverse population.

In his opinion, security cameras are not necessary on parks as there is need to maintain privacy for people in tents and caravans. He suggested that security could be improved on caravan parks if secured storage areas were attached to the ensuite; for example, to lock away bikes and other recreational equipment. One park, which was located in the centre of town, was unfenced and the officer believed this was the main reason that the park experienced significant problems with groups of teenagers trespassing on the park.

He maintained people in parks would report crimes to the manager first, who in turn will report the incident to police. He believed that the reasons people do not report crime is because they do not think the items stolen would be recovered and thus reporting would be a waste of time, or that the incident was not serious enough or the items stolen were of limited value. Other reasons suggested were that people could be embarrassed that they have been irresponsible with their belongings. While they may be diligent about security at home in the city, on holiday they will leave things out in the park. He suggested international tourists, particularly those from non-English-speaking countries, can be wary of police and will not report crimes.

Police activities to address park crime have included a letter to caravan parks containing security advice, which included a package for tourists. Police have a swipe key for all parks with security gates so they can access parks when needed urgently. Previously, there had been a problem finding someone to give them access. Police have also worked closely with community committees established to ensure a safe Schoolies Week. They have also provided security material for teenagers and for parents.

Police in the coastal community in the other state worked closely with the local Council Community Safety committee for Schoolies Week security and in producing safety packages for Schoolies. They also sent out safety and security posters to all caravan parks in the region. Officers in this region maintained that crime on local caravan parks was not a concern for police and security on local parks was sufficient.

In one rural town, where two parks had experienced a high rate of petty theft and break and enter offences, local police met with the park managers and local council to seek some solutions. All groups were concerned that the image of the parks and the town generally would be damaged by negative reports of crime. Most of the offences were opportunistic crimes involving quickly executed thefts of jewellery, cash and handbags. Much of the stolen property was recovered in nearby bushland, as thieves were primarily interested in cash.

Police conducted security audits on both caravan parks and recommendations for target hardening were made. Insufficient lighting and boundary fencing were the main problems identified. Also both parks had significant areas of scrubland along their perimeters. Police recommended that a firebreak be cut between the scrub and the caravan park to prevent offenders from hiding in the bushland, watching for people to leave for the amenity buildings before entering the campsite. Park managers have partly complied with the recommendations but the officer interviewed acknowledged the significant costs involved for the managers. Local police also produced a flyer for people staying on parks warning them to lock up, not to be complacent about security and be more vigilant.

The officer noted that the prime suspect is a person known to police. He is cunning, and has a similar modus operandi to another offender that operated in the district some years ago. That offender had detailed knowledge of various makes of caravans and knew how to enter a van where people were asleep without making the van rock. The officer noted that locks on vans are flimsy and canvas annexes can be easily accessed with a knife.

7.7 The perspective of security guards

To gather another point of view on security within caravan parks, security guards in each community were also interviewed. In one coastal community, one security business had five permanent staff and a casual workforce of 90. The manager maintained there was a rapidly growing need for their services. When asked about crime on caravan parks in the area, he reported that there were a lot of problems over the Christmas and school holidays, and other busy times of the year including Schoolies Week. He noted there were a lot of break-ins to caravans and cabins. When asked if

crime on parks was any different to crime in the wider community he responded: *They're no different. They're an even target I think.* He explained:

There's one park that charges a mint, but he doesn't attract the bad crowd. He only has the backpackers or the holidayers that come in as a holiday destination. But he's also out of town too. The bloke down here, it's not real dear to get a caravan, and he's attracting a bad group. The one along the highway – he doesn't get as much drama. The worst one is the park on the beach, it has a lot of trouble, but it's where it is. The manager was ringing up three times a night over the summer period – break-ins and things like that.

He is contracted to patrol several parks in the area. A car patrols the park three times a night, although there are no patrols during the day.

When asked if there were any seasonal trends in crime, he responded:

In summer you get your holidayers – out-of-towners coming up here for a six-week stint – they're going to party, and cause damage. But in winter, you've got your fair-dinkum blokes – they break in because they want to break in. The holidays and the drunks, they break in – they don't realise what they've done. Then when they get in trouble: 'Oh, sorry, sorry.' I always say: 'Winter's our scariest time of the year and our busiest time of the year,' because of the break-ins – how bad they get. It's busy during the summer, so they'll come back in winter when there's no one around. And also, there's probably not as many police around, whereas the summer periods there's a lot of cops on duty.

When asked what can be done to reduce crime on parks, he responded:

I think it's who they take in. I think they take a lot of the bad ones in, then they ask for it. I don't think they're ever going to do much about the local kids that coming in, because they just want something to do – maybe video cameras, fences, security patrols. Yet at that caravan park on the beach, he has all that – he has cameras, security, big fences.

That park, it's owned by the council, so they've got to play some part in stepping up the security. I'd say a static guard over that busy time, walking around all night – it might deter them a bit. But that comes back to the council. And the council has tried everything on that caravan park down there.

When asked if he had any thoughts on why tourists would not report a crime to police, he observed that some people may prefer not to report to police because they have something to hide or would not want to get involved in processing charges.

In one of the country towns, the local security guard reported that he was never contracted to work on caravan parks but was sufficiently aware of crime within the community to make some observations. When asked if any of the caravan parks in town experienced more problems than others, he noted that the local council caravan park, which was located adjacent to the town centre, was more vulnerable, whereas the other caravan parks were further out of town.

Caravan parks aren't really a problem here. Parks don't use the security services – they use the police more than security. The council caravan park – it'd be the worst one here, because all the people from the pubs walk past there. They have the most trouble with vandalism and that sort of stuff.

When asked who or what he blamed for crime on parks he responded: *Alcohol and drugs and seasonal workers.* When asked what he could suggest for improving park security, he naturally suggested security patrols, but added:

If it's really bad, security cameras. Fencing and boom gates are a deterrent but if people want to get in, nothing will stop them, will it? I think it comes down to the owner and the manager, and also the police. They can get together and try and work out some sort of plan of how they can deal with the problem, how they can cut the crime rate down, what measures they can put in place. It is the tourists' responsibility to lock their own caravans. It's their responsibility to make sure they've got their curtains are closed, and haven't got things out in the open so someone can come along and smash a window.

On the other side of the continent, the security business in one town was asked to patrol the local park only at busy times of the year such as when the town hosted a main sporting event. He perceived crime on the local park to be less serious than in the wider community because the park was located out of town. He observed:

Most people that travel are older or middle-aged, all retired or semi-retired people and they have their payout and they are all having a good time. The only time you are going to get crime is where caravan parks in area close to a town.

When asked if he had any suggestions for improving security on parks, he replied:

Lock doors – have rules for people. What else can you do apart from putting cameras up and spending heaps of money?

When asked if he had any idea of why people would not report crime, he maintained:

Sometimes it's not worth the hassle. People get agro and it finishes up as a court case and people don't want to know. People don't report because they are only going to be there for the night and they are travelling through. Or they are too frightened of getting involved.

7.8 Conclusion

Routine Activities Theory proved to be appropriate for examining victimisation against factors that influence the level of guardianship on caravan parks. The factors ranged from the physical location of the park to the security measures adopted by tourists, residents and park managers. Motivated offenders are attracted to the accessibility of parks and the fact that tourists carry items worth stealing, the transient and diverse nature of park populations and the ease of access to caravans and annexes, tents or cabins. According Routine Activities Theory, the opportunities that arise in routine everyday life are crucial in explaining crime and deviant behaviour. The nature of the social and physical environments of caravan parks clearly creates such opportunities for crime.

Informal guardianship contributes to security within parks though the eyes and ears of permanent residents and between parks through networks of park managers that allow for the sharing of information on deviant residents or tourists. Managers face a quandary of the necessity to encourage crime prevention practices amongst their guests versus the need not to raise alarm and provide a relaxed holiday environment. Furthermore, parks where there were high levels of security deterred some tourists. Yet victims of crime were blamed parks managers for not warning them about crime in the area. The case studies revealed that no two parks are the same, thus security practices on parks are dependent upon each manager's judgement and management style. However, a lack of consistency in security management and in some cases a lack of awareness of procedures for managing serious problems such as child abuse, suggests that there is a need for some clear policy guidelines throughout the industry.

Crime on caravan parks is clearly situational. Certain ecological factors, such as the proximity to urban centres and highways rendered parks “hot spots” for property crimes. In particular, the ease of accessibility to parks that are unfenced renders them a more vulnerable target, as does the lack of sufficient guardianship. Parks in busy holiday coastal regions appeared to be more vulnerable to crime than did some small rural towns. The level of crime within the surrounding community appears to have an effect upon the level of crime experienced within a park. These findings do not imply that parks that are located near urban centres or highways actually cause crime. Rather, these parks are more vulnerable to crime because of the routine activities that are characteristic to these operations interact simultaneously with the physical environment of a place to increase the likelihood of a crime occurring. Specifically, the difficulty experienced in effectively guarding these properties is predictive of crime in these places.

It is recommended that the caravan industry encourage park managers to undertake a security audit of their park through local police. Security lighting, static guards, security fencing and boom gates appear to be the most effective means for target hardening. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design could be employed to better design caravan park layouts to maximise security. Most caravan parks in Australia were built prior to 1979 (Beadel 2000). Any security improvements to parks may be confined by the park structure and the location of the park within the community. With an increasing number of caravan parks in prime locations in coastal regions being turned over to property developers, new parks established in hinterlands should take the opportunity to establish layouts that are safer by design.

However, the findings of this study suggest that from a safety and security consideration, people are safer camping within caravan parks. The caravan park industry has been actively seeking support for their members against Councils who open up public land such as showgrounds for special event or low cost camping to the detriment of local caravan park businesses. This finding suggests that crime and safety should be a consideration in Council's planning.

It was interesting to note that the observations of police confirmed that crime is not a concern on caravan parks. Officers noted that levels of security on most parks was satisfactory although some recommendations were made for fencing of those parks that are open. It was also interesting to note that offenders known to police had detailed knowledge of various makes of caravans and knew how to enter a van where people were asleep without making the van rock. Offenders are aware that locks on vans and canvas annexes are easily accessible. These findings are similar to those found in a study of Scottish offenders (Shaw and Pease 2000).

There is a definite need for crime prevention education programs for tourists. There is clearly an assumption that caravan parks, particularly those in small bucolic rural towns, are safe havens. There is a need to advise the general public that some rural communities experience crime rates that are greater in proportion to city centres. (Jobes et al. 2000). In light of the predicted growth of the caravan park industry, an education program would be timely. In appreciation of the dilemma park managers face in providing security warnings to tourists while striving to maintain a relaxed holiday environment, it is recommended that crime prevention material be disseminated to tourist through Tourist Information Centres and similar outlets. This study has shown that tourists frequently access these sources of information.

CHAPTER 8: Perceptions and representations of crime on caravan parks

8.1 Introduction

Rosenbaum and Lavrakas (1995:288) claim that studies of places have limited explanatory value unless researchers also examine the social processes that occur within those places. Therefore, it is necessary to define the social and physical reality of place from the viewpoint of people who frequent the area. Rosenbaum and Lavrakas argue that the social reality of places makes a critical contribution to the definition of local opportunities for crime as well as to criminal motivation. Previous studies have shown that perceptions of social problems and crime are associated with the actual presence of local problems and crime (Perkins, Meeks & Taylor, 1992).

Therefore, this chapter reports on the investigation of peoples' attitudes towards crime and anti-social behaviour on caravan parks to gather a better understanding of the social reality of the places in which these crimes occur. Attitudes are likes and dislikes about objects, people, groups, situations and any other identifiable aspects of the environment (Atkinson et al. 1990:702). Attitudes are often linked to beliefs about these same aspects of the environment, which in turn is linked to actions taken in respect to such beliefs because human beings generally strive to be consistent in their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Atkinson et al. 1990:703). Therefore, the attitudes of caravan populations are important because such attitudes may influence people's fear of crime and shape their behaviours regarding reporting crimes to police or implementing crime prevention strategies while travelling.

Participants' reactions to victimisation experiences, their perceptions and representations of crime and their attitudes towards safety and security on parks were explored. Their opinions were sought regarding the responsibility for crime prevention on parks, and where they apportioned blame for these offences. It was envisaged that participants' opinions on whom or what was to blame for crime may offer some insight into what motivates offenders to commit offences within parks. Suggestions for improving security on parks were also sought from participants.

8.2 Perceptions and representations of crime

The investigation began by asking participants to rate the seriousness of crime on caravan parks. The majority of park managers (88%) considered crime on parks to be *not serious*. One added; *We get really annoyed when it happens of course, but it's not really serious*. Even managers who were experiencing ongoing problems with gangs of youths and petty crime stated:

It's not an issue – you just get pockets of trouble. It usually only lasts a couple of years, because the kids grow up and move on, or they become real delinquents, or they end up in jail.

Only two managers who were experiencing similar problems with groups of youths, described crime as *serious* and *somewhat serious*.

Only one tourist (2.2%) who had been a victim of crime described it as *somewhat serious* while most (76%) thought it was *not serious at all*. Three could not say. Thus even victims of crime amongst tourists generally do not rate crime on parks as a concern. Most believed the problems experienced on parks were considerably less than experienced within the community outside of the park.

While the greater proportion of permanent residents (73%) also thought crime was 'not serious at all', three (14%) described crime as *serious* and one other thought crime was *somewhat serious*. One claimed:

It's quite serious, because you get the elements with drug taking, and people moving from place to place. If you haven't got a job you haven't got money, so you stay in the cheapest place, and that's the caravan park.

When asked about changes in crime, 11% of managers believed there had been an increase in crime in the past year, 31% believed it had remained much the same while the remainder believed there had been a decrease in crime. One manager maintained:

I'd say it's probably become less, because there's more security now on parks. The caravan parks are actually becoming better standard rather than worse over the last ten years. You've got residents that have invested one hundred thousand dollars into a nice property on a caravan park.

Thirty-nine per cent of park managers identified a seasonal trend in crime and anti-social behaviour. Understandably, parks in coastal areas defined the holidays as the prime times, particularly the December-January period. In one rural town, crime escalated within the community when seasonal workers flocked to the area in the summer months. Caravan parks were utilised by these groups for short-term accommodation.

8.3 Fear of Crime

To assess levels of fear of crime, tourists and park residents were asked how safe they felt walking around the park: during the day and after dark, staying home in the van/cabin alone at night, and also how safe they felt walking outside the park during the day and after dark. Responses were recorded on a four-point scale ranging from *Very Safe* through to *Very Unsafe*. Table 8.1 displays the degree of fearfulness expressed by tourists and park residents. The majority of participants reported feeling very safe on parks during the day and night.

Table 8.1: Participants' fear of crime.

Fear of Crime	% Very Safe		% Safe		% Unsafe		% Very Unsafe	
	Residents	Tourists	Residents	Tourists	Residents	Tourists	Residents	Tourists
Walking around park: during the day	90.9	97.5	4.5	2.5	–	–	–	–
Walking around park: after dark	81.8	92.5	9.1	7.5	–	–	–	–
Staying home alone at night	81.8	95.0	9.1	5.0	–	–	–	–
Walking outside park: during the day	77.3	55.0	–	22.5	4.5	–	9.1	2.5
Walking outside park: after dark	27.3	40.0	27.3	15.0	13.6	17.5	31.8	2.5

One tourist commented:

You use commonsense. But if you were worried about those things, you wouldn't go touring around. If we worried about leaving the caravan, we wouldn't go walking or anything.

It was, in contrast, notable that both residents and tourists felt markedly less safe outside the park. In the case of residents, this was particularly the case at night, when 45.4% said they felt unsafe.

Participants were also asked how concerned they were about the safety of their children or other family members. Of the eleven tourists that had children or family with them, only one couple were *very concerned* about their children's safety, two were *a little concerned*, while eight were not worried at all. One explained: *We constantly worry. We don't want her going off by herself. I like to know where she is, at all times.*

Of the three residents with children, three had no concerns about their children on the park, while one couple was very concerned. The couple had three small children and were staying temporarily on a park while waiting for a house. They occupied an onsite van. They found they had to watch their children constantly when outside the van because of traffic on the park road and because of the unfenced creek at the rear of the park. They believed there was a need for fencing to secure a small safe area for the children. They also felt the need to escort the children to the amenities block even though their site was adjacent to the amenities. The experience led them to state that they would not go on an unfenced caravan park holiday in the future, as it was *just too hard with the kids*.

One permanent resident on a park within a community with a relatively high crime rate was concerned for the safety of his wife on the park while he was away working. Three tourists were a little concerned about other family members safety on the park.

A follow-up question asked participants how much they worried about being a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour while staying or living on a park. Only six tourists (15%) reported they were *occasionally worried*, while the majority (75%) said they *never worried*. While 65% of the residents were *never worried* about being victimised, two (9%) were *very worried* and another two (9%) were *somewhat worried*.

One resident remarked:

A lot of times if I hear noises around, I take no notice. When I first came here, every single noise I'd get up and open the door. Then I thought, 'Bugger that.' Now I don't worry."

When asked what sorts of things were they most worried about, one resident and two tourists were concerned about being physically assaulted, two residents were worried about noise or people knocking on their door in the early hours of the morning, while two residents and two tourists were worried about the problems associated with drug and alcohol abuse on the park. Another tourist was concerned about theft.

Participants were then asked how much they worried about the safety of their property when they were away from the park. The majority of tourists (85%) were not worried at all. Only six (15%) reported that they were a *little concerned*. Several noted that it was sensible not to travel with valuables.

One maintained things were safety locked at the park than taken them with them when they went out.

I feel quite safe leaving this here. But when we go out, you leave the car locked in a car park and go off on a walk, you wonder if it's going to be there when you come back. We try and leave things that we wouldn't want to lose— like say the laptop locked up in the van when we go, than leave it in the car in a car park when we go walking.

Only two permanent residents were a little concerned about the security of their property when out but most commented that they had few possessions to be worried about. One long time user of parks maintained it depended upon the park: *You can tell as soon as you drive in the gate; you know whether or not you need to worry.*

Park Managers were asked how much they worried about crime and safety on their park. While 19 (53%) *never worried*, four (11%) maintained they were *very worried*, six (17%) were *sometimes worried* while two *rarely worried*. As one remarked: *It's always on your mind.* Several commented that they worried about the effect of crime on their business.

Yeah, well honestly you do worry about it. If it affects the guests' stay, and we want to become a destination, and destination parks aren't just about being at the destination once – it's about that recurring visit. If anyone out there is not enjoying themselves here for one reason or another, particularly for crime, they won't want to come back. We're in the business of getting people back.

One woman, whose park bordered a busy highway, was worried about her personal safety at night.

What is the concern more for me if I come up to let someone in of nighttime, there can be anyone – anywhere. And because we're on the highway, who's to say anyone can't walk in? But we've never had it happen. It's just sometimes you feel that shiver. Most nights it doesn't worry me, but just every now and then you get that little bit uneasy.

Another wife worried when her husband responded to the dog barking at night and checked out the park. Managers were further asked if they worried about the park when they were away from the park at any time. Most 61% reported that they never worried about the park when they were away. Many noted the support of reliable relief managers. Yet one was *very worried* while another five (14%) were *sometimes worried*. One commented:

I must admit, we've been to the RSL a couple of times for tea at night, and I've walked back down, just to have a look, and then go back. I suppose it is the security of the park.

8.4 Attitudes towards victimisation

In Chapter 6 it was revealed that tourists who had been victims of theft remained unconcerned about crime while on holiday. Some were even happy to go back to the park where the offence occurred. There were similar findings in studies with British tourists (Mawby 2000; McIntosh 2005), which found that the fear of crime, particularly the fear of serious crime, was much less than the actual risk of crime. The finding was in direct contrast to the findings of the British Crime Survey, which found that the fear of crime was greater than the actual incidence of crime (Kershaw *et al* 2001). Therefore, while most studies of crime risk reveal that fear exceeds actual risk, amongst tourists, the risk exceeds fear.

Victims of crime on caravan parks may experience cognitive dissonance leading to a rationalisation of the negative experience. Cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) is a feeling of uncomfortable tension, which arises when two conflicting thoughts or beliefs are held in the mind at the same time. This tension compels the individual to acquire new thoughts or beliefs, or modify existing beliefs, to reduce the discomfort. For example, a retired couple may spend a considerable sum to purchase a caravan, perhaps a boat and a four-wheel-drive vehicle to set out on a much-anticipated trip around Australia. Should they have the misfortune to be a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour on a caravan park, they may no longer consider the trip to be that enjoyable. Dissonance exists between this understanding and their belief that they have invested in this adventure and that it should be fun. Dissonance could be eliminated by deciding that the victimisation experience was incidental (reducing the importance of the dissonant belief) or by focusing on the positive aspects of the trip (thereby

adding more consonant beliefs). Selling the van and going home could also eliminate the dissonance, but this behaviour would be more difficult than changing beliefs.

Tourists' cognitions, including the way they attribute cause to negative experiences such as criminal events, will influence their behaviour. Caravan Park managers/owners interviewed were exasperated with the nonchalance amongst their guests regarding security of their possessions. While people may be diligent about security at home, when on holiday, they are less careful. Jackson, White and Schmierer's (1996) study of tourism experiences and attributions assessed whether tourists attributed positive and negative experiences to their own ability or inability to control their life, or to good or bad luck, or to the tourist industry *per se*. The study was based upon Attribution Theory (Heider 1958; Weiner 1974), which is concerned with the way individuals interpret events and how this relates to their emotional reactions and behaviour. A fundamental attribution error occurs when individuals overemphasise personal attributes for their successes and external attributions for their failures (Ross, 1978). Attributions are driven by emotional and motivational drives such as cognitive dissonance.

Jackson, White and Schmierer (1996) found that external (situational) attributions were more likely to be used by tourists to explain negative events that occurred on holiday. The authors concluded if tourists perceive they have minimal or no control over their experiences and attribute negative experiences such as crime to external factors, they will have no incentive to be proactive in crime prevention behaviours.

Therefore, in the present study, participants who reported they had been victims of crime were asked whether they attributed the incident to just bad luck or whether there was anything they could have done to prevent the crime occurring. Following Jackson et al (1996), their responses were rated according to the attributional dimensions; that is whether tourists attributed the experience to *internal* factors (their perception of their control over the situation) or *external* or situational factors (their lack of control in preventing the crime). Then whether the causal attributions were *stable* (based upon their ability to influence the outcome or how easy it was to manage the task at hand) or *unstable* (the outcome was due to bad luck or the difficulty of trying to remain safe and secure). However, as very few participants reported being victims of crime, no statistical analyses could be conducted. Nevertheless, some interesting trends in the data were evident. Of the nine tourists and seven residents who reported victimisation, 57% of residents and 33% of tourists believed they had *control* over the event and all reported they could have secured their possessions (*Ability*). Several reported that the experience had led to them to be more security conscious (*Effort*). However, the remaining 43% of residents and 67% of tourists defined their victimisation as a case of *Bad Luck* and that they had *no control* over the event. In the cases of clothes stolen from the clothesline, participants reported that there was nothing they could do to prevent the occurrence because park clotheslines are located in a public back yard. The only solution would be to stand and watch clothes dry. Others reported that there was nothing they could do to prevent the crime (*Task Difficulty*).

It is interesting to note that residents exhibited more internal locus of control. This may be because this is their permanent home and they are surer of their environment than were the tourists. Tourists on the other hand, were more likely to exhibit an external locus of control and attribute victimisation to bad luck. However, these findings are based upon a very small sample and therefore must be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the findings do replicate those found by Jackson et al. (1996). This has implications for crime prevention programs, as tourists' cognitions will affect their behaviour. If tourists believe they have no control over events and attribute victimisation to external factors, they are less likely to adopt crime prevention strategies. Thus any crime prevention programs will need to empower tourists to be more proactive in regards to their personal safety and security (Jackson et al 1996).

8.5 Attitudes towards safety and security on caravan parks

A series of questions sought participants' opinions about where responsibility lay for caravan park security and who or what they blamed from crime and anti-social behaviour on parks. Three questions also sought participants' opinions of crime and justice generally. There is a common polarisation in opinions of law and order issues in Australia, which can be characterised as involving those who require the criminal justice system to be hard on the offence and the offender, versus those who wish to address social problems that facilitate crime (Shipway and Maloney 1998). The present study sought to gather a perception of where the average opinion of caravan park populations lay on this continuum.

8.5.1 Responsibility for crime prevention

To assess people's attitudes towards responsibility for safety and security on caravan parks, participants were asked to rate park owners, residents of tourists, local communities, the police and justice systems according to the degree to which they believed they were responsible. Responses ranged from *Mainly Responsible*, *Partially Responsible* to *Least Responsible*. This question provided an indication of individual's perceptions of responsibility, which may influence their precautionary behaviours on parks. Figure 8.1 displays the responses of park managers, tourists and residents.

Most tourists acknowledged that their safety and security was first and foremost, their own responsibility. However just over half believed management was primarily responsible.

One tourist explained:

The onus is always first and foremost with the caravan park owner or the caretakers. They're the first person you go to when you have a problem. And it's up to them. They should have a rapport with the local police. They're the first people that cop the flack, so to speak. They're the first ones responsible. If they're aware that there's a problem in this town with burglary or something, then they should probably put a fence around this place. That's the kind of thing I mean.

Communities were seen to be more responsible than police for ensuring safety and security on local caravan parks. One tourist when asked if the local community had any responsibility, replied: *Absolutely. It's their town. We just visit here. We expect to be well looked after.*

Apart from their responsibility to attend a crime scene if called, police were seen as *least responsible* for maintaining security on local parks. There was an understanding that police are frequently under-resourced and busy with crime control in the whole community to be as responsible for security on local caravan parks.

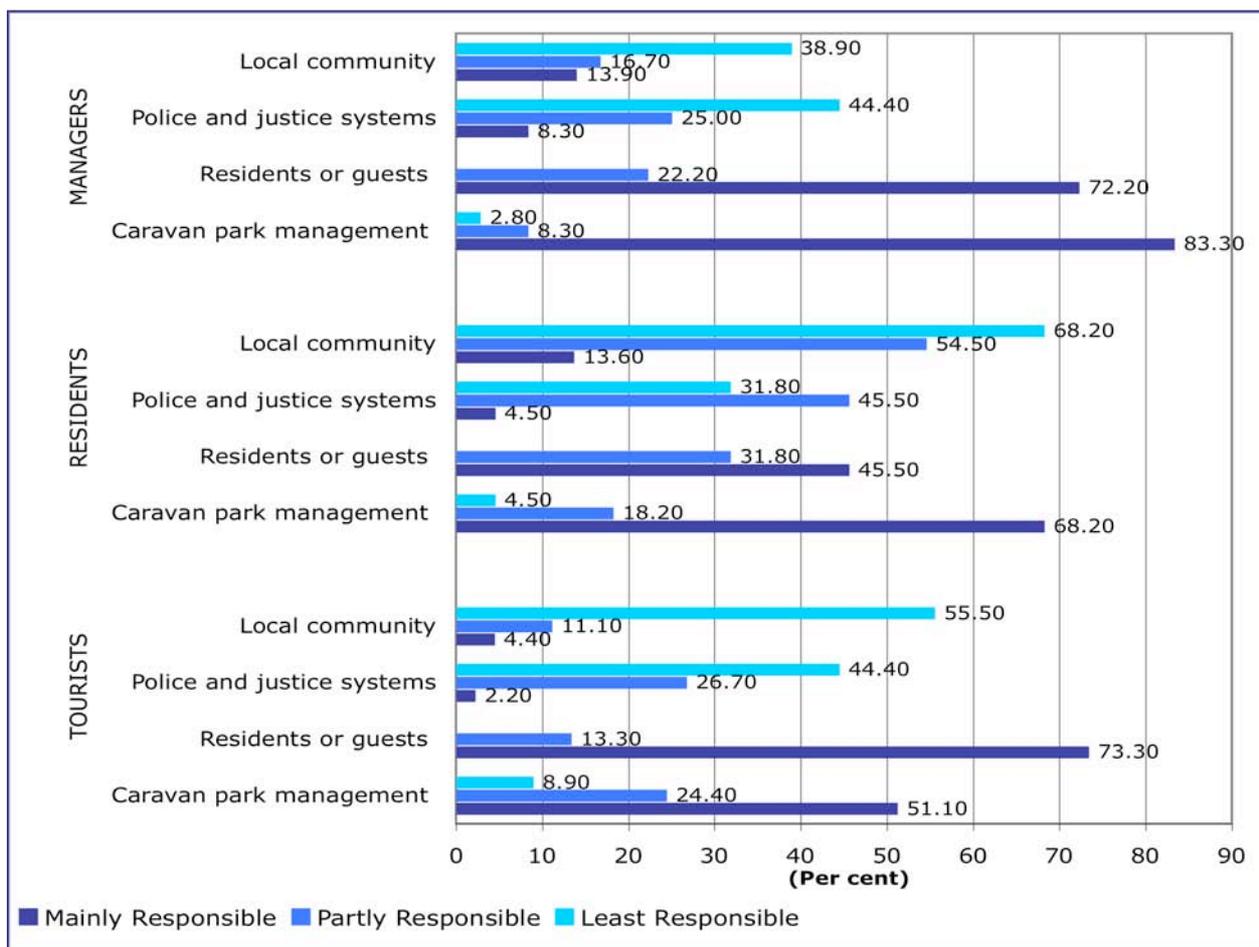


Figure 8.1: Responsibility for safety and security on caravan parks.

Most managers agreed that they were primarily responsible for the overall safety and security of the park and facilities according to their duty of care, but as for the safety and security of their guests' possessions, most believed that was the individual's responsibility.

One manager explained:

I've done my bit by telling them, and I figure that's where my responsibility finishes. If I've made them aware, then if they don't want to follow through then I'm not responsible at all I don't think.

It should be noted that 59% of tourists, 24% of park residents and 60% of managers believed responsibility for safety and security should be shared equally between managers and those staying on parks. One police officer agreed that managers and people are equally responsible for security on parks and police are partly responsible as they cannot be everywhere at the same time nor sit outside a park all the time.

8.5.2 Blame

Participants within the study were asked whom or what was to blame for most of the crime or anti-social behaviour in caravan parks. Responses were many and varied but there were some apparent themes, which are presented in Figure 8.2.

Most participants agreed that juvenile delinquency and the associated poor parenting were responsible particularly for petty theft.

One manager noted patterns in behaviour amongst problem youth in his area.

These groups tend to drag more and more good kids; so then the circle – the nucleus – of these bad things that happen grows. They tend to peer-pressure these other kids into being what they are, and before you know it that's where your problems start. If you could just break that cycle, and stop that nucleus from growing. It's just a cycle that nobody seems to be able to work out how to break.

One tourist claimed: *If you could get onto the parents, and find out why the parents are letting their underage kids roam the streets at night-time. That's probably where half the problem is.*

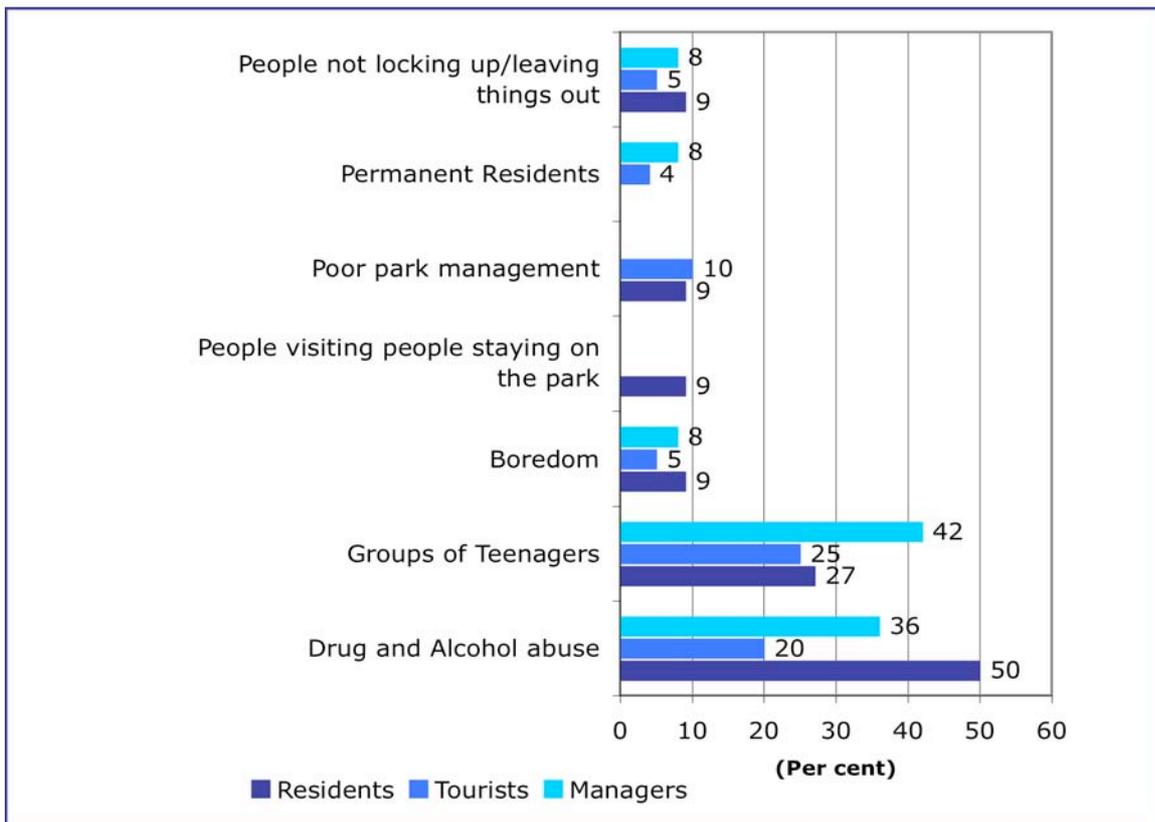


Figure 8.2: Where the blame lies for crime on caravan parks.

One manager gave an example of lack of responsibility on the behalf of parents.

I'd booked these people in. They came in really early which annoyed us, about half past nine, and by half past ten their kids had got in and absolutely flooded the ablution block, and trashed it. And I caught them red-handed doing it, I took them by the scruff of their neck down to their parents and said: 'Your kids have absolutely just obliterated the ablution block – what are you going to do about it?' 'Oh, my kids wouldn't do that.' And I just said, 'Well I think the best thing you can do is go to the office, get your money back and move on,' and that's what happened. But they will not take responsibility. And, that is a trend that is coming more and more, that their kids can do no wrong.

Managers and permanent residents primarily blamed drugs and alcohol abuse for problems on parks. One resident observed.

Probably drugs more than anything. Actually, if someone's seen to have aggression and mental problems, it comes back down to they're either on drugs or been on drugs.

It was interesting to note that although permanent residents were identified as possible offenders, only two managers blamed tourists for crime. Two tourists blamed international backpackers as likely offenders.

One of the local Council representatives observed that it was hard to tell if problems that occurred in holiday periods were caused by outsiders or locals taking the opportunities at that time.

Because we also grow to about three times our size in long-weekends and holiday periods, a lot of the damage is created at that time either by outsiders coming in, or locals taking advantage of the outsiders being in. We don't know how to clarify that. I think there's an element of people that take advantage of those situations when holiday people are in town. Naturally the caravan park's full, so the local kids can go and get a bigger bootie than they would if they were doing it in the middle of winter.

8.6 Solutions

When asked if they had any thoughts about what could be done to address these concerns, five people despaired and claimed there was nothing people could do. Two tourists gave examples where thieves broke into an annex while the owners were sleeping. Three tourists commented that responsibility lay with park managers to be more selective about people who entered their park and control anti-social behaviour amongst guests. One added that it was important for managers to have a good rapport with local police for assurance of their support. A further three believed people should be more security conscious. Five participants believed there should be a greater uniform presence on parks while another four claimed there needed to be more security features on parks, such as boom gates.

There were mixed attitudes to the effectiveness of security guards on parks. Often the quality of guards was found wanting. Regular security patrols were often ineffective as offenders soon became aware of the patrol times. Static guards that are in place throughout the night appear to be most effective on parks that are persistently troubled by crime or groups of trespassing youths.

We actually have a bloke that comes up here now in our busy times, and he sits here from eleven o'clock at night through until about four or five in the morning. It's just a friend, a family friend. He just gives us a call if he sees anything a bit suspicious. I think because local people know that we've got him sitting up here, they know that someone's going to be about watching them, so that's why we haven't got as many problems as we did.

Two of the managers found that employing their own security guards was more successful than relying on security companies. These guards also conducted other maintenance tasks on the park, which lessened the sometimes monotonous task of security. They are also more aware of who should or should not be on a park.

As teenagers were seen as the main culprits for crime and anti-social behaviour on parks, more activities for youth in country towns was seen as a priority for ten per cent of the respondents. Furthermore, existing organisations such as PCYC need to give teenagers a reason to attend. Five people claimed there was a need for better parental supervision and thus more training for parents. One manager who was troubled with groups of kids on his park decided to give one offender a job for \$10 an hour to water the park gardens and was hopeful that this will protect the child from trouble and the park.

There's this kid that I caught over the back here three times in the park, I said to him, 'Would you like a job with me in the summertime?' –just for two hours a day, a bit of hand-watering – give him ten bucks an hour. Maybe if I can get four or five of these kids, if they are working there, they might know the kids or stop the kids who get past me this summer. They might dob on them and might make it a little bit easier. I've put money aside for that.

Other managers believed the solution was more community activities for local youth.

We keep kids who stay on the park occupied with facilities and holiday activities such as discos mini Olympics, cricket matches, volley ball and table tennis tournaments, red faces etc. The community needs to put on the same programs for local kids. Our New Years Eve disco, the local kids want to come in and we feel bad. If there was more for them to do in that regard, there wouldn't be the problems.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the subjective attitudes and opinions held by participants in the study on a range of issues relating to crime and anti-social behaviour on caravan parks. Participants generally did not regard crime on caravan parks as serious. Neither did they report any degree of fear of crime on parks or worry about the safety of their possessions. Even victims of crime did not exhibit any heightened level of fear or concern. This finding is in line with British research that showed that tourist's fear of crime was disproportionate to their actual risk of crime (Mawby et al 1999; 2000; McIntosh 2005). Thus in contrast to the general public, tourists the risk of crime exceeds the fear of crime.

Although not statistically significant, it appears that tourists who are victims of crime were more likely to believe that the event was beyond their personal control and it was just a case of bad luck. This perception that they have no control over potential victimisation means that tourists will continue to play a helpless role in regards to their personal safety and security. As Jackson et al (1996) suggest, crime prevention programs will need to develop strategies to empower tourists to take a more proactive role.

Park managers understandably were a little worried about safety and security on their parks because of the impact of negative experiences on their customers and ultimately park business. They feel the burden of responsibility for ensuring the park maintains a level of security. Overall, the sample was divided on the issue of where responsibility lay for preventing crime on parks. It was notable that residents were more likely to apportion responsibility to park managers while it was heartening to note that most tourists perceived responsibility for their personal safety and security was their personal responsibility. Just over half conceded that tourists and managers should be equally responsible. This finding suggests that tourists will be open to educational programs that encourage greater uptake of precautionary behaviours.

Questions about whom or what participants blamed for crime and anti-social behaviour on caravan parks provided insight into the understandings and prejudices of park populations, which can guide future crime prevention strategies. Drug and alcohol abuse and juvenile delinquency combined poor parenting were viewed as the most common causes of social problems on parks. Solutions provided by participants included more activities to prevent boredom amongst youth particularly in small rural communities.

The relevance of Routine Activities Theory for explaining crime and anti social behaviour was evident in some of the participants' observations. Many were aware that the transient nature of the social environment on parks, and the lack of guardianship amongst tourists render parks more vulnerable to crime. However, these factors were not as strongly supported, as were the social factors. Blame was individualised by attributing crime to certain groups, such as young people, or drug and alcohol users.

CHAPTER 9: Conclusions and Implications

9.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to conduct an exploratory investigation of the nature and extent of crime and antisocial behaviour within caravan parks in Australia towards increasing knowledge and understanding of victimisation within these environments. This was the first study of its kind to be conducted in Australia. This chapter discusses the implications of the principle findings of this research and identifies some possible solutions for the prevention of crime and anti social behaviour within caravan parks.

9.2 Summary of the main findings

The report began with a review of the literature on crime and tourism, which identified several key issues. First, little is known about victimisation within caravan park populations, as there has been no previous research conducted on this topic in Australia. Furthermore, offences on parks in Australia are not separately recorded in official crime data and it is likely that many crimes go unreported because of the transient nature of park populations. Second, the discussion highlighted the wide and disparate social structure of caravan parks and their communities. The profile of the participants within the present study presented in Chapter 5, demonstrated this diversity. On any park at any time, there can be an eclectic group of domestic and international tourists, families on holiday, retirees touring the country, seasonal workers, as well as temporary and permanent residents of all age groups and economic status. Overseeing these uniquely diverse communities is a very hard working but caring group of managers.

The extremes in economic and social diversity combined with the transience of park residents, the ease of access to caravans, tents or cabins, and the tendency for tourists to be complacent about security, mean caravan parks can be an inviting target for thieves. Transience and economic diversity and low social cohesion can inhibit collective efficacy within park communities to effectively maintain control over crime and anti social behaviour. Never the less, several small communities of permanent residents, tourists, the town, and the industry do provide some measure of collective efficacy within parks. Participants believe these communities exist and were assured of shared norms of respect for others within park environments. Such beliefs and expectations can encourage people to disregard security while on holiday.

The research addressed four key questions:

1. *How extensive is the problem?*

The principal findings were that crime and anti-social behaviour is generally not a major concern within caravan parks. While 23% of tourists and 32% of residents reported being a victim of crime, there were no reports of repeat victimisation amongst the mostly older aged group of victims. Furthermore, the attitudes of all participants towards crime and safety demonstrated a lack of concern. Tourists and park residents within the study felt very safe within these environments. Few crimes were reported to police because they were considered not to be serious.

However, 25% of caravan parks within the study experienced problems with crime. Petty theft and break and enter were the most frequently occurring types of crime. The types of items reported

stolen included clothing from clotheslines or washing machines, alcohol and food from eskies, bicycles, surf-boards, wetsuits, fishing rods and other sporting equipment, mobile phones, laptop computers, wallets and handbags, generators, tools, barbeques and gas bottles. Some thefts of park property were committed by park patrons. The most common complaint by managers particularly on parks located within town centres was trespassing on the park by groups of teenagers. These groups were seen as responsible for the petty theft and vandalism. Although park managers are diligent in safeguarding their parks, many tourists remain vulnerable to crime because they are nonchalant about their personal safety and security.

2. How does risk vary between caravan parks and between caravan sites/mobile homes within parks?

Crime on caravan parks is clearly situational. Police data for the study areas suggest that caravans within caravan parks are much safer than caravans parked in other areas such as roadside stops or at private residences. Roadside stops and parks in the outer suburbs of cities and in some outback towns were identified by some tourists as places where they would not stay because they would feel unsafe. While tourists considered security when choosing a park, the standard of park facilities was the deciding factor. Information about crime and safety was mostly received from other travellers and tourist information bureaus.

Certain ecological factors, such as the proximity to urban centres and highways rendered parks “hot spots” for property crimes. In particular, the ease of accessibility to parks that are unfenced makes them a more vulnerable target. Parks in busy holiday coastal regions appeared to be more vulnerable to crime than did small rural towns. The level of crime within the surrounding community appears to have an effect upon the level of crime experienced within a park.

Certain sites within parks such as those along park boundaries were also hot spots for victimisation. The inability to effectively guard these properties is predictive of crime in these places. Security lighting, static guards, security fencing and boom gates appear to be the most effective means of security.

3. Why does risk vary?

Routine Activities Theory proved to be appropriate for examining victimisation against factors that influence the level of guardianship on caravan parks such as the physical location of the park to the security measures adopted by tourists, residents and park managers. Informal guardianship contributes to security *within* parks through the eyes and ears of permanent residents and *between* parks through networks of park managers that allow for the sharing of information on deviant residents or tourists. Formal guardianship through police patrols and static security guards in particular, were reported to increase security on parks.

The relevance of Routine Activities Theory for explaining crime was supported in some of the participants' observations. Many were aware that the nature of the social and physical environments of parks, the difficulties managers experience in managing guardianship over a transient population and the lack of attention to security by tourists, means parks are more vulnerable to crime. Their explanations articulated an understanding of causal forces.

4. How can park property crime offences be reduced?

The types of park security preferred by tourists included security lighting and boom gates, while park residents favoured security guards. Only half of the managers provided or offered any crime prevention information to people entering the park. Most warnings featured as part of a general set of park rules. Managers face a quandary of the necessity to encourage crime prevention practices amongst their guests versus the need not to raise alarm and provide a relaxed holiday environment. While some tourists were anxious if managers did give a warning or if there was an obvious high level of security on a park, victims of crime blamed managers for not providing sufficient warning.

Although there was some concern for the safety of children on parks particularly in regard to traffic, there was no evidence of fear of crime amongst participants. Victims of crime did not consider crime to be serious and reported no fear of crime. They were also likely to return to a park where an offence occurred. Tourists may experience some cognitive dissonance rationalising the costs and value of holidays against negative victimisation experiences. Similar findings were revealed in British studies that found that tourists' fear of victimisation was considerably less than their actual level of victimisation. Thus while most studies of crime risk reveal that fear exceeds actual risk, amongst tourists, the risk exceeds fear. Complacency about security however, does not facilitate precautionary behaviours amongst tourists.

However, the findings indicate that tourists who were victims of crime tended to believe that the event was beyond their personal control which suggest that tourist may play a helpless role in regards to their personal safety and security. At the same time, most tourists acknowledged that their safety and security was first and foremost, their own responsibility, which means that will be open to educational problems to enhance precautionary behaviours.

Park residents believed managers were primarily responsible for park security. Communities were regarded as more responsible than police for ensuring safety and security on local caravan parks. Police were seen as supportive in most areas but there was an appreciation that they were under-resourced. Blame for crime was attributed to juveniles and poor parenting as well as drug and alcohol abuse. Motivated offenders had detailed knowledge of various makes of caravans, they are aware that locks on vans and canvas annexes are easily accessible and they know how to enter a van where people are asleep without making the van rock. Thus target hardening of vans and annexes will alleviate some crimes. A series of recommendations for enhancing the security of caravan parks and reducing crime was developed based upon these observations and suggestions from participants. (A summary is provided in Appendix 1).

9.3 Implications of the findings

Although there were some reports of victimisation on caravan parks, there appears to be a certain level of acceptance amongst tourists that crime and anti-social behaviour is a part of life and the benefits and enjoyment of caravan park holidays and lifestyle far outweigh any of these 'annoyances' that may occur. This should alleviate concern amongst park managers who fear a loss of business because of problems on their park. Although the tourist grapevine does ensure news of problems on parks do travel, this does not necessarily deter tourists.

It is impossible to assess how many tourists have given up camping holidays because of negative experiences with crime. Tourists need to be made more aware of safety and security while travelling and encouraged to be more security conscious in their thinking and in their actions and more attentive to locking and securing their property. Crime prevention initiatives that target tourists are needed to encourage behaviours that will minimise risk. The findings suggest that tourists will be receptive to security information. As tourists frequently use tourist information bureaus in the towns that they visit, this may be the best avenue to distribute crime prevention information.

Park managers should be encouraged to have local police conduct a security audit of their park to increase target hardening. In designing and planning layouts for new parks, developers need to be more attuned to safety and security. Park managers should to be encouraged to join industry bodies to receive the benefits of legal, educational and moral support these agencies provide.

While there is an appreciation of the heterogeneity of caravan parks in Australia, and recognition that park managers would be the best judge of security requirements for their park, there is room for some consistency in policy pertaining to park security within the caravan park industry. While there are some commonalities in park management practices such as policing 10pm curfews, many practices

on parks appeared to be ad hoc. Problems could arise in terms of liability should some serious crime occur. For example, there is clearly a need for caravan industry protocol regarding the possible presence of paedophiles on a park. There are clear benefits for caravan park businesses to join park chains such as Big4, Top Tourist and Family Parks. This ensures managers access to legal and management advice and support. Affiliation with the state and national bodies of Caravan Industry Australia is also recommended. Consistency in park management and policy would increase as more businesses become aligned with these organisations.

There appeared to be a solid supportive relationship between police and caravan park managers in most of the case study areas. A lack of support was reported primarily in one coastal area where police were considered to be limited in numbers and response times to requests for assistance were slow. Overall, participants generally believed the police were doing a good job although there was an appreciation that they were under-resourced. This finding is similar to that found in previous studies of police - community relations within rural communities by the author and colleagues (Jobes, *et al.* 2001). Participants appreciated regular patrols by police and some preferred police patrols to private security patrols. Crime prevention material disseminated by local officers was well received by park managers.

The lack of official recorded crime data on crime within caravan parks contributes to the lack of understanding of the extent of victimisation. Data collections are also complicated by the varying methods of categorisation and collection methods between the states. There is a need for more detailed data collection at regional, state and national levels to allow comparisons of offence types and rates among regions, increase knowledge of this type of crime and place, and assist in its prevention. Furthermore, there is insufficient general data on transient people within Australia. Although Census data is collected on caravan populations, the distinction between tourist and transient is blurred.

The issues noted within this study concerning people with high social needs necessitates more information to better target resources. There is a need to recognise the contribution caravan park managers make in providing accommodation for some of the most marginalised in society particularly in small rural communities. This has implications for policies elsewhere. For example, residential parks in the UK are increasingly being used to meet the needs of low cost social housing (McIntosh, 2005). A recent BBC report highlighted pressure on the UK housing market which has led to a growing number of young first time home buyers as well as elderly or retired people choosing to purchase a park home because they are affordable and offer a quality lifestyle. In some areas, parks homes can be purchased from as little as 20,000 pounds, significantly less than an average home, which can range between 50,000 to 120,000 (BBC, 2005).

9.4 Limitations of the study

This research was exploratory in nature, focusing on the caravan park industry in two diverse regions in two states only. Thus the findings provide an indication only of the nature and extent of crime and anti social behaviour on Australian caravan parks and are not conclusive. As it is impossible to identify the numbers of people have given up caravan or camping holidays because of crime, a true understanding of victimisation of tourists cannot be achieved. It is suggested that a national mail survey of tourists as was conducted in the UK, which utilised a travel organization to disseminate the survey, may reach a wider variety of tourists to seek a more comprehensive understanding of the level of victimisation amongst tourists. An anonymous nation-wide mail survey of park managers may also provide a clearer understanding of the exact nature and extent of crime experienced on Australian caravan parks.

9.5 Conclusion

This study has found that crime and antisocial behaviour is not a major concern. However, tourists do need to be more security conscious in their thinking. The caravan industry is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in Australia and with the baby boomer generation about to join the *Grey Nomads* touring around the country, future growth is assured. There is a need for crime prevention programs that empower tourists to take a more proactive role in personal safety and security, while helping park managers to minimise incidences of crime on parks.

9.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations have been drawn from the findings of this study.

- ◆ That the caravan park industry encourage park managers to have a security audit of their park conducted by local police.
- ◆ That a crime prevention education program for tourists be developed for distribution through Tourist Information Bureaus across Australia.
- ◆ That industry bodies ensure that policy and guidelines regarding security practices, particularly in respect to serious crimes such as child abuse, be extended to all park managers and owners to ensure consistency in park security management practices.
- ◆ That police services in each state liaise with the caravan park industry to develop policy and guidelines for police officers as well as the industry on the rights and responsibilities of park owners, park residents, guests and visitors in dealing with anti-social behaviours and criminal acts on parks.
- ◆ That park managers be encouraged to join industry bodies to receive the benefits of legal, educational and moral support that these agencies provide.
- ◆ That more social and educational opportunities be provided for youth in small communities to alleviate the anti-social behaviour experienced on parks caused by groups of teenagers.
- ◆ That a nation-wide mail survey of tourists and park managers be conducted to extend the knowledge gathered in this study.
- ◆ That the Australian Bureau of Statistics collect data on transient populations.
- ◆ That official crime data collections be made uniform across states and regions for consistency and to allow for comparative analyses between regions

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Appendix I

For Park Managers

Acknowledgment:

The following suggestions for improving safety and security have been developed from the ideas and tried and true initiatives given to us by caravan park managers and tourists within a recent study of safety and security on Australian caravan parks. We sincerely thank them for their valued contribution. This project was funded by the Western Australian Office of Crime Prevention. Additional information has been drawn from a crime prevention program designed by the East Devon Police for British caravan parks. (Source: www.eastdevon.gov.uk/reducing_crime_caravan_parks.pdf)

The study investigated the nature and extent of crimes within caravan parks in two regions in Western Australia and two regions in New South Wales through case studies of 36 caravan parks and 121 interviews with park managers, tourists and permanent residents, police and security guards. One quarter of the caravan parks reported experiencing problems with crime. Most of the offences were petty theft. The types of items stolen included clothing from clotheslines or washing machines, alcohol and food from eskies, bicycles, surf-boards, wet suits, fishing rods and other sporting equipment, mobile phones, laptop computers, wallets and handbags, generators, tools, barbeques and gas bottles. Some break and enter crimes were also reported. Most crimes were opportunistic. Offenders often watched and waited until guests left their site for the amenity buildings and then quickly accomplished snatch and grab thefts. Some offenders have detailed knowledge of various makes of caravans and know how to enter a van where people were asleep without making the van rock. They are aware that locks on caravans are flimsy and canvas hatches and annexes can be easily accessed with a knife.

Most managers have security procedures in place on their parks but the following suggestions may offer a few more ideas. The one thing that became very clear in conducting this research is that no two parks are the same. Thus these suggestions may not be applicable to every caravan park. Furthermore, not every crime prevention practice is needed on every caravan park. Your judgement is best. Managers will need to work out how much and what type of security measures is necessary to avoid the loss, the inconvenience and anxiety associated with crime. The basic philosophy of all crime prevention programs is to decrease opportunity. Park Managers can take positive and effective steps toward reducing crime.

▪ Security Guards

There were mixed attitudes to the effectiveness of security guards on parks. Often the quality of guards was found wanting. Regular security patrols were often ineffective as offenders soon became aware of patrol times. Static guards that are in place throughout the night appear to be most effective on parks that are persistently troubled by crime or groups of trespassing youths. Two managers found that employing their own security was more successful than relying on security companies. These guards also conducted other maintenance tasks on the park, which lessened the sometimes monotonous task of security. They are also more aware of who should or should not be on a park. Static guards are recommended based upon the principal that increased guardianship decreases the incidence of crime.

▪ Police patrols

It appears to be worthwhile for managers to establish a good relationship with local police to ensure they will respond quickly in an emergency and also conduct regular patrols in or around the park. Tourists reported they liked to see police patrolling an area. Establishing a flow of information between police and park staff will ensure police are familiar with the park operation and managers are aware of information on crime and safety that could impact upon their park. In some communities, local police have provided caravan parks with security warning notices for tourists. Providing police with key cards to secured park entrances ensures officers can quickly access the park in an emergency. Maps of the parks for police with clearly defined areas will enable them to respond effectively when required.

▪ Security Audit

It is recommended that parks have a security audit conducted on their park. Some park managers who had experienced problems with crime had local police conduct a security audit which highlighted areas where thieves could easily operate. Police were able to recommend some changes for improving security, which the managers greatly appreciated. Park

managers can arrange for a security audit to be conducted on their park by contacting their local Crime Prevention Officer through their local Police Station.

- **Encourage tourists/ residents to be security conscious.**

Park managers face a dilemma between the necessity to ensure tourists are security conscious and the need to provide a relaxed holiday environment for their guests. The research revealed that it is better to advise tourists to be aware. Tourists who were victims of crime were angry with park managers for not alerting them to ongoing problems on the park. Warnings will ensure parks are not culpable in the event of any crime. It is suggested that managers verbally remind people to secure their belongings, that security advice be placed on signs at various locations around the park and within the park rules. Many of the park managers interviewed believed it was essential to verbally caution tourists, as many do not read park information. The following is an example of a security notice which provided emergency contact numbers for residents and guests. This was presented as a heading on the Park Rules for one of the caravan parks in the study.

Security Notice
Please make sure you conceal all valuables.

We feel that our security is as good as it can be in today's conditions. However, for your protection we need your help by reporting any unusual/suspicious events/persons at any time of day or night
Our contact phone numbers are: -----

Some managers found specific warnings were effective. One had very strict rules on eskies following a spate of theft of eskies full of alcohol. Every person entering the park is warned to keep eskies out of sight. The manager also patrols at night and will lock away any eskies left out. Theft has dropped significantly since implementing this policy.

- **Keeping watch**

Problems with the use of park amenity buildings, pools and other facilities by people other than park patrons have been solved on some parks by ongoing but random security checks. Improved guardianship makes it too difficult for offenders.

Many of the study participants noted how important it was for managers (or assistant managers) to live on the park to maintain security. Local offenders know about the presence of a watchful manager.

Different areas of the park should be clearly signposted so that they can be easily identified by staff and users. This will be important in the event of an emergency.

It is important to have sufficient numbers of staff to ensure effective guardianship day and night and to provide a duty of care. This is also insurance against any possible liability claims in the event of an accident or serious crime event. As noted above, security guards can double as maintenance or gardening staff. On large parks, staff ID cards are a good idea because they contribute to a sense of security amongst guests and allow staff to challenge possible trespassers on the park.

Use word of mouth when employing staff or check their references. Keep a good record of past staff especially if there has been a dispute or sacking. Take staff photos and keep descriptions of employees.

While many parks are moving towards tourist-only facilities, a few permanent residents can become a trusted and effective source of guardianship. Many managers valued the eyes and ears of their permanent residents as they know the park operation and they have the time to watch and observe others on the park. Permanent residents should be encouraged to report suspicious activity, strangers and vehicles and to keep a watchful eye on their neighbours' property and vehicles. For larger parks with a resident liaison committee, a formal or even informal Neighbourhood Watch Group could be established with residents. This would again be a manager's call, as the success of such groups rests entirely upon the people within it.

- **Watch Dog**

A good watch dog is the cheapest and most effective form of security. One manager noted the value of his dog who always alerted him to potential trouble on the park. Another had a large Rottweiler who accompanied him when he patrolled the park. Although the dog was very quiet while with his master, tourists recognised that the dog could be a very effective guard dog if required. Some of the permanent residents in the study had a dog. One had a small fenced enclosure around her onsite van to prevent the dog from straying on the park. Dogs are aware often before their owners of the presence of strangers. Thieves will be less likely to break into a caravan or annex when they know a dog is present. Although most dogs function primarily as pets and secondarily for security (if at all), even an ordinary dog can have a deterrent effect.

▪ Lighting

The more security lighting, the better. Thieves hate light. Security lighting was one of the main types of security preferred by tourists and park residents. Sensor lights on cabins and onsite vans are also recommended. One manager believed it was important to encourage tourists/residents to leave lights on in their van or cabin if they go out in the evenings to create signs of life. The relatively low cost of keeping a few lights on is a good investment in security.

▪ Security cameras

Security cameras are an effective deterrent and can assist in identifying offenders. It is important to use good quality equipment that is regularly maintained. To ensure cameras are utilised effectively, it is important that there is sufficient lighting around the surveillance area and that lines of vision are not obstructed by vegetation. Stickers can be displayed on doors or windows to serve as a warning to potential thieves. Where possible new digital cameras should be installed. Alternatively, videotapes should be replaced regularly. It is important not to use cheap videotape or replay it several times over to ensure the quality of the image.

Some managers found that installing dummy cameras were a cheap and effective additional deterrent.

On one park in the study, several strategically placed security cameras provided surveillance of the park entry, children's play area and camp kitchen for management. In addition, the footage was relayed to the televisions in each cabin on the park. This allowed parents to remain in their cabins or vans and watch their children playing on the park.

▪ Access points

Maintaining control over access points is a very effective crime prevention strategy. It is important that there be only one entry/exit point for vehicles located adjacent to and within in clear view of the office. Ideally a system of access control such as a swipe card should be installed, and issued to guests with a deposit. Boom gates were the security feature that most tourists preferred to see on a park as they were seen as a means of preventing unauthorised entry to the park.

Consider installing a monitored alarm system for the office and park shop areas as well as for the park perimeter.

Pedestrian accesses should be ideally located along the most direct path to public telephones, beaches, shops or pubs to maintain control over access to and from the park. It is preferable to have a lockable gate installed to the height of the boundary fence. Alternatively, open access points should be clearly defined as private property to avoid the excuse of 'accidental trespass'. Access points should be covered by natural or electronic surveillance.

▪ Boundaries

Park boundaries should also clearly define the park area as a private property and restrict unauthorised access. Aesthetically the 'Fortress Effect' of high wire fencing needs to be avoided. Tourists dislike the feeling of being in a prison even though they appreciate that in some areas, such barriers are necessary. In Britain, police suggest that park perimeters should be comprised of low growing thorny bushes maintained less than one metre high and at least two metres wide. This should be backed with a physical barrier sufficient to deter entry, located on the boundary side of the bushes. This could be a low wall or bank topped with a fence. Where none of this is possible, the alternative would have to be 1.8 metre high weldmesh or chain link fencing with fast growing trees or shrubs grown through the fencing to deceive its visual impact and thicken the barrier.

It is evident that the costs of fencing can hinder some businesses on large acreage from installing boundary fences. Furthermore, managers and tourists prefer the aesthetical appeal of open parks. However, solid boundary fences do define boundaries and will lessen the problem of illegal trespassing on parks.

Small internal fences around play grounds and some cabins and onsite vans were suggested for better security for small children (and for animals). One family found constantly watching that their three small children remained safe from park traffic and from unfenced creek land very stressful and stated that they would never again stay on a park that was not fenced because they would not enjoy it.

▪ Safer by design

The establishment of new caravan parks should incorporate CEPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) in their planing. CEPTED identifies and addresses features in the environment and in the park layout and style that can facilitate crime and antisocial behaviour. However, many existing caravan parks in Australia were established more than 30 years ago, which can make it difficult to implement structural security features. However, security audits as noted above, will provide some safer by design suggestions to improve security.

Ideally, all roadways should be clearly defined and parking bays provided adjacent to each site. Alternatively car parking should be situated in small, highly visible areas, overlooked by the occupants or security cameras. Footpaths should also be clearly defined by gardens or low fencing to avoid shortcuts being taken.

Landscaping should not restrict surveillance or create areas of concealment. At the rear of cabins and vans, low level dense planting of thorny species of shrubs can be an additional deterrent to intruders, particularly under windows. These varieties need minimum maintenance and are particularly hardy. With Australia's climate, an abundance of trees is a common feature on parks. Shade was a deciding factor for tourists when choosing a park. Yet heavy vegetation can also provide a screen for thieves. Trees should be planted with care and consideration of how their appearance when fully grown will effect surveillance. Those already planted should be pruned regularly to provide a canopy.

Many parks use environmental features such as rivers or bushland as natural boundary. A firebreak cut between scrub and the caravan park can assist in defining the park boundary and prevent offenders from hiding in vegetation.

▪ **Park Traffic**

Small children on bicycles on busy park roads was a major concern for park managers. One had introduced a "park road licence" for all children with bicycles. A system of rewards and restrictions if there was an infringement of road rules', such as not wearing a helmet, had reduced these problems.

▪ **Cabins and Onsite vans**

The usual means of criminal entry to a caravan is by forcing or overcoming the door lock. Doors are usually made of aluminium and most of the standard locks fitted to caravans are not of a high standard. Even manufacturers interviewed in the study acknowledged how easy it was to break into a caravan. It is recommended that good quality locks be fitted to cabins and onsite vans.

Thieves also enter vans or cabins through windows. Usually these are simply forced. Conventional substantial window locks should be fitted ensuring that the tongue of the catch is large enough to resist jemmying.

▪ **Amenity locks**

It is strongly recommended that keypad locks or other security locks be installed on toilets and shower areas to enable these facilities to be locked at all times. Not only will this reduce unauthorised use of park facilities, locked facilities can be considered as part of park managers' duty of care for their guests against possible sexual assault or child abuse. It is also wise to remind parents in particular that park amenities are public amenities and thus they need to accompany their young children.

▪ **Park infrastructure**

- Vending machines, coin or meter boxes should be clearly on view, emptied regularly, and protected by security cameras or other means of control such as positioning them near to staffed office or reception areas.
- All park property in cabins and onsite vans (particularly goods such as televisions or microwaves etc) should be coded or marked with identification and appropriate warning stickers displayed.

▪ **Secured Storage Areas**

- Parks should provide a safe for the secure storage of valuables for tourists.
- Provide bike racks to ensure security for bicycles.
- The provision of small storage sheds that can be padlocked to allow storage of valuable items is also recommended for those seasonal workers or other temporary residents who may travel with a greater number of possessions than the average tourist.
- Communal key card storage areas for tourists for surfboards, bikes and other recreational items that are more often stolen are also suggested.
- One camper suggested locks would be a good idea for refrigerators having had food stolen.

▪ **Teenage offenders**

The most common problem reported by park managers was groups of kids trespassing on the park. Often these groups were seen as responsible for petty theft and vandalism on parks. One manager decided to give one or two of these offenders a job for \$10 an hour to water the park gardens. He was hopeful that this would keep the kids out of trouble and that they would alert him to any other kids trespassing on the park.

Other managers believed the solution was more community activities for local youth. Often holiday parks provide facilities and holiday activities and entertainment for youth on the park that youth outside the park would like to be a part of. Petitioning local Councils to provide more activities for youth particularly over the holiday periods, may alleviate some of these problems.

▪ Networks

It is strongly recommended that park managers join industry bodies to receive the benefits of legal and management advice and support that these agencies provide. There are clear benefits for caravan park businesses to join park chains such as Big4, Top Tourist or Family Parks to access training and moral support.

It is also suggested that park managers network with other park managers in their town and region to allow a flow of information on any tourist or resident who is evicted for bad behaviour or for skipping park without paying. In one area in the study, if offenders tried to enter another park, the managers would insist on payment for the arrears incurred at the previous park. The managers interviewed reported that people always paid up when confronted. Park chains also provide a similar network of information between park managers.

Park managers also have access to the TICA Default Tenancy Control System that operates in Australia and New Zealand. Managers can enquire if a tenancy applicant has previously defaulted prior to accommodating them.

▪ Reporting Crime

If you do experience problems with crime and anti-social behaviour on your park, it is very important to let the police know. Other parks may be experiencing the same difficulties and there may be a pattern of behavior in the district, which the police can target.

It is also recommended that you record details on any incidences that occur on your park, even minor ones, which may later be of benefit for police investigations. Note all personal identifying information about offenders or the type, make, colour and registration number of a vehicle.

For more information, or if you wish to comment on the material in this leaflet, or if you have any other suggestions for crime prevention strategies for caravan parks, please contact Dr Elaine Barclay at:

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For Tourists

Acknowledgment:

The following suggestions for improving safety and security to assist holidaymakers to reduce their vulnerability to crime have been developed from the ideas and tried and true initiatives given to us by caravan park managers and tourists within a recent study of safety and security on Australian caravan parks. We sincerely thank them for their valued contribution. The project was funded by the Western Australian Office of Crime Prevention.

The study crime and safety within caravan parks was conducted in two regions in Western Australia and two regions in New South Wales through case studies of 36 caravan parks and 121 face-to-face and telephone interviews with park managers, tourists and permanent residents, police and security guards. The study revealed that crime and anti-social behaviour is generally not a major concern within caravan parks. While 20% of tourists and 32% of residents reported being a victim of crime, there was only one account in the lifetime of the mostly older aged group of victims. Most of the offences reported were petty theft. The types of items reported stolen included clothing from clotheslines or washing machines, alcohol and food from eskies, bicycles, surf-boards, wet suits, fishing rods and other sporting equipment, mobile phones, laptop computers, wallets and handbags, generators, tools, barbecues and gas bottles. Some break and enter crimes were also reported. Most crimes were opportunistic. Offenders often watched until guests left their site for the amenity buildings and then quickly accomplished snatch and grab thefts. Some offenders have detailed knowledge of various makes of caravans and know how to enter a van where people were asleep without making the van rock. Caravans and tents are easy targets for break and enter. Many caravans have triple lock security doors and locked front and rear boots but many of the fittings are plastic. Roof hatches on pop top caravans and camper-trailers and annexes are canvas and vinyl, which can easily be slashed with a knife.

The two things that are necessary for a crime to occur include a suitable or attractive target and an opportunity to carry out a crime without being detected. Campers can be targeted by thieves because of the easy access to tents and caravans, the fact that tourists carry items of interest to thieves such as mobile phones, cameras and cash. In addition, because there are so many people coming and going on the park, it is impossible to tell who should, or should not be on the park. Park managers do strive to take every care to ensure the safety of their guests, but they cannot be everywhere at all times and thieves are cunning.

The common perception of life in rural Australia is that it is virtually crime free. This has encouraged people who may be very security conscious when in the city, to lead a more trusting and casual way of life when on holiday in country areas. This means that many rarely lock up or secure their property and therefore, are easy targets for thieves. Unfortunately, crime in rural areas is on the increase and in some communities, is seriously affecting the quality of life for residents. Some rural places experience higher rates of crime than some inner city areas. Therefore, people on holiday cannot afford to be casual about security. However, this does not mean they have to accept crime or become victims. There are many things they can do.

The basic philosophy of all crime prevention programs is to decrease opportunity. Although several of these suggestions for better security may seem somewhat drastic and time consuming, they are worthwhile if a theft is prevented. You are the best judge of whether it is worth the time and trouble in your particular situation. There are no guarantees in life and that includes the prevention of crime. However, every action to prevent crime contributes to greater security. Just be aware of safety and security while travelling and more attentive to locking and securing your property.

▪ **Networks**

- Talk to other tourists about safety and security in places in Australia. Discover what places you should avoid and also the ones you should not!
- Similar information can be obtained from the internet including reviews on various camping grounds. For example, see goseeaustralia.com.au/.
- Consider joining Park Chains, which offer discounts to members and a guaranteed standard of accommodation.
- Some tourists use UHF radio to communicate with other tourists while on the road. This provides a great source of information as well as security in remote parts of Australia where mobile phone coverage is inadequate.

▪ **Camping in roadside rest areas, bush camps etc**

It is important to note that official police data indicate that campsites outside of caravan parks, such as roadside stops, bush camp sites or private backyards experience more crime. This suggests that it is safer to camp within a caravan park.

However, sometimes it is necessary to camp at roadside rest stops or bush camping areas. Roadside rest areas are located throughout Australia, providing facilities and an opportunity for travellers to stop and rest but they are not designed for long-term camping. When using these areas, try to camp where others are camping. Alternatively, camp near trucks that have stopped for the night.

One tourist recommended that in these areas, that people park their vehicle and van on an angle to enable the van to be seen from the vehicle and visa versa. This increases guardianship against someone breaking into either vehicle.

▪ **Watch Dogs**

With increasing numbers of people now travelling with dogs, this is a good form of security for tourists. One tourist travelled with a blue heeler and a rottweiler and maintained he NEVER had any trouble. More caravan parks are becoming dog-friendly to meet the needs of the market. While some object to problems with too many barking dogs or dogs let off a leash, dogs are a cheap and effective means of security. Dogs are aware often before their owners of the presence of strangers. Thieves will be less likely to break into a caravan or annex when they know a dog is present. Although most dogs function primarily as pets and secondarily for security (if at all), even an ordinary dog can have a deterrent effect.

▪ **Hitch locks**

- Immobilise your caravan whenever you park, even if for only a short time. One tourist in the study reported being on a park where thieves hooked up a van and attempted to drive off with the owners still inside! Hitch locks range from \$35 to \$350. However, the cheaper and the simplest coupling hitch is very effective. This lock links the caravan to the towing vehicle and is locked by a strong padlock. The lock clamps the entire coupling making it impossible to remove the nut under the tow bar. The safety chain loops through the lock and a padlock locks the entire assembly. It is impossible to tow a van with a safety chain.
- Many caravaners do improvise for hitch locks using chains. If you use a chain, make sure it's a strong heavy-duty one.
- Wheel locks are available but few are sold in Australia.
- Check with your local caravan spares supplier what other security options are available.

▪ **Leave the family jewels at home!**

- If you need to travel with jewellery or other valuables, a safe hidden and secured in the van is a good idea. Alternatively, when staying on a park ask the park manager to store valuables in the office safe.
- Ensure all other items of value are marked with an identification number, such as your driver's licence number and your state. Engravings enable police to identify stolen articles and increase the chance of recovery. It also makes it harder for thieves to resell stolen goods. Anything of value should be marked and listed: cameras, televisions, video and DVD players, radios, stereo systems, tools, and musical instruments. Most items can be marked with an engraving tool or with an invisible ink pen.
- Photograph or video your most valuable items against a ruler to indicate size.
- Keep an inventory of all items of value as well as your CD's and DVD's. Record serial and model numbers, inscriptions, replacement value and other identifying features.
- Record serial numbers of your caravan or motorhome's fixtures, such as microwaves, and refrigerators.
- Take photographs or videotape of the interior and exterior of your van or cabin to have a record of identifiable marks and scratches. Make sure cupboards are open. Store photos or tapes with the inventory list. Inventories and photographs help people to remember things that are missing for making reports to insurers and the police. Periodically update the inventory with new purchases and remove those items that have been sold or discarded.
- Engrave your ID number on the chassis in several places of your caravan such as under cushions, and make a record of their location. You can also do this on your vehicle in several areas including engine parts.
- It is very important to have adequate insurance cover against theft or damage to your caravan, motor home or cabin as well as for the contents.
- Install deadlocks on doors and key locks and security screens on caravan windows as most standard fittings are plastic.
- Consider installing an alarm system for added peace of mind.

■ When camping

- When you arrive at a park or any camping ground, get to know your neighbours. Keep an eye on each other's caravans, and get to know who belongs on the site.
- Ask the manager about safety and security in the area and on the park.
- Report suspicious activity, strangers and vehicles to the park manager or to the police and keep a watchful eye on their neighbours' property and vehicles.
- It's natural to want to pull everything out of a vehicle and caravan when you first arrive at a park. Don't leave eskies (particularly containing alcohol), surfboards, wet suits, bicycles, fishing gear or other recreational equipment lying about outside a van cabin or tent. These items are frequently stolen.
- Chain bicycles and secure to a van or a stable park facility with a padlock.
- Don't leave equipment in boats.
- Don't leave things of value on display inside a vehicle, caravan, cabin or tent. There were some reports of theft from vehicles on camping grounds in the study. Even a jacket on a back seat can encourage a thief to break in, to see if there are any money or credit cards in the pocket. In particular, never leave things like mobile phones, laptop computers, cameras, video games, handbags or wallets and credit cards anywhere in your vehicle, caravan or tent as these are particularly attractive to thieves.
- Also, never leave registration documents or purchase receipts in your caravan/vehicle. They could help a thief to sell it on.
- Gas cylinders, barbeques, refrigerators, washing machines and generators are also targeted by thieves. Many tourists chain and padlock these items to their caravan when on a camping ground. Use good quality locks and chains.
- Don't leave washing on clotheslines overnight. Keep an eye on washing during the day as well. Don't leave beach towels and swimmers drying out of your sight.
- Remember park amenities are public amenities. Make sure you accompany your children to toilets and showers.
- Watch children on park roads. Ensure they have bike helmets and ride their bicycles in safe areas. Not all people adhere to the speed limits on parks.

■ When you go out

- Take all your valuables with you when you leave the caravan. If this is impossible, lock them out of sight in a cupboard, or in the boot of your vehicle or van. To be really sure, think about having a specialist caravan safe fitted.
- Always close and lock doors, windows and any roof light when you leave your caravan - even if it's only for a short time. Many offences occur when people leave their camp site to use a caravan park's amenities as offenders can be watching and waiting to use that opportunity.
- **Avoid signs of "no life":** One of the most effective strategies for securing a site is to make it appear as if someone is there. "Signs of life" can be easily created.
- Leave lights on in your van/cabin when you go out in the evenings. If you are away for several days or more, automatic timer devices can make it possible to turn lights on and off in a vacant van/cabin.
- Don't advertise that you are not there by leaving notes for friends or family.
- Advise the manager or a trusted neighbour if you plan to go away for a few days or more. Encourage neighbours to report any suspicious activity. Leave details where you can be contacted.

■ Storing vans

- When your caravan is not being used, remove all personal belongings.
- Consider leaving cupboard doors and curtains open. This way, there will be no curiosity on the side of the thief. An obviously empty caravan will be of no interest.
- Caravans not in use, stored on caravan parks or even in your back yard can be targeted by thieves. Make sure the park provides high quality security.
- Immobilise the van with a hitchlock or wheel brace.

■ Reporting crime

If you have any information about criminal activity on caravan parks, stolen caravans or stolen items from vans, report this to the park manager and to the local police. One of the biggest obstacles police face in dealing with crime is the lack of reporting of crimes by victims. If the police do not hear about a crime, there is little they can do. If people do not report crimes, the offenders will get away with whatever they have done and will be encouraged to do it again. It is true that police are busy, but they are never too busy to deal with a crime no matter how trivial you think it is. Often police will find that incidences of petty crime in a particular area can present a pattern, and police can plan to deal with it. This is particularly important when thieves target tourists. Also police numbers in an area are defined by the rate of crime reported.

If you are unfortunate to be a victim of crime, your actions following the discovery of a crime can have considerable impact upon the success of the subsequent investigation by Police.

Upon discovery:

- Immediately advise the park manager and alert your neighbours to what has occurred.
- **It is important that you report the crime to police as soon as possible.** Put together as much information as you can to give police; descriptions of the items or vehicles stolen; the identification used and the identification numbers / or the serial or chassis numbers of vehicles, where the items/vehicles were last located etc and any other relevant information. Note any evidence at the scene, eg damage to locks.
- When reporting the crime to police, accurately answer any questions asked and listen to instructions given.
- Do not disturb anything in or around the area involved until the police arrive.
- Do not allow people in or around the area.
- Try to recall any information that might be of use to officers in regard to suspicious people and vehicles.

When the officers arrive:

- Cooperate fully by following their instructions.
- Provide all information possible about items taken etc.
- Try to recall where the items/vehicle were purchased and provide descriptive information.
- If you recall additional information after the officers have gone, contact the station immediately.
- Review with officers what could have been done to avert a crime. Implement measures to prevent it happening again.
-

Other means of reporting crimes

If you prefer not to report to the local Police Station, there are other ways. You may choose to report a crime anonymously using the Police Assistance Line or Crimestoppers. After a crime has been reported over the telephone, customers are provided with a reference number. It is important to retain this number for future reference.

Crimestoppers 1800 333 000

TTY 9211 3776 (NSW) or 9374 4399 (WA)

Police Assistance Line 131444

For more information, or if you wish to comment on the material in this leaflet, or if you have any other suggestions for crime prevention strategies for caravan parks, please contact Dr Elaine Barclay at:

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