



Ref: Petition No 36.

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

18-32 Parliament Place

West Perth, WA, 6000

Dear Members

In reply to Petition No.36 – Crime Prevention – Greater Geraldton, tabled by Hon. Darren West MLC.

The crime statistics available from the Western Australian police website show a huge increase in crime in the Geraldton region with the numbers remaining steady. Fear among the community members is growing and more and more incidents are now occurring while people are home.

During a recent visit to Geraldton, the Police Minister stated that the spike in crime figures were in direct proportion to holiday periods. While increases occurred over the Dec 2013 /Jan 2014 period it should be noted that Police resources were at full capacity during this time as they were also dealing with the issues involved with an escapee prisoner. (Police resources were pulled from all over the region).

Since then however, we are still recording high levels of crime compared to last year's figures and the residents of Geraldton are becoming very frustrated and frightened. Despite the Minister's comments, crime numbers have increased and remain steady.

Residents are lacking sleep, from constant disturbances and break in's while people sleep in their own homes, also we all are in fear of attending our employments during the day to return to find our home's broken into. Residents also fear leaving their homes unattended.

As community members, we are receiving more and more reports that residents are being asked to lodge their crime online, which for a lot of the elderly or low socio-economic residents is frustrating and fuels a feeling of complacency.

Overall the Geraldton Police do a fantastic job considering the increase of spikes in crime that has occurred. The region also has a number of pockets of undeveloped land and it is a constant struggle with pursuits. A lot of trail bikes are stolen and used by the criminals for easy escape, and sometimes the Police vehicles cannot enter effectively into these dense shrub areas. A bike task force that could be deployed would be very effective for the Police; along with regular foot patrols with police dogs at night through the troubled suburbs.

Intimidation is becoming a very strong tactic that the criminals are using, with one of the latest being to have a female knock at your front door while male offenders present at your back door, having you trapped within your own home.

It is acknowledged that there are increases in issues at holiday periods, when transients come into town and when school is not in attendance especially over the Christmas break. To the Geraldton community this is a direct admission that the main offenders are Juveniles which is also backed by our own local paper reporting's from the court attendances. Many of the juveniles are re-offenders.

The juveniles attitude is that they are untouchable and this is evident in their social media comments stating that the "Cops can't touch us" and "Who cares our records are wiped at 18". The residents of Geraldton are beyond frustrated and anger is surfacing.

It has been mentioned that curfews would be perhaps a better 1st offense implementation (7pm to 7am), therefore giving the Police some form of support if they are picked up in the evenings and being able to document that a breach has occurred to the magistrates. Also community service that is meant to be adhered to is not being completed or controlled.

Mandatory counselling for the offenders and their Parents may also help. If these conditions are not met then the look at Juvenile prison (Banksia in Perth) as we have had feedback that not one juvenile person that has attended this establishment has liked it and the majority of offenders try harder not to re-offend.

Action most definitely needs to be taken ASAP as the residents are becoming angry, frightened and feel that the system is letting them down. There has already been talk of Vigilantism and this would not help anyone. The advice of leaving your own home in the case of a break in is ridiculous. No person is going to leave their home with children occupying it. Our fear is that someone is going to become injured or perhaps a fatality may occur, like we have seen already occur in Perth.

We would also like to see a "Boot Camp" established in the state, like Queensland Government is already doing and by the looks with great success. This not only is run normally by our Army Reserves or return servicemen, but it also gives a good disciplined framework for the juvenile offender, and the juveniles that are leaving this form of program are becoming responsible, trustworthy citizens of the community, having something to contribute rather than steal from it.

This is the main reason why the Geraldton Community stood up to be heard with this petition. We would like to make our region a safer place to live in and for people to visit. We are over the stigma of being the crime town of Western Australia, where people keep on driving by rather than staying say they are to scared of being robbed or assaulted.

Please hear our plea, as you are our governing body and without your support to our Police and investigate this juvenile issue, we feel that something horrible will occur it's just a matter of time.

We have not approached the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman), concerning this petition.

Yours Sincerely

ROSEMARY F LANGRIDGE

PETITION CO ORDINATOR

GERALDTON RESIDENTS DEMAND OUR STREETS BACK GROUP