

## **Tertiary Education in Security and Policing in Australia**

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### Abstract

This paper reports on the current status of police and security education in Australian universities and technical colleges. The study was undertaken in the context of calls for greater professionalization of policing and security along with a variety of conduct scandals that have driven reform agendas for both sectors. The study found that police studies had a significant profile in universities with a wide range of courses available, but virtually no profile in technical and further education (TAFE) colleges. Conversely, protective security offerings were proportionately more prominent in the TAFE sector than in universities. Courses in information and communication technology security were more common across universities and TAFE. The research also found that, of the 39 Australian universities, nine have research centres related generally to policing and security. These also appeared to favour policing over security. We argue that these findings should be of concern, given the fact that private and public sector security services have eclipsed police, in numbers at least, in many jurisdictions. Security should, we argue, be counted as an equal partner with police in crime prevention services. In addition, we argue that those engaged in security management should be given greater opportunities for study at the university level. Moreover, security studies should have an expanded research focus.

### Trends in Policing and Security

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, public sector police have been seen as the primary organisation through which law enforcement and crime prevention services are provided to communities. From the 1960s, however, there has been a world-wide 'rebirth' of private security (Johnson 1992). Numbers of security personnel, however, vary enormously across jurisdictions, particularly in terms of the ratio of private security to police. For instance, in continental Europe private security numbers have generally remained well below those of police, whereas in South Africa, the United States and the United Kingdom the private security sector has outstripped police (van Steden and Sarre 2007). Many countries in transition to democracy and/or capitalism, such as Russia and China, have seen very rapid growth in private security in the last decade. In one of the most recent reviews, van Dijk estimated that, in the mid-2000s, 'worldwide, more people are employed as a private security officer (348 per 100,000) than as a police officer (318 per 100,000)' (2008 p. 15).

The growth of private security has been influenced by a variety of factors. Market demand appears as the most significant factor, with consumption of security driven initially by the rapid rise in crime experienced in many countries from the 1970s to the 1990s. Despite declining crime rates, high levels of crime remain a feature of many societies, and there is an ongoing shift in consciousness away from reliance on police to 'self-protection' (Sarre and Prenzler 2009) or 'responsive securitization' (van Dijk 2008). This includes the provision of security by governments outside the regular policing

framework. Other contributing factors include the cost gap between security and police, increased security standards for insurance and workplace safety, improvements in security technology, and the post-9/11 counter-terrorism agenda as it relates to the protection of critical infrastructure.

Despite this growth in protective security, some significant differences remain between security and police. The investigations sector in private security remains very small, whereas the pursuit and prosecution of offenders after crimes have been committed remains a major task for public police. Security, on the other hand, is much more prominent as a preventive presence, in large part because of the much lower price of labour, with manpower increasingly supplemented or replaced by electronic surveillance. Police generally also have higher social status than security providers, are better trained and educated, with more secure full-time employment, and are more closely regulated in terms of corruption prevention controls (Sarre and Prenzler 2009; Prenzler, Earle and Sarre 2009). At the same time, it has been argued that there is little or nothing that police do that private security cannot also do (including on a contract basis with governments). Private providers can conduct patrols, engage in complex investigations and serve in crowd control operations. Nonetheless, while police retain a strong prosecution orientation, private security has been described as ‘the primary protective resource’ in modern society (Pastor 2003 p. 44).

The growth of private security has thrown up a complex set of social issues and challenges for government policy. One critique asserts that security is overly intrusive and represents an insidious threat to civil liberties. At the same time, international research has found that security directly contributes to reductions in criminal victimisation, albeit with a widening gap world-wide between victimisation of the rich and poor relative to their ability to afford security (van Dijk 2008 pp. 129ff). There is, therefore, an argument for more security. However, the expansion of security also puts many consumers and third parties at risk from a range of abuses. Growth in security has involved scandals and diverse problems related to competency and conduct, including insider crime, violence and harassment by security providers, fraud in contracting, false advertising, inadequate training, and misuse of firearms. The main growth period for security – from the 1970s to the 1990s – also saw enormous problems with police corruption in many jurisdictions around the world, and recurring misconduct has driven increased government regulation of both sectors (Button and George 2006, Sarre and Prenzler 2009). A recent study of conduct issues in Australian security – across the private and public sectors – revealed two major problem areas: violence by crowd controllers at entertainment venues and inadequate security systems, including at major institutions. The latter problem highlighted deficits in basic security management skills. While increased government regulation was focused on the ‘lower end’ of security operative screening and training, the ‘higher end’ of security management had been left largely untouched (Prenzler and Sarre 2008). This same problem has been identified in other jurisdictions (Button 2008).

*Education, Training and Research*

Tertiary (post-high school) education and training have repeatedly been recommended as key requirements for improved standards in policing and security (Griever 2007). By way of an example in Australia, the Fitzgerald Inquiry into police corruption in Queensland argued that:

[p]olice need more education to cope with their increasingly complex role. Officers should be encouraged to undertake higher education in colleges of advanced education and other tertiary institutions along with students from other disciplines. There should be a long term move to recruit more graduates (Fitzgerald 1989 p. 365).

Commissioner Fitzgerald made a close association between the police culture of mismanagement and corruption he identified and the absence of tertiary education in the police profile. He sought to apply the findings of US research that indicated that tertiary education generated a broader awareness of the social context of policing and contributed to improved management skills; as well as producing improvements in basic operational skills of communication, negotiation and problem solving (Carter, Sapp and Stephens 1989; Paoline and Terrill 2007).

In the US, a major review by Carter, Sapp and Stevens (1989) estimated that between 1960 and 1988 the percentage of police with no college education reduced from 80.0% to 34.8%, with those having 2 to 3 years of college education increasing from 7.3% to 22.1%, and those with four or more years increasing from 2.7% to 22.6% (p. 38). Since the publication of their work, there appears to have been no similar systematic national studies of police education in the US. Most likely, internationally, there has been a trend towards increasing levels of police tertiary qualifications, and even degree entry in some jurisdictions. Nonetheless, it is likely that there are still very low proportions of police with degrees in most countries. Whatever increases have occurred tend to flow on from changes in the general population, rather than deliberate police policy (Baro and Burlingame 1999, Kratcoski and Das 2007).

In Australia, increased tertiary education for police has been driven in part by 'credential creep' but also by deliberate policy emanating from major reviews and corruption inquiries. Notable recent reports include Fitzgerald (1989) in Queensland, Wood (1997) in New South Wales and Kennedy (2004) in Western Australia. In New South Wales and Western Australia the police academies have been integrated with universities, while in other states and territories there is considerable weight given to tertiary education in recruit selection and in promotion criteria. The Australian Federal Police now have a system of graduate entry (Trofymowych 2007/8, Wimshurst and Ransley 2007).

As noted above, a major point of difference between police and security personnel has been in the area of education. Where university education, or education in 'liberal arts' colleges, has been proposed as a core component of police reform, the movement to improve standards in security personnel has been focused on compulsory training at the

technical college level. Increased regulation of the industry internationally has centred on an occupational licensing system based on two main elements: the application of disqualifying offences through criminal history checks and compulsory pre-licence training. In most countries, however, mandated training has often been limited to one to three days. The training generally takes place in private academies or government funded technical colleges. Reforms in the 2000s in some European countries have increased training requirements up to a month, but little more overall (Button and George 2006, CoESS 2008).

Reforms in education and training for police and security may have, therefore, driven an even greater wedge between the two sectors. While private security personnel numbers are rising and their role is becoming more akin to that of sworn police officers, they are not afforded the same depth and breadth of training that police officers experience. A typical police officer (in an advanced democracy) may have a college or university degree and up to six months of skills training in an academy. Middle and senior level police managers are increasingly expected to have graduate qualifications in management and/or law. A private or public sector security officer may typically have a high school certificate and up to eight hours training, with hours beyond that only in a few jurisdictions. Security managers may have advanced qualifications, but this is less likely to be a standard requirement in the more fragmented and less regulated world of security (Borodzicz and Gibson 2006).

The growth of tertiary education for police has been mirrored to a considerable extent by enormous growth in policing research conducted by university researchers. University-based research has been vital for understanding many of the problems that beset modern policing and also for scientifically demonstrating best practice in law enforcement, crime prevention and integrity management. University-based research has also contributed significantly to addressing issues of effective security strategies (e.g., Clarke 1997) and strategies for improving conduct and competency in the industry (e.g., Button and George 2006). Nonetheless, research on security has lagged well behind that on police and the criminal justice system despite continuing high crime rates in most societies and the potential for security to produce significant reductions in crime (Giever 2007).

## **Method**

The primary purpose of the present study was to map the field of tertiary education in policing and security in Australia in terms of the availability of courses and the distribution of courses between the two main sectors of universities and 'TAFE' – colleges of 'Technical and Further Education'. The research also addressed the distribution of dedicated research centres in universities – keeping in mind that a fundamental distinction between universities and TAFE in Australia is that research is essentially exclusive to universities. In theory, the convergence of roles between police and security and the social importance of both sectors should see a roughly similar profile for teaching and research, especially in universities.

A list of the 39 universities in Australia was obtained from the Australian Education Network website (Australian Education Network 2008a). The websites of each of the universities were used to access online handbooks for 2009. The same website was used to search state-level TAFE websites, producing a total of 66 TAFE 'institute' websites (Australian Education Network 2008b). The university handbooks list 'courses' ('subjects' or 'units') and 'programs' (sets of courses resulting in qualifications such as certificates, diplomas and degrees). TAFEs offer certificate and diploma level 'programs'. However, they do not consistently use the term 'program' in descriptions of qualifications and course combinations available in this complex sector. Consequently, analysis of the TAFE sites was confined to course lists. The university lists were systematically searched for policing and security programs and courses, and the TAFE lists were searched for courses, using the following search terms: 'police', 'policing', 'law enforcement' and 'security'. (These terms were also used to search for university research centres.) Programs and courses concerned with security in terms of national security and defence studies were excluded unless the course information specifically identified content related to human security personnel, police or information and communications security.

The search produced a total of 456 programs and courses across both sectors. A more detailed examination was made of course and program titles, and online descriptions of content and associated brochures, to determine whether the training was focused on policing, security or a hybrid version of the two. After commencing the data analysis, it became clear that there were a large number of offerings in information and communication technology security (ICT). It was felt that these computer-based courses were qualitatively different from the type of security – discussed in the introduction to this paper – that focused on the protection of assets and people, utilising human resources and electronic surveillance. Consequently, a distinction was made between (1) 'policing', (2) 'protective security', (3) 'ICT security' and (4) 'hybrids' of (1) and (2).

## **Findings**

As noted, 456 cases of policing and security programs and courses were identified in Australian universities and TAFE institutes on offer in 2009. This involved 54 TAFE courses, 347 university courses and 55 university programs. As noted in the method section, 'courses' – as sub-components of 'programs' – could be identified for both universities and TAFES, but TAFE programs could not be consistently identified. Consequently, courses provide the most basic unit of analysis that could also be applied across both sectors. Of the 39 universities, 35 (90%) had courses in the four categories, and nine (23%) had programs. The number of universities with 'policing' courses was 19 (49%) and the number with 'policing' programs was six (15%). The number of universities with 'protective security' courses was 13 (33%) and with 'protective security' programs the number was two (5%). The same type of analysis was not possible for the 66 TAFE campuses because of ambiguous reporting formats.

In total, 401 courses were examined across the four categories, with 347 (87%) in universities and 54 (13%) in TAFE. Figure 1 shows that of the 347 university courses, the

majority (62%) were dedicated to 'ICT security', with 'policing' accounting for 23%, 'protective security' 12% and 'hybrids' of policing and protective security accounting for 3%.

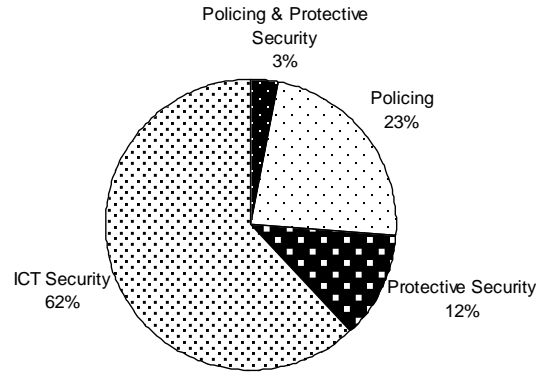


Figure 1. Percentages of Policing, Protective Security, ICT Security & Hybrid University Courses.

Removal of the ICT security courses at the university level left 132 courses specialising in policing and/or protective security. As can be seen in Figure 2, a policing-focus dominated at 62% at the university course level.

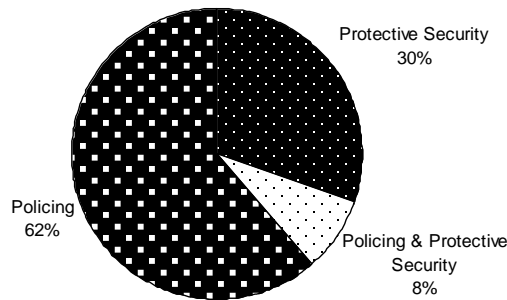


Figure 2. Percentages of Policing, Protective Security and Hybrid University Courses – Excluding ICT Security

Figure 3 shows that of the 54 TAFE courses, 50% were dedicated to ICT security, with policing accounting for 43%, and protective security 7%. There were no hybrids.

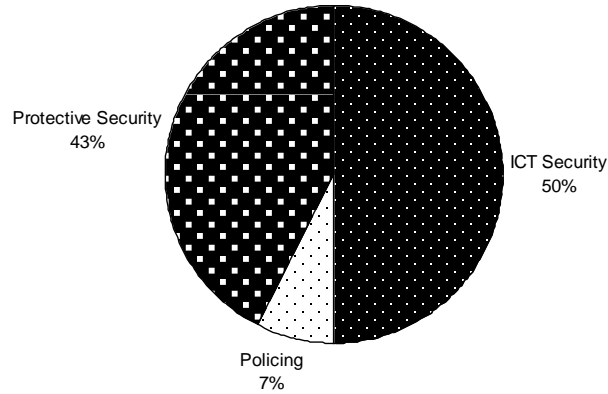


Figure 3. Percentages of Policing, Protective Security and ICT Security TAFE Courses.

Removal of the ICT security courses at the TAFE level left 31 courses specialising in policing and/or protective security. As can be seen in Figure 4, a protective security focus dominated at 85% at the TAFE course level.

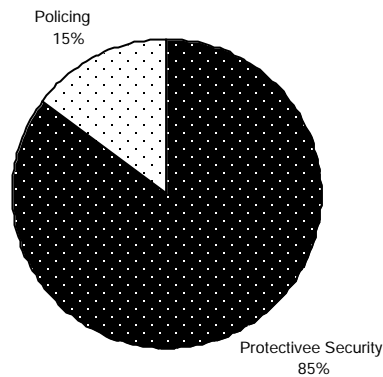


Figure 4. Percentages of Policing and Protective Security TAFE Courses – Excluding ICT

In summary, across the education-provider level of analysis, there were three main findings on policing and security courses and programs. First, ICT security training represented a large and significant proportion of the courses and programs at both universities and TAFE. Second, a large majority of police offerings was provided by universities in both programs and courses. TAFE offerings in policing were extremely



limited, with only four policing courses available throughout Australia. Third, protective security courses outweighed policing courses in TAFE institutes. Protective security training was found to comprise 85% of TAFE policing and security courses.

Some caveats need to be applied to these findings. Although policing dominated over protective security in universities, the number of protective security courses was 40 (with a further 11 hybrid policing and protective security courses), which outnumbered the 23 available through TAFE. The large majority of TAFE protective security courses had titles that were operationally oriented – such as ‘security operations’, ‘crowd control’ or ‘security guard’ – with six having management oriented titles such as ‘security and risk management’. Of the 40 university courses, 11 were clearly focused on management, while half had operationally oriented titles such as ‘industrial security procedures’ and ‘intrusion detection systems’.

Of particular note is the amount of specialisation and concentration in the policing and security field in universities, a fact not immediately apparent in the above figures. Charles Sturt University, based in New South Wales, was the largest provider of policing programs and courses, with 13 (48%) of all policing university programs and 40 (43%) of all policing university courses. When it came to protective security, Edith Cowan University in Western Australia was the only university with dedicated programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels – including a PhD in Security Sciences. ‘Security Sciences’ at Edith Cowan housed the majority of the operationally and management oriented protective security courses, and also offered a large suite of ICT security offerings. ICT security is spread much more widely across universities. From the total university sample, ICT security was identified in 46% of programs and 62% of courses. It was also identified in 50% of the TAFE sample.

Table 1 identifies the university research centres that are currently dedicated to policing and security research. Nine centres were identified across nine universities. The very small number of ICT security research centres is somewhat surprising given the salience of ICT security problems and the large number of ICT security courses. The table also indicates that policing and protective security studies were fairly evenly spread across the research centres. However, a closer inspection of centre websites showed that ‘security’ in most cases tended to be less about protective security and the work of the security industry and more about national and regional security and defence.

Table 1  
*University Research Centres in Policing and/or Security*

Research Centre	University
Security 21: International Centre for Security & Justice	Australian National University
Security Research Centre	Edith Cowan University
Sellenger Centre for Research in Law, Justice & Policing	Edith Cowan University

Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence in Policing & Security	Based at Griffith University with nodes at Australian National University, University of Queensland and Charles Sturt University
Centre for Policing, Intelligence & Counterterrorism	Macquarie University
Information Security Institute	Queensland University of Technology
Information Security Research Lab	Swinburne University
Defence & Security Applications Research Centre	University of New South Wales
Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies	University of Tasmania

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## Discussion

The research presents a mixed picture in terms of positive and negative implications. The extent of police studies in Australian universities can be interpreted in generally positive terms. Policing is sufficiently complex, and of sufficient importance to the qualities of life and liberty, to warrant attention at the higher level, and through the teaching and research nexus provided by universities. The prominence of police studies in universities is also fairly easy to explain. The public sector nature of policing makes it subject to direct policy changes by government. It is also relatively easy to leverage change, for example, through adjusted police recruitment and promotion criteria. Although university input into police education is handled differently in each jurisdiction, the fact that Australian policing consists of only eight large departments also makes for greater national consistency. Furthermore, governments are able to absorb the additional costs of university-based police education in prosperous countries – like Australia – with high tax revenues and where policing budgets are something of a sacred cow. In addition, police in Australia have always run their own academies so that police training never became entrenched in technical colleges.

The prominence of ICT security in both universities and the TAFE sector also appears as a positive development. Internet-based crime represents a major threat to the safety and security of ordinary people, as well as posing an enormous threat to integrity in business operations and government (van Dijk 2008). TAFE provides a convenient location for relatively short base-level training programs, with direct entry to employment. University programs are thus able to address the higher end of the market with more extended training and greater focus on critical thinking, problem-solving, research skill development and independent learning. At the same time they are able to address management-level issues in ICT security.

The availability of protective security training at the TAFE level also has positive aspects. As noted in the introduction, the relatively low cost of security personnel has been one factor in the growth of security services. While many graduates of these courses may not be able to demand more than the minimum wage, TAFE courses tend to be shorter, more vocationally and practically focused, and offer a more direct route to employment. The absence of a research mission at technical colleges also reduces costs. The presence of operationally oriented protective security courses in TAFE is consistent with international research showing security skill-development is largely dealt with through technical college training (Button and George 2006). For economic and practical reasons it makes sense for technical colleges to provide base-level mandated training in security, oriented towards fulfilling minimum requirements for government licensing. One of these practicalities is that a great number of security guarding duties are provided by part-time officers, many of whom use security as a convenient source of secondary employment (Sarre and Prenzler 2009). What is arguably desirable, however, is a much wider range of course offerings in security management at the university level, where more attention can be given to theory and to a critical approach to the role of security in society. Legal issues in security can also be given more attention at the university level where legal training is readily available in one of the 31 law schools.

The research also found that policing and security courses were largely separated, with very little in the way of hybrid or integrated offerings. This also reflects the historical divide between police and security, where lack of cooperation and mutual suspicion have, in part, been fuelled by differing educational levels (Prenzler and Sarre 2007). One suggestion aimed at breaking down barriers and initiating cooperative relationships has been to develop government sponsored joint colleges, for both operational level training and management education (Law Commission of Canada 2002).

When it comes to university-based research, the findings showed something of a strong tendency towards dedicated police research in Australia. This is partially reflective of the fact, as noted in the introduction, that theoretical and empirical research in the area of private and public sector security is limited in comparison to policing. However, there were some notable combinations of security and policing within centres. This foreshadows much promise for a more integrated science of crime prevention.

## **Conclusion**

The above research into the profile of police and security studies in tertiary teaching and research revealed a lopsided picture. Police education dominates in universities and security studies dominate in TAFE colleges. This is not necessarily a bad thing. TAFE training, in theory at least, provides an efficient means of providing entry-level skills to security operatives who work within a limited sphere. Any attempt to put security training into universities could adversely affect the supply of relatively cheap labour for basic security duties. At the same time, it is notable that a convergence in many police and security functions stands in contrast to the divergence of educational standards. Certainly, there would seem to be a case for universities to offer more programs and

courses in the area of security management and advanced security operations in addition to policing qualifications and research.

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