

School Security Assessment Programme in Australia

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Since 1999 the Department of Education and Training in Western Australia has operated a successful security risk management programme. Its strategy is to help school principals both evaluate whether existing controls comply with security procedures and provide adequate, cost-effective levels of security to meet the risks faced by their schools.

The state-wide programme follows a structured risk management approach focusing on the safety and security of people, information provision, and assets in the school environment.

To assist school principals, a Security Risk Assessment Programme was developed on a CD-Rom. The CD-Rom begins with a short video showing the process for undertaking a Security Risk Assessment of a school site by performing the following actions:

- Identify areas in the school that have a history of high-frequency and high-cost vandal damage.
- Analyse which areas are regularly targeted.
- Carry out a site risk review to identify why the particular areas are targeted and to determine the most appropriate security treatments. In the site review process, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing security measures and recommend whether improvements are necessary.
- Cost and review each treatment for cost effectiveness.
- Implement selected treatments.
- Monitor the ongoing effectiveness of the new security arrangements.

After the video is a step-by-step guide on how a school can complete the Security Risk Assessment spreadsheet. The spreadsheet has provision to enter types of risk, existing controls, adequacies of controls, consequences of each identified risk, the likelihood of risks occurring, and the number and cost of incidents (taken over a three-year period).

Based on the data entered, a formula contained in the spreadsheet calculates the level of risk from low to extreme. The risks can also be ranked by order of severity. This helps plan which of the treatments to implement first, based on the severity of the risk and budget allocation.

Additional sections on the CD-Rom include controls and treatments, risk tables, and a treatment plan. To develop the treatment plan, the principal provides a description of the school plan including costs of individual treatments and the location where the proposed treatments will be applied.

Photo: DET Research & Development image bank



Mindarie Senior College

This exemplary school entry contains a welcome statement and offers aesthetic appeal. It illustrates the strong ownership by the school community who take pride in their school's appearance, which is reflected in student behaviour. The area's spaciousness and exposure are conducive to natural surveillance.

2

The types of treatments include:

- *Procedure changes and on-site risk management programmes.*
- *Physical barriers:* This can be described as target hardening whereby the building or contents are physically secured, therefore reducing the opportunity for a successful criminal action. Physical barriers consist of fencing, security screens, gates and deadlocks which inhibit access to potential crime areas in the school.
- *Landscape management:* Commonly known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), this involves better use of the environment to increase natural surveillance and provides greater opportunity for people to detect and report unauthorised activity. Effective landscaping management involves more than simply choosing the right plant; it may involve the plant's location. For example a tree planted close to a building may not impact on the natural surveillance of the site; however, it may allow access onto the roof or create a fire hazard due to falling leaves. CPTED may involve clearing a surveillance corridor through trees and shrubs, or avoiding shrubbery that creates a dense environment, particularly surrounding paths and buildings.
- *Lighting:* Effective lighting reduces the opportunities for concealment while increasing the likelihood of detection. The following questions should be asked:
 - Are excessive glare and dark shadows avoided?
 - Is light used to observe unauthorised persons or discourage intruders?
 - Does light assist with the safe movement of people?
 - Is the light fitting vandal resistant?

- What is the relative cost and life of the lamp?
- What is the cost of installation (on a pole or a building)?
- **Electronic security:** This includes the use of movement detectors, glass break detectors, smoke detectors and duress alarms.
- **Ownership/territorial reinforcement:** The concept of ownership or territorial reinforcement refers to the process that ensures school sites and buildings appear cared for. This involves not only school staff and students, but also the community through the School Watch programme. Sound ground maintenance and rubbish removal are required. An entry statement at the front of the school and use of the site after hours can provide a sense of ownership. Other ideas to consider are:
 - Signage that provides visitors with clear directions.
 - Immediate repair of faulty building components and damage.
 - Immediate removal of graffiti.
 - A School Watch programme.
 - Student involvement in establishing projects around the school.
 - A distinct design and texture for the pathway leading from the street to the school.
 - Low-level hedges that direct visitors to the area where supervision is available.

The statistics below show that significant cost savings can be achieved by applying a structured risk management approach to ensure effective use of available resources.

Table 1. **Cost of damage and security treatment at five schools in Western Australia¹**

Schools	Cost of damage (over three years)	Cost of security treatment	Security treatment completion date
School A	AUD 220 865	AUD 26 902	23 December 2004
School B	AUD 326 210	AUD 27 950	13 June 2005
School C	AUD 261 338	AUD 48 807	7 June 2005
School D	AUD 155 588	AUD 27 166	22 November 2004
School E	AUD 151 739	AUD 34 661	1 July 2005

Table 2. **Cost of crime prior to and after security treatment¹**

Schools	Cost of crime prior to security treatment	Cost of crime after security treatment ²	Percentage change
School A	AUD 174 803	AUD 54 643	-68.74%
School B	AUD 97 662	AUD 33 325	-65.88%
School C	AUD 96 494	AUD 25 302	-73.78%
School D	AUD 81 093	AUD 57 157	-29.52%
School E ³	AUD 7 222	AUD 22 960	+218%

1. In Australian dollars.

2. To June 2006.

3. The increase in crime at School E can be attributed to vandal damage and an isolated occurrence where computers were stolen. Access to these computers was made easy due to their location near unprotected windows. Security screens have since been placed over these windows and no further incidents have been recorded. The incidence of crime and associated costs at School E has decreased since June 2006.

Table 3. **Number of offences prior to and after security treatment**

Schools	Number of offences prior to security treatment	Number of offences after security treatment ²	Percentage change
School A	166	100	-39.76%
School B	114	92	-19.30%
School C	109	83	-23.85%
School D	96	83	-13.54%
School E ³	23	50	+117%

For notes 2 and 3, see Table 2.

The observable long-term outcomes of implementing the Security Risk Assessment Programme are as follows:

- Reducing the financial impact on the Department of Education and Training.
- Improving staff and student morale.
- Reducing vandalism.
- Reducing property theft.
- Increasing the value of government assets.
- Reducing negative media attention and its impact on a school's reputation.

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