

# Information Bulletin

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## ROBBERY

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South Australian police statistics recorded 1,167 robbery offences in 1997, and revealed a substantial increase in the following year with a total of 1,706 robbery offences. This report is an attempt to provide detailed information on a sample of robbery offences. It aims to get behind the statistics and obtain some understanding of the complexities surrounding the incident itself.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

South Australian police statistics recorded 1,167 robbery offences in 1997, and revealed a substantial increase in the following year with a total of 1,706 robbery offences. While the numbers dropped in 1999, the extent of the decrease was not sufficient to overcome the large upswing of the previous year (Office of Crime Statistics 2000: 29). Hence, robbery offences remain an area of some interest. However, the raw statistics tell us little about the nature of the incident itself or the range of situations covered by this one offence category. This report is an attempt to provide detailed information on a sample of robbery offences. It aims to get behind the statistics and obtain some understanding of the complexities surrounding the incident itself.

A wide range of behaviours may be recorded under the offence of armed robbery. For example, this offence may cover an armed hold-up of a bank where a number of offenders use firearms. It may apply to an incident in which a normal social interaction between two teenagers who know each other escalates to the point where one becomes aggressive and displays a knife. Even when not involved in the actual confrontation, people who took part in the planning and then sharing of the proceeds may end up being apprehended for robbery. In addition, slightly different roles played by the individuals involved, and the level of victim, witness and offender information may result in different charges being recorded against different people involved in the one incident.

This research focuses on juvenile apprehensions for armed robbery in the two years of 1997 and 1998. This means that allegations of unarmed robbery are not considered. As stated earlier, the aim of this report was to get behind the statistics and understand some of the complexities surrounding the incidents. The offence of armed robbery was chosen because it provided a sample that was small enough to allow study of the narratives or descriptions of the events surrounding the offences as recorded by police on the apprehension reports. By using this quite detailed descriptive data, it has been possible to obtain some insight into the range of incidents that lead to juvenile apprehensions for armed robbery.

This report will cover the following aspects:

- the age, sex and Aboriginality of those juveniles charged with armed robbery in the two years 1997 and 1998;
- the number of discrete incidents that led to these apprehensions;
- the number of adults and additional juveniles apprehended in relation to those incidents;
- characteristics of the incidents, including the social dynamics surrounding the armed robberies, the type of weapon used, if a disguise was worn, the value of any property taken, the injuries inflicted and the location of the incident; and
- finally, some case details.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Apprehensions of juveniles for armed robbery

When an armed robbery occurs, the victim may or may not report the matter to police. For those matters that are reported to police, the victim or witness may not be able to accurately identify whether or not the perpetrator belonged to the 10 – 17 year old age group. This means that it is not possible to determine the full extent of juvenile involvement in armed robbery incidents. It is only when an alleged offender is apprehended that his/her age is recorded. This study then is limited to those young people actually apprehended for armed robbery offences. It does not include offences that were not reported to police. Similarly, it does not include those offences that were recorded by police but were never cleared by way of an apprehension of a juvenile.

The starting point for this research was to extract data from the SAPOL's Police apprehension reports database that met each of the following criteria:

- the report included an allegation of actual or attempted armed robbery (specifically *robbery with a firearm, robbery with other weapon*);
- the apprehension report was filed during 1997 or 1998; and
- the alleged offender was under the age of 18 at the date of the offence.

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The next stage was to link these armed robbery apprehensions with the actual incidents which gave rise to them. In so doing, it should be stressed that there is no simple one-to-one relationship between the two. For example:

- If more than one offender is involved in the criminal incident and apprehended by police, a separate apprehension report is filed against each co-offender.
- If the apprehending officer is aware that a young person has committed several offences on the same day, ordinarily one apprehension report that incorporates all detected offences will be submitted. Similarly, if a youth has allegedly committed several offences of a like nature over several months and the apprehending officer becomes aware of all of these offences as part of a single investigation, they may all be included in the one report.

This means that there can be situations where a number of apprehension reports are generated from the one incident, and conversely, details of charges arising from two or more incidents may be recorded on the one apprehension report. A detailed explanation of the methodology used to link apprehension reports involving a charge of armed robbery with the appropriate incident is detailed in Appendix A.

### **Information in the apprehension report ‘narratives’**

Once the individual incidents were identified, the apprehension report ‘narratives’ were used to obtain an understanding of the complexities surrounding the incidents. The narrative gives the victim’s account of events, and may contain information obtained from any witnesses. These details from the victims and witnesses provide a much greater understanding of the circumstances of the incident than can be gained from an analysis of the statistical information alone. In addition, these narratives usually contain a section headed ‘police’. This typically provides summary details of the police investigation including their dealings with victims, witnesses and the apprehended person.

The apprehension report narrative also includes a section headed ‘accused’ or ‘defendant’. This provides some details of the apprehended person’s response to the allegation, and sometimes the accused’s motivation for being involved or the circumstances leading to the incident.

As most of the required information was far more consistently provided in the victim and witness sections of the narratives, these were used as the primary source of information. However, it needs to be noted that all sections of these narratives have some limitations. It is possible that victims and witnesses may be mistaken about some details, or have motives for providing inaccurate information. In addition, the information may vary considerably depending upon what the police choose to record, the level of detail included and how information provided by victims, witnesses or defendants is interpreted. The fact that a particular detail is not included in the information does not necessarily mean that this did not occur.

The information obtained from the narratives was used to reconstruct the social dynamics of the incident, as outlined below.

### ***Number in the victim group***

From the apprehension report narratives it was possible to determine the number of people who were with the targeted victim during an incident. In official crime statistics the term ‘victim’ is usually used in the narrow sense of the person who was directly confronted. However, there may be additional people present during the incident who are affected by the confrontation. This study attempted to portray some of this complexity, and uses the concept of the number of people in the victim group. The following example provides an illustration of how this number was determined:

Three young teenagers (Group A) meet up with another group of four young people (Group B), and one of Group A is confronted by one of Group B who displays a knife and demands the T-shirt that she is wearing. In this case, police statistics would record one victim for this incident. However, in the following discussion the number in the ‘victim group’ would be considered to be three.

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Determining the number in the ‘victim group’ was difficult for some incidents where either the exact numbers were not recorded or the situation was more fluid in that during the course of the incident, people moved in and out of the ‘victim group’. In such situations, a best guess had to be made.

### *Number in the perpetrator group*

Just as official crime statistics have limitations with respect to reporting on victims, they do not present the full picture with respect to the perpetrators. In some incidents, only one or two individuals play an active role in the direct confrontation. The others may provide some support, or may simply be observers, or their roles may be ambiguous. Police then have to make a decision regarding the number of people against whom they will take action. In some cases, formal police apprehension reports are not lodged for all those who were present with the person(s) considered to be the chief perpetrator(s). However, the presence of a group with the central perpetrator(s) can be considered to create an additional dimension of threat to the victim, and is part of the social dynamic of the incident.

Using the apprehension narratives, it was possible to determine the number in the ‘perpetrator group’ – that is the number of people present with the chief perpetrator(s) during the confrontation. In the example discussed in the preceding section, the number in the ‘perpetrator group’ would be four. For most incidents, the information provided by the narratives was clear. However, in a small number of cases, the narratives did not give precise details and, as was the case with some of the ‘victim group’ numbers, a best guess had to be made.

### *Perpetrator known to victim*

The study was able to explore a widely held general perception that the perpetrators of robbery are strangers to the victim. The apprehension narratives provided information on this aspect of the social dynamics of the incident.

### *Juvenile victims*

The final social dynamic studied was whether or not the victim was a young person. An incident in which the victim was a juvenile would mean that the armed robbery was one in which juveniles targeted other juveniles. Victim age was obtained from either the information on the narrative or in the official crime statistics file. This had some limitations. As discussed earlier, ‘victim group’ has been defined more broadly here than in police statistics. This meant that age was not recorded for all those considered by this study to be part of the ‘victim group’. However, age details were usually recorded for persons identified by the police as the victim(s) and were sometimes recorded for witnesses.

## **3. APPREHENSIONS OF JUVENILES FOR ARMED ROBBERY, 1997 and 1998**

In 1997, police filed 36 apprehension reports containing an allegation of armed robbery against juveniles. In 1998, 55 such apprehension reports were recorded. This means that in total across the two years under study, there were 91 juvenile apprehensions listing an allegation of armed robbery. Included in the offence grouping of armed robbery were seven cases where the apprehension report listed attempted armed robbery and one where the allegation was aiding and abetting armed robbery.

As shown in the Table 1 the majority of these 91 apprehensions involved males. Females accounted for one-fifth of all the armed robbery apprehensions. Youths aged 16 years or more represented three-fifths of the total. However, for females the age distribution was somewhat different from this general age profile. Almost two-thirds (12) of the 19 females were in the 13 – 15 year age group, compared with only about one-quarter of the males.

**Table 1 Juvenile apprehensions involving an allegation of armed robbery 1997 – 1998  
Sex by age**

	10-12 years	13-15 years	16 years or over	Total
Male	1	20	51	72
Female	3	12	4	19
Total	4	32	55	91

Aboriginal young people accounted for one-fifth of the juvenile apprehensions for armed robbery in these two years (see Table 2). Youths aged 16 years or over represented a higher proportion of the Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal apprehensions (over three-quarters compared with just over one-half respectively).

**Table 2 Juvenile apprehensions involving an allegation of armed robbery 1997 – 1998  
Aboriginality by age**

	10-12 years	13-15 years	16 years or over	Total
Aboriginal	1	3	15	19
Non-Aboriginal	3	27	36	66
Not Known	0	2	4	6
Total	4	32	55	91

As shown in Table 3, females accounted for approximately equal proportions of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal apprehensions (about one-fifth).

**Table 3 Juvenile apprehensions involving an allegation of armed robbery 1997 – 1998  
Aboriginality by sex**

	Female	Male	Total
Aboriginal	4	15	19
Non-Aboriginal	14	52	66
Not Known	1	5	6
Total	19	72	91

The great majority of juveniles apprehended for armed robbery in 1997 and 1998 had only one ‘armed robbery’ apprehension recorded in those two years. There were only three juveniles who had more than one apprehension for this offence during the study period. Each of these young people had two separate apprehensions listing an allegation of armed robbery.

- For the first juvenile, the two apprehension reports listed two separate armed robbery incidents at service stations. The incidents occurred within the space of three days.
- Each of the two apprehension reports for the second young person listed an armed robbery incident in which a car was stolen after the owner was threatened with a knife. Both incidents occurred within a month of each other.
- For the third juvenile, one apprehension report listed an incident that occurred on a Saturday afternoon in a suburban street and the other the following Sunday in a carpark.

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#### 4. RELATING APPREHENSIONS TO DISCRETE INCIDENTS

##### Number of apprehensions per incident

As noted earlier, in 1997 police filed 36 apprehension reports alleging that a juvenile had been involved in an armed robbery. However, when the victim reports and narratives associated with these apprehensions were identified, it was found that the 36 apprehensions related to only 24 incidents involving 26 victims. The substantially higher number of apprehensions than incidents was largely due to the fact that two of the incidents each led to the apprehension of five juveniles. Table 4 presents the above information for 1997 and the equivalent data for 1998.

**Table 4 Juvenile apprehension reports involving armed robbery allegations and associated discrete armed robbery incidents 1997 – 1998**

	No. of juvenile apprehensions recorded in year	No. of Victim Reports associated with apprehension reports	No. of Discrete Armed Robbery Incidents
1997	36	26	24
1998	55	55	50
Total for the two years	91	81	74

##### Number of incidents per apprehension report

As noted one apprehension report may list armed robbery charges that stem from more than one armed robbery incident. Table 5 provides information on the number of armed robbery incidents recorded on individual apprehension reports. As can be seen, the majority of juvenile apprehensions (94.5%) related to only one armed robbery incident. However, there were five apprehension reports where the charges originated from more than one armed robbery incident.

For one of these, two incidents occurred in the space of a week in the same bank. Each of the other four apprehension reports recorded allegations relating to sequences of incidents that occurred in the space of a few hours.

The following provides brief details of these situations:

- One apprehension report detailed two incidents where a lone perpetrator approached one victim in a suburban street early one evening and then another victim in the same suburb approximately one and a half hours later.
- In another case, one armed robbery confrontation occurred near a railway station and the other on a city street nearly one and a half hours later. The juvenile apprehended for these two incidents was also charged with a drug offence in addition to the armed robbery allegations.
- In a third apprehension report the suspect was charged with an armed robbery in a home just after midnight one Saturday evening during which a rifle was stolen. Nearly four and a half hours later, he allegedly committed an armed robbery at a beach during which a car was stolen and at about 6.00 a.m., there was another armed robbery in a restaurant. The narrative also referred to two other incidents involving this perpetrator that did not involve armed robberies. The first of these was a break-in to a home during which a pistol was stolen and the second the theft of a car that had been parked in the driveway of a suburban home.
- The fourth apprehension report recorded a sequence of four armed robbery incidents committed by the alleged offender, with the first occurring on a city street, the next on a bus, the third in a suburban park and the fourth at a suburban bus-stop. These four incidents took place in the space of an hour. The juvenile apprehended for these offences recorded a drug offence in addition to the armed robbery allegations.

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**Table 5**      **Number of armed robbery incidents recorded on individual apprehension reports**

No. of armed robbery incidents recorded on individual apprehension reports	No. of apprehension reports
Only 1 armed robbery incident	86
Two armed robbery incidents	3
Three armed robbery incidents	1
Four armed robbery incidents	1
Total number of apprehension reports	91

## **5. OFFENCES RECORDED ON THESE APPREHENSION REPORTS**

Table 6 details the range of offences recorded on the 91 apprehension reports. It needs to be noted that this table covers all the offences associated with the apprehensions. That is, in addition to detailing offences arising from the 74 armed robbery incidents, this table includes charges associated with any non-robbery incidents recorded on the apprehension report. For the majority of apprehensions (64.8%), the only type of offence listed was *armed robbery*. For 17 of these cases, only one other type of offence was listed in addition to the armed robbery. On three of these apprehension reports were recorded *offences against the person* (two with *attempted murder* and one *assault with intent*) while seven recorded a *good order offence* (such as *possess/use firearms, possess/use other weapon, resist/hinder police* or *disorderly behaviour*).

There were 11 apprehension reports that listed two additional types of offences. For nearly half of these, one of the offences recorded was an *offence against the person* (*kidnapping/abduction, common assault, other offences against the person*). Finally, on four apprehension reports were listed three or more offence types additional to *armed robbery*.

**Table 6 Juvenile apprehensions for armed robbery: types of offences listed on apprehension report**

Types of Offences listed on apprehension reports*	No. of apprehension reports	%
Armed Robbery only	59	64.8
Armed Robbery + 1 other offence type		
Armed Robbery + Attempted murder	2	
Armed Robbery + Assault with intent	1	
Armed Robbery + Unarmed robbery no violence	1	
Armed Robbery + Burglary	1	
Armed Robbery + Illegal use of motor vehicle	2	
Armed Robbery + Larceny or illegal use of other vehicle	1	
Armed Robbery + Receiving	1	
Armed Robbery + Possess/use firearms	1	
Armed Robbery + Possess/use other weapon	4	
Armed Robbery + Resist/hinder police	1	
Armed Robbery + Disorderly behaviour	1	
Armed Robbery + Possess use/cannabis	1	
Sub-total	17	18.7
Armed Robbery + 2 other offence types		
Armed Robbery + Kidnapping/Abduction + Unarmed Robbery with violence	1	
Armed Robbery + Common Assault + Other offences against the person	1	
Armed Robbery + Common Assault + Burglary	1	
Armed Robbery + Common Assault + Unlawful possession of stolen goods	1	
Armed Robbery + Other offences against the person + Illegal use of motor vehicle	1	
Armed Robbery + Unarmed Robbery with violence + other larceny	1	
Armed Robbery + Break and enter dwelling + Illegal use of motor vehicle	1	
Armed Robbery + Resist/hinder police + Possess/use cannabis	1	
Armed Robbery + Possess/use cannabis + Possess/use implements for drug use	3	
Sub-total	11	12.1
Armed Robbery + 3 other offence types		
Armed Robbery + Kidnapping/Abduction + Unarmed Robbery with violence + Other fraud + Other larceny	1	
Armed Robbery + Kidnapping/Abduction + Break and enter dwelling + Break and enter shops	1	
Sub-total	2	2.2
Armed Robbery + 4 other offence types		
Armed Robbery + Larceny from shops + Possess/use other weapon + Possess/use cannabis + Possess/use implements for drug use	1	
Armed Robbery + Resist/ Hinder police + Other offences against justice procedures + Possess/ use other weapon + Possess/use implements for drug use	1	
Sub-total	2	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* In some cases, multiple instances of the one offence type were recorded.



## 6. OTHER APPREHENSIONS FOR THE ARMED ROBBERY INCIDENTS

In the two years 1997 – 1998, there were 91 juvenile apprehension reports for armed robbery associated with 74 incidents. However, this does not mean that these were the only apprehensions associated with those incidents.<sup>1</sup> There were 12 additional juveniles apprehended in relation to these incidents, but none were charged with armed robbery. Instead, the offence recorded was either *robbery in company*, *illegal use of a motor vehicle*, *burglary* or *receiving*. There were also 27 adults apprehended from the armed robbery incidents. For 23 of these, there was an allegation of armed robbery. The other four apprehensions detailed some other sort of involvement in the incidents. The offences recorded on these were *receiving*, *unarmed robbery* and *accessory after the fact*.

In summary, as shown in Table 7, when all the apprehensions of both juveniles and adults are considered, the 74 incidents generated a total of 130 apprehension reports with 114 of these listing armed robbery allegations. The remaining 16 apprehension reports did not contain an armed robbery allegation, but some other type of offence associated with the armed robbery.

**Table 7 All apprehensions resulting from the 74 armed robbery incidents**

Age group of offender	Apprehension reports that included an allegation of armed robbery	Apprehension reports that did not include any allegation of armed robbery but did list other offences associated with the armed robbery incident	Total
Juvenile	91	12	103
Adult	23	4	27
Total	114	16	130

Table 8 presents the age of the adults apprehended in the armed robbery incidents. It shows that all were young adults, with the oldest being 25 years of age. The great majority of those adults apprehended were 18 or 19 years of age (70.4%), with a further 18.5% in the 20 to 21 years age group.

**Table 8 Adult apprehensions resulting from armed robbery incidents  
Age of adults**

Age of Adult	Number of apprehensions
18 – 19 years	19
20 – 21 years	5
22 - 23 years	2
24 – 25 years	1
Total	27

The above discussion has provided information on the total number of juvenile and adult apprehensions resulting from the armed robbery incidents. However, it has not given any insight into the numbers of apprehensions resulting from each incident. Table 9 shows that nearly two-thirds of the incidents involved multiple apprehensions (63.5%). In the remaining one-third (36.5%), only one person was apprehended in relation to the incident. However, because not all those involved in an incident may end up being apprehended<sup>2</sup> it is likely that an even higher proportion than two-thirds of the incidents involved co-offenders. In summary then, it is apparent that juveniles preferred the security of a group in perpetrating these armed robberies.

<sup>1</sup> Alongside each armed robbery allegation on the original 91 juvenile apprehension reports was a cross-reference to a victim report. These cross-references were used to identify all other apprehension reports associated with the armed robbery incidents.

<sup>2</sup> It was clear from the narratives that some of those juveniles were not prepared to identify others involved in the incident.

**Table 9** Number of incidents that resulted in an apprehension (juvenile and adult)

			No. of incidents that resulted in adult apprehension
No. of incidents that resulted in 1 apprehension	27	36.5	0
No. of incidents that resulted in 2 apprehensions	28	37.8	12
No. of incidents that resulted in 3 apprehensions	7	9.5	5
No. of incidents that resulted in 4 apprehensions	10	13.5	8
No. of incidents that resulted in 5 apprehensions	2	2.7	0
Total	74	100.0	25

Note that, as discussed earlier, in a small number of cases, more than one armed robbery incident was listed on an individual apprehension report.

Table 9 also provides information on the number of incidents that resulted in adult apprehensions, and shows that adult apprehensions resulted from one-third of the 74 incidents (n =25). However, as noted earlier, not all those involved in an incident may end up being apprehended. Given the comparative immaturity of juveniles, it could be expected that they would be more likely than adults to be vulnerable to apprehension by police. Hence, the fact that one-third of the incidents resulted in the apprehension of an adult is likely to be an under-enumeration of the actual extent of adult involvement in these offences.

## 7. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ARMED ROBBERY INCIDENTS

The following discussion provides an overview of the characteristics of the 74 armed robbery incidents, and describes the dynamics between victims and perpetrators, weapons used, property taken, disguises worn, injury inflicted and the location.

### Numbers in victim and perpetrator groups

As discussed in the Methodology section, official crime statistics apply the term ‘victim’ in the narrow sense of the person who was directly confronted. Those numbers may not include all those who were present and affected by the incident. Similarly, official apprehension statistics detail only those apprehended and may not include everyone involved with the central perpetrators during the confrontation. This section attempts to look more broadly at the incident in terms of the number of people in the ‘victim group’ and the ‘perpetrator group’<sup>3</sup>.

As shown in Table 10, four in ten cases (39.2%), the victim group consisted of more than one person. In 12.2% of incidents, there were two in the victim group and in 14.9% three. Just over one in ten cases (12.2%) involved victim groups of four or more people (with the highest number of 28 being recorded for one of the bank incidents).

**Table 10** Number in victim group per incident

Number in victim group	No. of incidents	%
1	45	60.8
2	9	12.2
3	11	14.9
4 or more	9	12.2
Total	74	100.0

<sup>3</sup> For details of how the numbers in the ‘victim group’ and ‘perpetrator group’ were defined refer to the Methodology section.

As shown in Table 11, in approximately one-third of incidents (37.8%) a lone perpetrator was responsible for the armed robbery. The majority of incidents (62.2%) involved two or more people in the 'perpetrator group'. In a third of the incidents (32.4%), there were two people in the perpetrator group, while almost one-fifth of incidents involved three people and one in ten involved four or more in the perpetrator group.

**Table 11 Number in perpetrator group per incident**

Number in perpetrator group	No. of incidents	%
1	28	37.8
2	24	32.4
3	14	18.9
4 or more	8	10.8
Total	74	100.0

Table 12 provides information on the combination of victim and perpetrator group numbers for each incident. This shows that just under one-quarter of incidents involved one victim confronted by a single perpetrator (23.0%). In contrast, the remaining 28 'single victim' incidents involved a 'perpetrator group' of two or more. There were 29 incidents that involved more than one person in the 'victim group'. In total then, 57 incidents (77.0%) involved group dynamics in that there were two or more people in either the 'victim' or 'perpetrator' group.

**Table 12 Victim – Perpetrator confrontation : numbers in each group**

Victim – Perpetrator confrontation	No. of incidents	%
1 victim confronted by		
1 perpetrator	17	23.0
2 perpetrators	18	24.3
3 perpetrators	6	8.1
4 or more perpetrators	4	5.4
Sub- Total	45	60.8
2 or 3 victims confronted by		
1 perpetrator	6	8.1
2 perpetrators	5	6.8
3 perpetrators	5	6.8
4 or more perpetrators	4	5.4
Sub- Total	20	27.0
4 or more victims confronted by		
1 perpetrator	5	6.8
2 perpetrators	1	1.4
3 perpetrators	3	4.1
4 or more perpetrators	0	0
Sub- Total	9	12.2
Total	74	100.0

#### Known or Stranger Perpetrators

There is a general perception that perpetrators of robbery are ‘strangers’ unknown to the victim. However, in nearly one-quarter of the incidents studied here, this was not so. Instead, in 17 cases, one or more in the ‘victim group’ knew at least one of the people in the ‘perpetrator group’.

#### Juvenile victims

Of particular interest was the extent to which the armed robbery apprehensions were a reflection of juveniles targeting other juveniles. It was found that in 77.0% of cases, none of the ‘victim group’ was in the juvenile age group. However, for 17 of the 74 incidents, at least one of the people in the victim group was recorded as being a juvenile (aged 10 – 17 years).

Table 13 combines information on victim age and whether or not any of the victim group knew people in the perpetrator group. This shows that the majority of incidents (51 of the 74) were ‘stranger’ crimes in which the victims were adults. However, there were 11 cases where the incident could be considered to be a confrontation involving juveniles who knew each other. In these incidents, at least one of the ‘victim group’ was in the juvenile age group and one or more of those in the ‘victim group’ knew at least one of the ‘perpetrator group’.

**Table 13 Whether or not victim and perpetrator knew each other by whether or not victim was in the juvenile age range: number of incidents**

Person in 'victim group' knew at least one person in 'perpetrator' group	No. of Incidents		Total	%
	At least 1 juvenile in the victim group	No juvenile in victim group		
Yes	11	6	17	23.0
No	6	51	57	77.0
Total	17	57	74	
%	23.0	77.0		100.0

#### Weapons Used

Table 14 provides information on the weapons used in the armed robberies. Here, the emphasis is on the type of weapon used rather than the number of offenders carrying a weapon. For example, an incident that involved two perpetrators each displaying a knife would be recorded as one incident involving a knife. However, in those incidents in which a combination of different weapons was used – each weapon type would be listed separately.<sup>4</sup>

As shown, knives were the most frequently used weapon in those instances where a juvenile was apprehended. In addition to one incident involving both a firearm and a knife, there were 41 incidents (55.4% of the total) in which a knife was used. In six of these, a stick or bat or bar was used in combination with a knife. A firearm was used in a quarter of incidents (n= 19). There were only fourteen incidents (18.9%) that did not involve a firearm or knife. In five of these, a stick or bat or bar was the only weapon used, while in one incident, a paint scraper was used in combination with a stick. In two cases, the only type of weapon used was a tool, and in five cases other sorts of weapons were used.

**Table 14 Type of Weapon Used**

Type of Weapon Used	No. of incidents involving this weapon type or combination	% of incidents involving this weapon type or combination
Firearm used		
Firearm only	17	23.0
Firearm + Knife	1	1.4
Firearm + Stick/Bat/Bar	1	1.4
Sub-total	19	25.7
<b>Knife (no firearm used)</b>		
Knife only	35	47.3
Knife + Stick/Bat/Bar	6	8.1
Sub-total	41	55.4
No firearm or knife used		
Stick/Bat/Bar only	5	6.8
Stick/Bat/Bar + Tool	1	1.4
Tool only	2	2.7
Other	6	8.1
Sub-total	14	18.9
Total	74	100.0

<sup>4</sup> Firearms included pistols, rifles, flare guns and air rifles (also referred to b-b guns).

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### Disguise worn

The majority of incidents for which a juvenile was apprehended (77.0%) did not involve any form of disguise. However, for 17 of the 74 incidents, the narratives recorded that one or more of the perpetrators wore some form of disguise. As shown in Table 15, balaclavas was the disguise used most frequently.

**Table 15 Type of disguise worn**

Type of disguise worn	No. of incidents	%
No disguise worn	57	77.0
Balaclava	11	14.9
Mask	2	2.7
Other	4	5.4
Total	74	100.0

### Property taken

In nearly one quarter of the incidents resulting in a juvenile apprehension (n = 18) nothing was taken from the victim (see Table 16). In 20 incidents, cash was the only item taken and in a further 18 cases, cash plus some sort of property was taken. This means that cash was stolen in just over one-half of all incidents (n = 38). In a quarter of the incidents, some item of property was taken without any cash being stolen.

**Table 16 Type of property taken**

Property taken	No. of incidents	%
None	18	24.3
Cash only	20	27.0
Cash plus other sort of property	18	24.3
Other sort of property	18	24.3
Total	74	100.0

Table 17<sup>5</sup> summarises the value of the property taken (including cash), and shows that in one-quarter of cases (24.3%), nothing was taken. Nearly one-fifth involved property valued at \$1 to \$50. This means that for over four in ten (43.2%) of the incidents either nothing was taken or the value of the stolen property was \$50 or less. In just over one-quarter of all incidents, the property stolen had a value in the range \$51 to \$400. At the high end of the range, there was one incident in a bank that resulted in \$15,000 being stolen, and a further four incidents where the value of the stolen property was in the range of \$5,001 to \$15,000. One of these incidents involved a car being stolen.

Given the distribution outlined above, it would be expected that there would be a substantial difference between the mean and median values of property stolen. This is the case. The average amount stolen was \$1,279.12 while the median amount was only \$102.50. That is, half the incidents involved takings of \$102.50 or less.

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<sup>5</sup> In interpreting these figures it should be remembered that the property values listed are based upon victim estimates.

**Table 17 Value of property taken**

Value of Property taken (\$)	No. of incidents	%
0	18	24.3
1 – 50	14	18.9
51 – 400	21	28.4
401 – 1,000	8	10.8
1,001 – 5,000	8	10.8
5,001 – 15,000	4	5.4
15,001 +	1	1.4
Total	74	100.0

Median = \$102.50; Mean = \$1,279.12

### **Injuries Inflicted**

Because the narratives provide details on only physical injuries, it is not possible to identify the extent of the emotional or psychological impact of the robbery on the victim. In the majority of incidents, there was no indication of physical injury. However, in thirteen of the seventy-four incidents, the victim(s) reported some form of physical injury. In seven of those cases, the victim either sought medical attention or stated to police that (s)he intended doing so.

The injuries ranged from sore ribs and small cuts to injuries that required hospitalisation. Three incidents resulted in injuries at the serious end of the spectrum, with one victim being stabbed in the chest and another two being hit around the head to the point of losing consciousness. (As a result of one of these incidents, four youths aged 17, 18, 19 and 20 years were apprehended. Two youths aged 17 years were apprehended for the second of these incidents that caused serious injuries. While three perpetrators were involved in the third incident, only one person, a 17 year old female, was apprehended.)

### **Location of incident**

The following discussion groups the incidents into three locational categories of workplace, public space and residential. An incident was defined as ‘workplace’ if at least one of the victims was in their place of work and the incident was aimed at him/her in their role as employee or proprietor.

The category of ‘public space’ covered those incidents that occurred in locations such as city or suburban streets, carparks, parks or reserves, on public transport, at public transport interchanges, or in buildings with general public access. It included those incidents that occurred in commercial buildings and were directed at a customer but not at any staff members. For example, one incident directed at a customer in the toilets at a restaurant was included in this category. Also included under the ‘public space’ category was an incident that occurred on a public street and was directed at a charity collector. Although this person was undertaking a work-related task, she was included in this category rather than in the workplace category because, from the information available, it appeared that she had been targeted as a member of the public, rather than because of her role as a charity worker.

As can be seen from Table 18, apart from a handful in residential locations, the incidents which resulted in the apprehension of a juvenile were equally divided between workplace and public space locations. Of the 32 incidents that occurred in workplace settings, service stations were the most prominent, accounting for 10 incidents. These were followed by delicatessens (n = 6) and financial institutions (n =5). The other workplace incidents were spread across licensed premises, hairdressing salons, pharmacies, post offices, a TAB office, a restaurant and a taxi base. Also included were two incidents that took place in taxis. In each case, the victim was a taxi driver and the perpetrators were customers.

As shown in Table 18, there were 32 public space incidents. Street locations accounted for just under half of these (n = 15). Public transport facilities were the next most prominent (n=5). Parks/reserves and carparks each accounted for four incidents. Also included in this category was one incident that

was directed at a student in a school, another at a member of the public walking though a school oval and one at a beach.

Ten incidents occurred in a place of residence. Nine of these took place within the residential building itself, while one occurred in the back yard of a home.

**Table 18 Location of incident**

Type of location	Total	%
Workplace		
Financial Institution	5	6.7
Service Station	10	13.5
Licensed Premises	1	1.4
Delicatessen	6	8.1
Hairdressing Salon	1	1.4
Pharmacy	2	2.7
Post Office	2	2.7
TAB	1	1.4
Restaurant	1	1.4
Taxi base	1	1.4
Taxi	2	2.7
Sub-total	32	43.4
Public Space/Public Transport		
Park/Reserve	4	5.4
Street	15	20.3
Carpark	4	5.4
Public Transport Facilities	5	6.7
School Grounds	2	2.7
Restaurant	1	1.4
Beach	1	1.4
Sub-total	32	43.3
Place of residence	10	13.5
Total	74	100.0

#### Characteristics of incidents by location

It would be expected that the location would have some bearing on the nature of the incident that juveniles were involved in. For example, it might be anticipated that workplace armed robberies are likely to result in higher takings than those in public space. Workplace incidents may also involve higher risks than public space ones. There is a chance of a workplace robbery being quite a public event as the perpetrators may be confronting customers as well as a number of staff. In addition, the perpetrators may need to take account of security cameras that could be used to identify them. Given the expectation that the location would affect the nature of the incident, the broad location categories of workplace, public space and residential were analysed by some of the incident characteristics discussed earlier.

As noted earlier, workplace and public space locations each accounted for 32 incidents which resulted in the apprehension of a juvenile, while only 10 incidents took place in residential locations. Given that there were equal numbers of incidents in workplace and public space locations, their profiles will be compared first. As shown in Table 19a, a higher proportion of workplace than public space incidents involved a single victim (68.8% compared with 56.3% respectively). However, similar proportions of incidents in both locations involved a lone juvenile perpetrator (approximately four in ten). Further, similar proportions of both workplace and public space incidents involved a lone victim confronted by a lone perpetrator.

However, differences between the two locations were apparent at the higher end of the spectrum of numbers in the 'victim group'. One-fifth (21.9%) of the commercial incidents compared with only 3.1% of the public space incidents involved a 'victim group' of three or more. A similarly substantial difference was apparent for the proportions of incidents involving three or more in the 'perpetrator



group’. However, here, the difference was in the opposite direction. One-quarter of incidents in public space locations involved a ‘perpetrator group’ of three or more while none of the workplace incidents did.

As shown in Table 19b, substantial differences between incidents in workplace and public space locations were evident on the other two ‘social dynamic’ characteristics. In nearly half of the public space incidents (46.9%) the ‘victim group’ contained at least one juvenile. This situation did not occur in any of the workplace incidents. Finally, the victim knew the perpetrator in a substantially higher proportion of public space than workplace incidents (34.4% compared with 3.1% respectively).

Table 19c indicates that firearms were used in approximately the same proportion of incidents for both locations; namely 28.1% of workplace and 25.0% of public space incidents. A slightly lower proportion of workplace than public space incidents recorded that the victim was injured (12.5% compared with 18.9% respectively). However, there were substantial differences between the two locations with respect to the use of disguise and the value of the stolen property. As could be expected, disguise was used in nearly half the workplace incidents (46.9%), but in only 3.1% of the public space incidents. The median value of the property taken in workplace incidents was \$335.50 compared with only \$17.50 for public space ones.

As there were only 10 incidents in residential locations, it is not meaningful to compare the profile for residential incidents with those for workplace or public space incidents or to calculate percentages. Therefore, the residential profile is discussed separately. In half of these residential incidents, the victim knew the perpetrator and in three of the ten incidents there was some form of physical injury. In two of the incidents, at least one member of the ‘victim group’ was a juvenile. In two incidents a firearm was used and in one, a disguise was worn. The median value of the property taken was \$102.50.

**Table 19a Location type by social dynamics of incident**

Location Type	Incidents with lone victim %	Incidents with lone perpetrator %	Incidents in which a lone victim was confronted by a lone perpetrator %	Incidents involving more than 3 in the ‘victim group’ %	Incidents involving more than 3 in the ‘perpetrator group’ %
Workplace	68.8	40.6	25.0	21.9	0.0
Public space	56.3	37.5	21.9	3.1	25.0
Residential *	5	3	2	1	0

**Table 19b Location type by Victim in juvenile age group and Perpetrator known to victim**

Location Type	At least 1 Victim in juvenile age group %	At least 1 in victim group knew 1 in perpetrator group %
Workplace	0.0	3.1
Public space	46.9	34.4
Residential *	2	5

**Table 19c Location type by other incident characteristics**

Location Type	Firearm used %	Disguise used %	Median value of property taken	Injury %
Workplace	28.1	46.9	335.50	12.5
Public space	25.0	3.1	17.50	18.9
Residential *	2	1	102.50	3

\* As there were only 10 incidents in residential locations, it was not meaningful to calculate percentages. Hence raw numbers have been used.

### Summary

For those incidents which resulted in the apprehension of at least one juvenile for armed robbery, knives were the most frequently used weapon, featuring in more than half the incidents. A disguise was used in less than one-quarter, and for a substantial proportion of the incidents the value of the property taken was low, with four in ten of the armed robberies resulting in takings worth \$50 or less. However, there were some incidents where considerable amounts were taken and in 17.6% of the armed robberies, the stolen property was worth more than \$5,000. The great majority of the incidents (eight in ten) did not involve any physical injury, although a handful resulted in injuries requiring hospitalisation.

Workplace and public space incidents accounted for the great majority of the armed robberies. As might be expected, workplace incidents were more likely than public space ones to involve the use of disguise and, on average, resulted in substantially higher takings than public space incidents. The workplace incidents did not exhibit a great deal of diversity in terms of the social dynamics of the armed robbery. Apart from one incident, all involved victims unknown to the perpetrator. None involved a juvenile victim, and all were characterised by a small 'perpetrator group' of three or fewer people. In nearly seven in ten of the workplace incidents, the confrontation involved a lone victim – the sole employee or proprietor on duty. However, in terms of the size of the 'victim group' there was some variation. One-fifth of workplace incidents involved three or more people in the 'victim group'. In some cases, the workplaces employed quite a number of staff and in some, there were customers as well as staff present at the time of the incident.

A range of 'social dynamics' was evident in public space locations. In one-third of cases, the perpetrator was known to the victim, and in nearly half of the incidents the victim was a juvenile. In one-quarter of the public space incidents, the 'perpetrator group' consisted of three or more people. While over half the incidents targeted a lone victim, over four in ten involved 'victim groups' of two or three people.

## 8. CASE STUDIES

As discussed earlier, the main purpose of this study was to look beneath the surface of official crime statistics to obtain a better understanding of the type of incidents which led to juveniles being apprehended for armed robbery. The previous section has revealed that a considerable range of situations surrounded the 74 armed robbery incidents. However, a greater level of diversity was evident in the narratives than has been captured by the discussion so far. This section attempts to provide further insight into the range of behaviour and circumstances surrounding the armed robberies by detailing case examples based on the apprehension narratives.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the narratives varied a great deal in the degree of detail provided. For some incidents, there was only one person's version of events and in some cases, only a very abbreviated description of events was recorded. In other cases, not only was the victim's version recorded but so were those of one or more witnesses. This has meant that many of the following case examples, some are limited by the amount of detail provided while others have required a substantial degree of paraphrasing.

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## Workplace incidents

As noted earlier, there were 32 workplace incidents which resulted in the apprehension of at least one juvenile for armed robbery. In 15 of these, the perpetrators wore some form of disguise. Hence, these incidents could be considered to conform to the stereotypic image of an armed robbery. However, only six of these fell at the extreme end of the spectrum by involving both disguised offenders and the use of firearms. The other nine involved some other sort of weapon. Nonetheless, the 15 incidents used a similar method of operation, with the disguised perpetrators displaying the weapons either on entry to the premises or very early in the incident. The following is an example of the cases at the extreme end of the spectrum:

- The victim stated that she was working at the financial institution when she was confronted by a male who was wearing a balaclava and carrying a firearm. This male demanded that he be given money. He used offensive language and yelled at staff to comply with his wishes. He waved the rifle around, pointing it in all directions and at the staff. The victim and another employee put money in a bag supplied by the perpetrator, and then he left. (Subsequently, a 17 year old male was apprehended for this incident. In addition, two 18 year olds, a male and female, were apprehended.)

In some other incidents where a disguise was used the perpetrators carried knives:

- The console operator of a service station reported that in the early hours of the morning he was mopping the store floor when he heard the doors open. He looked up to see two males who were wearing masks enter the store. One was armed with a knife, the other with a machete. The victim was threatened and he opened the cash register and handed one of the males approximately \$30. The perpetrators demanded cigarettes, but the victim refused. The males then ran from the store. (The two males subsequently apprehended were 16 and 17 years old).

In other 'disguised' incidents, the perpetrators used rather unexpected weapons:

- Two males wearing balaclavas entered the service station. One ran up to the counter, holding a 30-cm long piece of wood and shouted 'give me all the money'. The victim opened the till and started putting the money into a bag held by the other male who was holding a paint scraper towards the victim. As the victim got the money, the man with the piece of wood leaned across the counter and took money out of the till. He continually shouted 'Hurry up.' Once the money was in the bag, both males ran from the shop. (The two males later apprehended were aged 17 years and 19 years.)

Seventeen of the 32 workplace incidents did not involve a disguise. However, most of these could be regarded as similar in method of operation to the 'disguised' incidents described above. One involved the perpetrator spray painting the security camera in a bank:

- The manager reported that he was on duty when he heard the internal siren for the alarm activate. He looked across at another employee and saw that she was on the floor. He walked to the front counter and saw that the security camera had been spray painted. Near the door to the teller, he saw a male who demanded that he open the safe. When he did not reply, the male repeated his demand. He thought that the perpetrator was holding something under a white calico bag, but could not see what it was. (A 17 year old male was apprehended for this incident.)

Another involved the perpetrator jumping the counter:

- The victim reported that he was on duty as a teller when he was approached by a male who jumped the counter and attacked him with a small meat cleaver. The victim attempted to protect himself and was helped by other staff and members of the public who eventually were able to restrain the perpetrator. (The youth apprehended for this armed robbery was 17 years of age.)

In some of the 'un-disguised' incidents the young perpetrator first acted as a customer before initiating the robbery, as in the following case:

- The victim was working alone in the delicatessen and was behind the counter at the cigarette display when a male entered the shop. He walked to the drink fridge, and the victim asked him if

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he wanted anything. He replied “ Any money?” and walked quickly towards the victim, stopping in front of the cash register. He pulled what appeared to be a pistol from his pants and pointed it in the direction of the victim. The victim handed him money from the cash register, and after he insisted on more, she then gave him a further \$50. (A 17 year old male was subsequently apprehended.)

In the following case, the 16 year old male perpetrator played the ‘customer’ role for a considerable length of time to the point that the victim became suspicious:

- The victim reported that she was at work at the deli when a male entered the store, walked to the drinks fridge and then to the bubble gum stand. He then asked the victim for some lollies, paid for them and left the store. He sat outside on the ledge and ate the lollies. The victim then went out the back of the shop for a short time, and when she returned, she saw the same male still sitting on the ledge. He then re-entered the store, produced a credit card and asked how much he would need to spend to be able to use the card. She told him and he then put the card away. The victim was by then becoming nervous. As she walked back to the till, the male pulled out a large kitchen knife and held it close to the victim. He demanded that she open the till. He took money from the till and then took some cigarettes and tobacco from a display. After telling the victim to stay where she was, he left the store. (In addition to the 16 year old male who was apprehended for this incident, a fifteen year old youth was charged with aiding and abetting armed robbery. A further two males, aged 15 and 16 years, were apprehended for receiving.)

Four workplace cases could be considered to be somewhat different from all of the above:

- One involved two juveniles, aged 13 and 15 years, who asked the taxi-driver to take them some considerable distance from the Adelaide city centre. However, after reaching an outer suburb of Adelaide, the driver was told to stop. One of the youths then pulled a knife and the other said ‘Can you give us 4 or 5 dollars so we can get something to eat.’ The victim gave them \$3. Later, when interviewed by the police, the two perpetrators said that they were homeless.
- Another incident involved a fifteen year old and an eighteen year old youth who asked the taxi driver to take them from the inner city to a suburban address in Adelaide. The driver reported that there was general conversation between the three of them on route. The driver was threatened as they neared their destination, and accelerated. At this point, the two perpetrators jumped out of the taxi, and both sustained injuries, with the fifteen year old suffering a fractured skull. The driver had received a knife wound to her neck and required 11 sutures.
- An incident at a delicatessen did not actually eventuate, as a witness sitting in a car nearby saw two males acting suspiciously. He then saw one pull a full-length rifle from under his black coat. The witness walked past the males and into the delicatessen where he informed the proprietor, at which point the perpetrators left. (Two males, aged 16 years and 17 years, were subsequently apprehended for this incident.)
- The incident at the taxi base was a particularly violent one, and unusual in that it involved a substantial amount of property damage. In the early hours of the morning, a taxi driver returned to the taxi base to refuel his taxi. When he finished re-fuelling, he went over to the office, and as he entered he heard someone demand his money. The driver ran into an inner section of the office, but was followed by a masked perpetrator wielding a baseball bat who smashed a glass panel of the door behind which the driver had run. The driver ran further into the office and hid behind a drink machine, but was pursued by the perpetrator with the baseball bat who asked where the money was. This perpetrator was joined by another male and a third one stood outside. The two males inside then attempted to open the safe, smashing objects in frustration. The episode continued, with the driver being threatened whenever he moved to see what was happening. Before leaving the taxi base, the perpetrators smashed the front window of the victim’s taxi. (Four males, aged 16, 19, 21 and 23 years were apprehended in relation to this incident.)

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## Public Space incidents

As noted earlier, a distinguishing feature of the public space incidents was that in nearly half of these cases (n=15), the victim group involved at least one juvenile. That is, the incident could be considered to be a confrontation between juveniles. Another distinguishing feature was that one-third involved perpetrators who were known to the victims. When the public space incidents were analysed by these two characteristics in combination, some patterns emerged. In more than half of the 15 incidents involving a juvenile victim, the perpetrators were known to the 'victim group'. In contrast, in only two of the 17 'adult victim' incidents was this the case.

A further difference between the 'juvenile' and 'adult' victim incidents was evident. In nearly all the juvenile incidents, there were two or more people in both the 'perpetrator' and the 'victim' groups. In contrast, in the majority of the 'adult victim' incidents, a lone victim was confronted, and in seven of these, a lone perpetrator confronted a lone victim. In summary, the public space incidents involving juvenile victims were often characterised by group to group confrontations. In addition, a relatively high proportion of these incidents involved perpetrators known to the victim group. In contrast, those where the victim was an adult generally involved 'stranger' perpetrators confronting a lone victim.

The 'juvenile victim' with 'known' perpetrator cases are considered first. Within these nine cases, a diverse range of situations was evident, as illustrated by the following examples. In the first case, 'standover tactics' were used to obtain items of clothing:

- Five friends (the victim group) were seated at the back of a bus travelling from the city centre to a north-eastern suburb. Seated near these friends was another group of youths (the perpetrator group), one of whom was known to at least one person in the victim group. One of the youths in the perpetrator group approached the victim group, produced a pocket knife, held it close to the face of one of the victim friends and demanded his ADIDAS cap. He was given the cap and rejoined his own group. However, he later re-approached the victim group accompanied by some of his own friends and used a small wooden baton to threaten the victims and took the shoes that belonged to one of them. The shoes were thrown to others in the perpetrator group. He then produced the knife again and demanded money from the victim group, but was told that none of them had any money. The bus stopped at the interchange and the victim group alighted. (One 16 year old male was subsequently apprehended.)

In the next example, the victim and her friends joined a group of people previously unknown to them and for ten minutes there was cordial social interaction amongst this group. Then one person became aggressive towards the victim, demanding her packet of cigarettes.

- The victim and two friends had been walking in a reserve in a popular seaside suburb, when they walked past a group of five people who were sitting on the grass (the perpetrator group). The latter greeted the victim and her friends and invited them to sit with them. The victim and her friends joined the group. About ten minutes later, one of the girls in the group introduced herself as Y and demanded the victim's packet of cigarettes. Y repeated this demand and raised an empty bottle above her head in a threatening way. One of the victim's friends suggested that they leave, but as the victim attempted to stand Y grabbed the victim's hair and pulled her back onto the ground. Y again demanded the victim hand over her cigarettes, but the victim tried to break free and Y hit her over the left side of the head with the empty bottle. The victim joined her friends who by this stage were talking to the police, who happened to be nearby. When interviewed by police, the offender told them that she did not remember the incident, as she was drunk. (One 15 year old female was apprehended in relation to this incident.)

As in the previous case, the motive for the following incident was to obtain a cigarette. However, the victim in this incident, a 15 year old female, had known the perpetrators for some time, and had frequently provided them with cigarettes. However, on this day she did not, and the interaction escalated:

- The victim reported she was on a train on her way to work one morning when three youths got on the train. She knew these youths from previous occasions. She said that they often asked her for a cigarette, and that usually she would give them one. On this day, she talked to the youths as usual. However, when one of the youths asked the victim for a cigarette, she told him that she did not

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have any. The youth did not believe this and grabbed her shoulder bag and started searching it. When the victim tried to take it back, the youth removed her wallet and passed the bag over the seat to one of the other youths who searched through the bag. The youth then used items in the bag to stop the victim getting anywhere near her bag. However, eventually the victim was able to get her bag back and she alighted at the next station. Later in the day, she realised that her mobile phone and two cigarette lighters had been taken from her bag. (Two fourteen year old males were subsequently apprehended.)

In some of the incidents where the juvenile victim knew the perpetrator, it seemed that there was some pre-existing issue between the 'perpetrator' and 'victim' groups and robbery was not the primary motive for the confrontation. In the following incident retribution appeared to be driving the confrontation. During the attack, there was mention of one of the 'victim group' having 'been with' the girlfriend of one of the offender group. In addition to physical attacks, there were substantial property takings from this incident:

- At about 3.00 a.m. one morning, three friends (the victim group) were behind a car park in a seaside suburb when they met four males aged 17, 18, 19 and 20 years (the perpetrator group), all of whom were known to two of these three friends. One of this perpetrator group held one of the first group in a headlock and started punching him in the face. Another in the perpetrator group went up to a second person in the victim group, produced a revolver and put it to the victim's temple, telling him to take off his gold chain and jacket or he would shoot him. The victim complied, and in addition, further items of jewellery and cash from his wallet were taken. At this point, another male from the offender group struck this victim on the right side of the head. He fell to the ground where he was repeatedly kicked and ended up blacking out. When he regained consciousness, he was alone. While the second victim was being attacked, the first victim was repeatedly punched. He fell to the ground where the attack continued. Eventually, he got to his feet and ran off. The third friend had left with the four males in the perpetrator group because he was frightened of them. (Three of the males were apprehended and charged with armed robbery. The 20 year old youth was charged with receiving.)

Again, in the final example (below) of a juvenile victim being confronted by a known juvenile perpetrator, robbery did not seem to be the primary motive for the incident. Rather, the robbery was just one element, with general intimidation the apparent purpose of the confrontation:

- The victim (D) was returning home one Saturday afternoon, when approached by five or six girls. One of the girls (Y) asked D for a smoke and D gave her two cigarettes. Y then asked D why she called her a slut, but D denied having said this. Y threatened to bash D. Y approached and grabbed a packet of cigarettes from her tracksuit pants pocket. D turned to walk away but Y approached, slapped her across the face and kicked her. D retaliated and a struggle ensued for a couple of minutes, before Y walked over to one of her friends and grabbed a collapsible baton that this friend was holding. D then picked up her shopping and left. (The young girl subsequently apprehended was 12 years of age.)

There were six incidents involving juvenile victims that were 'stranger' confrontations i.e. neither the victims nor perpetrators knew each other. As noted earlier, group interaction was evident in all these incidents as well, a feature that distinguished them from 'stranger' confrontations with adult victims. In this first case, two males confronted a group of three:

- The victim (C) reported that he was with two friends walking down a ramp at the central city train station when he was approached by two males, one of whom asked him for a smoke. He said that he didn't have one. His friend (B) was then asked if he had a spare smoke. One of the males then produced a butterfly knife. B gave the males a cigarette. C was then asked if he had any money. C showed the perpetrators that his pockets were empty except for a cigarette lighter, and was told to keep walking. C and one of the friends left, but the males continued to demand and threaten B until he gave them some money. (Two males, aged 16 and 18 years, were later apprehended for this incident.)

The next case involved two friends confronted by one male:

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- A teenage victim reported that she was sitting outside a city café with a friend when a male approached her, asking her for cigarettes and money. The male lifted his shirt and exposed a firearm tucked inside the front of his pants. The victim handed over her purse and \$10 and the offender ran off with three other males. (Four youths were apprehended for this incident and three other armed robberies that occurred soon after. Two of those apprehended were 18 years old, another was 16 and the other 17 years of age.)

The following incident was unusual in that no weapon was used in the initial confrontation. It was only when the victim took chase that a weapon was used to stop the victim from getting his bike back:

- Two young males (D and E) were riding their bicycles near a busway track. Two girls were in the vicinity at the time. As D was about to ride his bike down a hill, one of the girls kicked the back wheel of this bike out from under him. D fell off the bike and the female got on it and rode away quickly. D gave chase on E's bike and as he rode past a large bin the accused hit him on the bicycle helmet with a large stick. He fell face first onto the concrete surface. He noticed that there were two males with the girl. One of the boys threw his bike on top of him. The girl then picked up E's bike and rode away on it. (A 13 year old female was subsequently apprehended.)

Adults were the targets in 17 public space incidents. As discussed earlier, only two of these incidents involved a perpetrator known to the victim. One appeared to be motivated by an underlying issue as in some of the 'juvenile victim' cases described earlier. The other incident involved a young person threatening adults in a suburban street. In this case robbery, rather than some underlying relationship issue, seemed to be the prime motive:

- The victim was walking down a suburban street with her husband, when she saw a young boy she knew standing on the roundabout in the middle of the road. As he came closer she could see that he was holding a large knife in his hand, with the blade pointing at her and her husband. He demanded that they hand over their money. She told him not to be stupid, that he would be in trouble if the police knew that he was standing in the street brandishing a knife. The boy refused to hand over the knife, but put the knife down and walked away. (This young boy who was 13 years of age was later apprehended.)

The remaining 15 public space incidents involved adult victims confronted by 'stranger' perpetrators. All but one of these incidents involved a lone victim, with seven involving a lone perpetrator confronting a lone victim. The following cases provide some examples of these one to one confrontations:

- The victim purchased some alcohol from a suburban hotel and began walking home. She was approached by a male who demanded her money, and then produced a knife. The male flicked the knife across the victim's wrist causing her to bleed. She dropped both the alcohol and her purse. The perpetrator picked up her purse and removed the \$15 that was in it. He threw the purse on the ground, and walked away. (Subsequently, a 17 year old male was apprehended for this armed robbery.)
- The victim was sitting in his car in a shopping centre carpark when he was approached by a male who asked him the time. The male then produces a knife and pointed it through the window at the victim's chest. The male ordered the victim from the car. Once the victim was out of the vehicle, the male demanded money. The victim gave him about five dollars in loose change. The male then got into the victim's car and drove out of the carpark. (The perpetrator aged 15 years of age was later apprehended. Another youth aged 15 years old was charged with illegal use in relation to this incident.)
- The victim got on a bus that was travelling through the city, and a male who got on at the same time sat opposite him. This male demanded the victim's watch, threatening him with assault and then lifted up his shirt to reveal a pistol near his left hip. The victim handed over his watch. The perpetrator poked the victim in the chest with the pistol muzzle, threatened him again and then got off the bus.

As noted above, seven of the remaining 'adult victim' incidents also involved lone victims. However, in contrast to the above group, in these cases the perpetrator groups involved two or more. Two

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examples of these cases are provided, with a 'perpetrator group' of two in the first and three in the second:

- A male was walking down a suburban street when he heard the footsteps of more than one person running up behind him. As he turned around to see who it was, he was grabbed on the back with both hands by a male while another one told him that he had a knife. This male then produced a knife and demanded that the victim give him the wallet. When the victim said that he didn't have any money, he was punched in his ribs and kicked in the stomach. The two perpetrators then ran off. (Two youths, aged 15 and 16 years, were later apprehended.)
- In an incident on a city street, a victim was approached by two males and a female. One of the males asked if the victim had a dollar, and the victim replied that he did not. The victim could see that the second male was holding a 'butterfly knife'. The victim was then threatened with being stabbed if he did not hand over his money. The female reached into the victim's pocket and pulled out his wallet. On looking through the wallet, all that was found were two bus tickets. The victim was handed back his wallet and the offenders walked away. (Two males, aged 18 and 16 years, and a 15 year old female were subsequently apprehended.)

As already illustrated by the examples given above, there were some unexpected elements in these public space armed robberies. For example, some were undertaken for very little gain – a cigarette or a few dollars. Another unexpected aspect was that some perpetrators did not seem to do any basic planning of the incident. This is illustrated in the following example in which the perpetrator did not immediately 'decamp' from the scene and so became vulnerable to apprehension:

- The victim reported that at the time of the incident he was walking down a city street, when he was approached by a female (Y) who asked for a cigarette. He indicated that he did not have any. The female then produced a pocket knife with the blade extended and threatened to stab the victim if he didn't give her a cigarette. The victim stepped back and approached a person in the nearby hotel who happened to be a plain-clothes police officer. Y was still standing nearby, was identified by the victim and the police officer searched her, asking her to remove her jacket. As Y did so, a pocket knife fell onto the ground. Y ran away to a nearby street, but the police officer pursued and apprehended her. (The young girl was 14 years of age.)

Finally, other cases exhibited an unexpected level of gullibility or immaturity as in the following example:

- About 7.00 p.m. one evening, the victim in a suburban area was approached by a male who asked what she had in the money bag around her waist. When the victim replied, the male produced a knife, and the victim handed the money over to him. At this point, the male noticed a set of keys in the victim's belt and demanded her car. The victim said that she didn't know where her car was, and would need to go home to ask her husband. She said that she lived nearby and began to walk to a house where she knew the occupants, with the male following. On the way, he gave her some of the money back. At the house, the victim went inside and shut the door, and the male walked away. A total of \$24.60 had been taken. (A 17 year old male was subsequently apprehended in relation to this incident.)

#### Incidents in a place of residence

Ten incidents involving juvenile perpetrators occurred in a place of residence. Nine of these took place within the dwelling itself, while one occurred in the back yard of a house. Seven of the incidents involved unlawful entry into the home. The narratives associated with these seven incidents indicated that in three the victim knew one or more of the perpetrators at least to some degree. In one of these, the offender reported that he had gone to the victim's place to talk to him and other family matters'. In another two cases, the victim identified the perpetrators by name. One of these incidents resulted in serious injuries that required hospitalisation:

- The victim and his two young sons were asleep late at night when the victim was awoken by someone removing the screen to his bedroom window. Two males and a female climbed into the bedroom. The victim was repeatedly hit on the head with a gun and lost consciousness. When he regained consciousness the assailants had gone. After obtaining help from a neighbour, the victim



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was taken to hospital where he required an operation. A number of items had been taken from his home. (Only one apprehension – of a 17 year old female - was recorded for this incident.)

In the remaining four residential incidents that involved unlawful entry, the narratives did not record any indication that the victim knew the perpetrators. However, in two of these cases, it appeared that the perpetrators had chosen the victim because they knew that they had particular items of property, in one case a rifle and in the other cannabis plants growing hydroponically. In this last incident, the victim reported that:

- At about 9.30 p.m., two females forced entry into his home. One of these women who had a broken wooden stake and a knife, lunged at the victim and demanded that he get the keys (to the room where he had cannabis plants growing hydroponically). The victim was then locked in the room. When one of the women left the house, the victim escaped through the window. (As for the previous incident, only one apprehension –of a 17 year old female - was recorded for this armed robbery and this apprehension occurred approximately two years after the incident.)

The term ‘home invasion’ is usually applied to armed robbery incidents involving unlawful entry into a residential dwelling when the occupants are at home. In addition, home invasions are usually seen as involving a stranger. This means that the term ‘home invasion’ could be applied to only two of the seven incidents involving unlawful entry. However, there was another incident that might be considered to be a home invasion, although it did not involve unlawful entry. In this case, a young person collecting money for a charity asked to enter the house to have a drink. After being allowed in the house, he displayed a knife and demanded money. (A 16 year old male was subsequently apprehended.)

In the remaining two residential incidents, the situations were ones of robberies from juvenile victims who knew the perpetrators. By chance, the incidents occurred on residential property, one inside a house and one in a backyard:

- In one, the incident arose out of a conflict over the sharing of money earned by three boys doing odd jobs. During the argument, a struggle developed between two of the boys and the defendant threatened the victim with a sharp kitchen knife, demanding money from the victim. (A 12 year old male was subsequently apprehended for this incident.)
- In the other, the incident arose when the victim, in company with three friends went around to another young male’s home to ask for his folding butterfly knife back. This youth demanded the victim’s shirt and when the victim refused started to physically attack him. When the victim tried to leave, the perpetrator displayed the knife and demanded again that the victim give him his shirt. The perpetrator then punched the victim again. The victim was eventually helped from the yard by one of his friends. (A 14 year old male was later apprehended in relation to this incident.)

## 9. SUMMARY

This study has been based on only those armed robbery incidents for which juveniles were apprehended. This means that the incidents studied in this paper may not be representative of all armed robberies perpetrated by juveniles. Nonetheless, the research has provided some insight into the types of armed robberies juveniles have been involved in.

In the two years 1997 – 1998, there were 91 apprehensions of juveniles for armed robbery, and these related to 74 discrete incidents. Nearly two-thirds of these incidents led to more than one person being apprehended. Of particular interest is the fact that one-third of the incidents resulted in the apprehension of one or more adults. As might be anticipated, all these adults were in the ‘young adult’ age range of 18 to 25 years. In total, 130 apprehensions were generated by the 74 incidents.

A knife was the most frequently used weapon in these armed robberies, featuring in more than half the incidents. Disguise was used in less than one-quarter. In a substantial proportion of the incidents the value of the property taken was low, with four in ten of the armed robberies resulting in takings worth \$50 or less. However, in nearly one-fifth of the armed robberies, the stolen property was worth more than \$5,000. The great majority of the incidents did not involve any physical injury.

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Apart from 10 incidents that occurred in residential locations, the armed robberies were equally divided between workplace and public space locations. As might be expected, workplace incidents were more likely than public space ones to involve the use of disguise, and on average, incidents in the workplace resulted in substantially higher takings compared with those in public space locations. The workplace incidents did not exhibit a great deal of diversity in terms of the social dynamics of the armed robbery. Apart from one incident, all involved perpetrators unknown to the victim. None involved a juvenile victim, and all were characterised by a small 'perpetrator group' of three or fewer people. In nearly seven in ten of the commercial incidents, the confrontation involved a lone victim – the proprietor or sole employee on duty.

In contrast, the public space incidents exhibited a much greater level of diversity and less adherence to the 'stereotypic' notion of an armed robbery. This was largely due to the fact that half of the armed robberies in public space locations involved juvenile victims. A distinguishing feature of these incidents was that they generally consisted of group to group confrontations. In addition, a substantial proportion involved perpetrators known to the victim. In some of these cases, it was evident that robbery was not the primary motive for the confrontation, with some incidents appearing to be driven by retribution or general intimidation, or simply arising out of what began as normal social interaction. The public space incidents involving adult victims were quite different in nature. These incidents were characterised by 'stranger' perpetrators confronting lone victims.

In addition to this diversity in the public space incidents, there some surprising aspects evident in the public space confrontations. Some of these armed robberies appeared to have been undertaken for very little gain – a cigarette or a few dollars. Others indicated a failure to undertake even a basic level of planning and some exhibited an unexpected level of gullibility or immaturity on the part of the perpetrators.

There were only 10 residential incidents and 3 of these could be considered to be 'home invasions'. However, in total, seven involved unlawful entry into a residential dwelling. Only two of the residential armed robberies involved juvenile – juvenile confrontations, and these two incidents had much the same characteristics as the public space ones that involved juveniles known to each other.

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## References

S.A. Office of Crime Statistics (2000), *Crime and Justice in South Australia, 1999 – Offences reported to Police, the Victims and Alleged Perpetrators*, S.A. Office of Crime Statistics.

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## APPENDIX A

### Relating apprehensions to discrete incidents

In order to identify the discrete incidents that led to the juvenile apprehensions, the information contained on apprehension reports needed to be studied in more detail. The first step was to determine the number of distinct victim reports<sup>7</sup> associated with the armed robbery allegations listed on the apprehension reports. These reports are lodged at the time that an incident is reported to police, and contain the police record of the victim's account of the events. When a person is apprehended in relation to a criminal incident, the resulting allegations on the apprehension report are cross-referenced to the victim report associated with the incident.

However, because the police complete a separate report for each victim involved in an incident, the number of victim reports filed may be greater than the actual number of incidents. Where there were two or more victim reports listed against the armed robbery allegations on an apprehension report, extra information was needed to determine how many discrete incidents were involved. This information was obtained from the 'narrative' associated with the apprehension report. The narrative gives the victim's and witnesses account of events. Some examples are provided to illustrate how the narrative was used to determine the number of incidents:

- One particular apprehension report listed references to two different victim reports. However, the narrative indicated that the two victim reports arose from a situation in which a youth displaying a knife approached two people walking together down a suburban street and demanded money from them. The two victim reports related to only one armed robbery incident.
- In another incident, the alleged offenders had entered a Post Office and declared they were doing a "hold up". One victim report was lodged for the robbery from the post office itself. However, during the robbery, a customer in the post office had left her handbag on the counter. The handbag was taken, with the result that a second victim report was lodged, with the victim in this case being the customer. The associated apprehension report recorded two armed robbery victims. However, for the purposes of this study, the two victim reports were regarded as being associated with only one 'armed robbery incident'.
- In another case, one apprehension report was cross-referenced to three victim reports. The first two of these related to a situation in which three friends were walking together down the ramp at a railway station when they were approached by the alleged offenders. The narrative recorded a confrontation in which a knife was displayed, with a request for cigarettes and money. This resulted in one victim report being lodged. Then two of the three friends walked away, and the third friend was threatened individually. This second interaction resulted in a second victim report being generated. As this second threat occurred very soon after the first, and at the same location, to victims who were associated with each other, these two victim reports were viewed as arising from the one incident. The third victim report detailed on this apprehension report arose from an incident on a city street approximately an hour later, when a different person was threatened. This incident on the street has been defined as a separate incident, as it occurred at a different location and involved different victims. In summary, it was determined that the victim reports related to two individual incidents – the first incident on the railway ramp led to two victim reports and the second incident on the street generated another victim report.

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<sup>7</sup> 'Victim report' refers to the report lodged by police (usually known as the 'Police Incident Report' when an incident is reported to them. A separate report is filed for each victim involved in the criminal incident.)