



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL
AFFAIRS

(Subcommittee)

Reference: Crime in the community

MONDAY, 7 JUNE 2004

RAYMOND TERRACE AND FORSTER

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Monday, 7 June 2004

Members: Mrs Bronwyn Bishop (*Chair*), Mr Murphy (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Cadman, Mr Kerr, Mr McClelland, Ms Panopoulos, Mr Sciacca, Mr Secker, Mr Somlyay and Dr Washer

Members in attendance: Mrs Bronwyn Bishop, Mr Cadman

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The extent and impact of crime and fear of crime within the Australian community and effective measures for the Commonwealth in countering and preventing crime. The Committee's inquiry shall consider but not be limited to:

- a) the types of crimes committed against Australians
- b) perpetrators of crime and motives
- c) fear of crime in the community
- d) the impact of being a victim of crime and fear of crime
- e) strategies to support victims and reduce crime
- f) apprehension rates
- g) effectiveness of sentencing
- h) community safety and policing

WITNESSES

ANDERSON, Mr Leonard James, Chief Executive Officer, Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council	1707
BALDWIN, Mr Bob, MP, Federal Member for Paterson.....	1707
BECKETT, Mr Ian Geoffrey, (Private capacity).....	1707
BRADLEY, Mrs Doreen, OAM, (Private capacity).....	1707
BRENNAN, Mr Sean Patrick, Spokesman, Port Stephens Crime Forum Committee	1707
CARMAN, Senior Constable Natalie Anne, (Private capacity).....	1707
COLLEY, Mr Paul John, (Private capacity).....	1707
DOVER, Mrs Sally, Councillor, Port Stephens Council.....	1707
EARNSHAW, Ms Valda Daneille, (Private capacity).....	1707
HAGGETT, Superintendent Charles, Commander, Lower Hunter Command, NSW Police	1707
MASON, Mr Peter John, Chairman, Port Stephens Crime Forum Committee	1707
OWEN, Mr Robert Thomas, (Private capacity).....	1707
RITCHIE, Mr James Andrew, (Private capacity)	1707
SWAN, Mr Ronald Maxwell, Deputy Mayor, Port Stephens Shire Council	1707
WARK, Mr Trevor Frederick, (Private capacity)	1707
WHITALL, Mr Gregory P., (Private capacity).....	1707

Subcommittee met at 10.01 a.m.

ANDERSON, Mr Leonard James, Chief Executive Officer, Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council

BALDWIN, Mr Bob, MP, Member for Paterson

BECKETT, Mr Ian Geoffrey, (Private capacity)

BRADLEY, Mrs Doreen, OAM, (Private capacity)

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DOVER, Mrs Sally, Councillor, Port Stephens Council

EARNSHAW, Ms Valda Danielle, (Private capacity)

HAGGETT, Superintendent Charles, Commander, Lower Hunter Command, New South Wales Police

MASON, Mr Peter John, Chairman, Port Stephens Crime Forum Committee

OWEN, Mr Robert Thomas, (Private capacity)

SWAN, Mr Ronald Maxwell, Deputy Mayor, Port Stephens Shire Council

RITCHIE, Mr James Andrew, (Private capacity)

WARK, Mr Trevor Frederick, (Private capacity)

WHITALL, Mr Gregory P., (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Good morning. I apologise for our lateness. We were supposed to fly into Williamstown, but it was fogged in. Instead, we flew into Belmont and got up here as quickly as we could. Those who are sitting at the table opposite us have indicated they will give statements this morning. Not here at present but expected to attend is Bev Manton, Coordinator, Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Council.

I will now read an opening statement and then we will hear from those who are present. As others come, we will hear from them. After we have heard from those at the table, we will be most interested to have others take part in the forum.

I now declare open this public hearing by a subcommittee of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry into crime in the community:

victims, offenders and fear of crime. Since this inquiry was referred to the committee, we have taken evidence relating to many aspects of crime. Of particular interest has been the nature of crime experienced in local communities such as yours and the programs which have been put in place by community bodies to combat neighbourhood crime. We have found that in responding to crime in their communities some councils and other groups have introduced some innovative strategies which are clearly making a difference.

We are pleased to be here in Raymond Terrace this morning to hear from you about your concerns and how you think crime issues can be addressed. We will commence this morning's program with a roundtable discussion, with representation from various organisations. Following that initial discussion there will be an opportunity for others present here today to put their views to us. Although the subcommittee does not require you to give evidence under oath on this occasion, I would advise that these hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House of Representatives. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament.

I thank each of you for coming this morning. Would each person like to make an opening statement or some opening remarks? A copy of the *Hansard* of today's proceedings will subsequently be forwarded to you for your records. Perhaps we might begin with Councillor Dover.

Councillor Dover—As an opening statement and on behalf of all residents of Port Stephens, I welcome you here today. It is great that you are here and we thank you very much for coming. This particular situation has been one of great concern for our community for quite some time. I am here this morning representing the Tomaree Peninsula. You have probably heard in the news over the last few weeks about the problems of the Tilligerry Peninsula and the public meetings that have been held here. I am here in particular because I am concerned about the Tomaree Peninsula. We have similar problems out our way in Fingal Bay, Boat Harbour, Corlette and Nelson Bay.

I believe that we can find solutions to these problems. We know that it is very difficult for the police. As they do not have the staffing levels they need, out in our areas they are very limited. We also know that the law is not really behind them, as they have not been given the law enforcement powers they need to be able to correct this situation. We are determined to find answers to these problems, and I believe it will not be too difficult. As a community we will not have to put up with the harassment, the intimidation and the violence that we have put up with in the past. We are really grateful that you have come here today so that community members who are concerned can air their concerns and actual strategies can be made available so that we can do something about the problem of crime in our community.

CHAIR—Deputy Mayor Swan might like to speak next.

Mr Swan—I also welcome you to the Shire of Port Stephens and thank you very much for coming. We greatly appreciate your travelling around the country and coming to our shire. I am sure, as the statistics suggest, we share this problem with many other shires. This community has basically had enough of: 'Well, there are 10 people a day murdered in the streets of New York, so if there is one person murdered in the streets here it is acceptable.' We do not find it acceptable. We want to look at all the different mechanisms that could be implemented in this

shire to overcome it—such as having more police, the police having greater powers, parents and teachers having more powers and perhaps the judiciary being a little firmer in some of its decisions.

In the main the council more recently have been asked to consider building a police station at Tilligerry, which we are happy to do. This morning, through Mr Bob Baldwin, we were made aware that funding is available to assist in these matters—and that may be another consideration. I will have more to say a little later. Once again, thank you for coming to Port Stephens.

CHAIR—We might hear now from Superintendent Charles Haggett, the Lower Hunter area commander.

Supt Haggett—I am the local area commander for the whole of the Lower Hunter, which covers Cessnock, Maitland, Raymond Terrace, Nelson Bay, Tea Gardens, Hawks Nest and up around Dungog and the surrounding areas there. My main involvement is allocating resources to the area, based on the resources I am provided by the police force and the state government. At the moment, we have placed what resources we have available, depending on priority for each of the areas, and on our tasking and deployment, based on what intelligence we have obtained for the area.

I am happy to work in with the community. We have been working quite well in recent times in trying to establish better means of dealing with the crime situation right across my whole command. More importantly, in more recent times the eastern zone of the command has been very supportive of the police, and we will endeavour to move along those lines. There has certainly been the issue of community expectations and the timing of the release of offenders—where we arrest offenders, for example, and they are released a lot earlier than the community might expect. This has particularly been the case with stolen motor vehicle offenders, who are arrested, put inside for three months, for example, and then return to their habits—and the weekend they return we suddenly see a huge rise in the number of stolen motor vehicles. Today I certainly hope to get a bit of feedback from the community itself and the other people here on what we might be able to do a bit better to help out.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

Mr Anderson—I represent the Aboriginal population of Port Stephens. As such, I am a representative of the Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Worimi traditional owners group. An inherent problem with the area here is simply the lack of facilities for our people to be trained, re-educated or even given the chance to explain themselves. For example, in most areas overseas they have a traditional person in a court procedure or an appeal who is aware of simple things, such as the fact that traditionally these people are not allowed to look an elder in the eye. We are running quite well with the local police in this area. They are quite understanding. We have a rapport with Charlie and even a few of the local constables, but the problem is that people are seeing Aboriginals as alcoholics, drunks or thieves, and that is not the way it is. We need an image reappraisal, and we need a court procedure at federal level in which we can explain how our people feel and what they do. At a state level, our state police are trying their hardest, but I think it is a problem that we must address. We must have the facilitation and the legislation to adopt these principles of operation. In other words, we need alternative education and sentencing

programs, with the support of the local, state and federal police. These are areas that we must look at at all levels—from ground level through to the top.

Aboriginal people do not want to be identified by the things they have done wrong. We want pronouncements and recommendations for the things that we are trying to do right. This is what we are trying to address here. We are hoping that we will get some support in the area of identification of the social awareness of the Aboriginal people from this region—from the missions to where our Woromi land council is spread out—and of the social problems of the blue-collar situation which we are trying to address.

Also, we want to see support for positive plans in our community, because Aboriginal people are still a positive part of the community. What we are trying to do with the police station at Tilligerry Bay, if we can, is to offer our support in any way or form. We also offer the state police personnel the same support which they offer to some of our women's groups and areas like that, but we will need immediate action in response from our own people. We want the empowerment of some of our own people to act in areas where the state police cannot. For example, in the old ACLO days we could go on missions where the state police were held back. Then they stopped that program, which then impinged on or, in a way, held back the actual support the state police were trying to give us.

Mr Mason—I come from a police background. I represent what is now the Port Stephens Crime Forum Committee. I propose to address the state government's neglect, I suppose, in relation to how they have adopted and controlled policing in recent times. I would like to make it clear at the outset that we are not attacking our police force in any way. We are attacking the way they are resourced, the way that the state government has adopted a British policing model that runs on economy rather than efficiency, the effect that that has on communities—especially isolated communities like Port Stephens—and the way we are separate from them. I will have a lot more to say in due course about that. Thank you very much.

Mr Brennan—I will be speaking today as the spokesman for the newly formed Port Stephens Crime Forum Committee. We started off as the Tilligerry crime forum, but over the last five or six weeks we have realised that it would be more beneficial and more productive to expand it to the greater Port Stephens area. The campaign started about five to six weeks ago. We have had a lot of support from the media. With this support we have been able to put a lot of pressure on the state minister for police, who has now instructed his deputy commissioner to come to Newcastle this week to speak with the area commander, in order to find out what is going on up here in Port Stephens and to come up with solutions and report back to him by the end of June with some recommendations.

We are all sitting tight, waiting for the recommendations that will go from Newcastle's commanders via their deputy commissioner back to the minister. We are feeling quietly confident now that there are going to be changes up here in Port Stephens. The changes are well overdue—due again to a lack of police resources and the blow-out in response times which has resulted in the citizens of Port Stephens feeling quite insecure about what is going on their neighbourhood. That is what I will mainly be speaking on today. I thank everyone for coming.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. I hear you say that the police are not resourced properly. I would like to hear from all of you precisely what you mean by resourced properly—what you

think is missing and what you think is needed. It is good to hear that there is a good working relationship between the community and the individual members of the police force, who are part of your community, but I would like to know what you all think resourced means.

Mrs Dover—That is a really good question, because I think we can all get tied up and caught up in words and talk in committees when actually I believe our community is looking for some action. When we talk about resources we are talking about money to put police on our streets. That is what is needed and that is what we seem to be coming up against that brick wall about all the time. Every time we have a need in a community we are told, ‘I’m sorry, we haven’t got enough police to do that. We haven’t got enough money to pay the police to do that.’

We need cars on our roads to cover the great distances between, say, Shoal Bay and Raymond Terrace and Karuah. These areas are covered by one car at night, and that is not adequate. Every time we complain about things like that we are told, ‘Sorry, there are no resources to cover that.’ In my opinion, that is what it means—funding being available for our community to be serviced by our policemen in an effective way so that our communities feel safe.

Mr Swan—On resourcing, at a recent meeting at Tilligerry which 400-plus people attended, one of the police representatives, to his credit, admitted that there were many occasions when there was one vehicle covering the whole of Port Stephens. I have been well aware of this for many years because I am an ex-policeman and I have a security business and quite a few of my personnel are on the street all night long. I have been aware of the impost that has been placed upon the local police in having to work, in dangerous situations on occasions, while totally underresourced. We are looking for a local area command to be returned to this area. It was at Raymond Terrace and it was taken to Maitland. We are hoping that it will be brought back.

That also relates to incarcerating people at Nelson Bay, at the far end of the shire. For example, to lock somebody up in custody overnight they are required to take that person to Maitland. I am not sure how many kilometres away that is but it would take them out of the area for a minimum of 2½ hours, leaving Nelson Bay, Karuah, Raymond Terrace or the whole shire perhaps unprotected for that period of time. So we have a problem there, and a local area command here at Raymond Terrace with associated holding facilities would certainly improve the situation.

I know that Mr Peter Mason is going to allude to rostering and so forth—things that he has expertise in. At Tilligerry the problem with resourcing is, I believe, that a man or men are allocated there but they are taken away from that area and used perhaps at Karuah, which is a long way away, or at Raymond Terrace or on other duties. In the main, the perception the public out there has is that those men are mainly there in the daytime, as opposed to on a Friday or Saturday night when the problems occur. The bottom line is that, firstly, we need more men here; and, secondly, we need a local area command here at Raymond Terrace, which in itself should bring extra police. We certainly need the facilities to house prisoners overnight in the Port Stephens shire.

Mr Brennan—Government departments seem to be doing things in reverse. The government has a responsibility to provide services to the community—police, ambulance, fire brigade and so on. The way I would be doing it is to provide the service and then back it up with the budget that is needed to provide that service to meet community expectations. What happens now is that

governments give you the budget and then you have to provide a service to equal that budget and not go over it. So to not go over budget you then have to cut back on the community service. We are doing things in reverse. We do not do that with the social security budget. If unemployment goes up to 18 per cent they increase the budget, because they do not want people to go without an income because they are unemployed. So, if they can do it with the social security budget to meet demand with resources and increase the budget and, if need be, go into deficit to fund that budget, why can't we do it with essential services? I think we are doing things in reverse. Provide the service and then back it up with the budget that is needed; do not provide the budget and then say to the department heads, 'Now provide a service to match that budget.'

CHAIR—Superintendent Haggett, in your area command do you have a duty officer?

Supt Haggett—Yes, we have five duty officers. Within my command I have split those duty officers into geographical areas. I have one placed at Raymond Terrace to look after the eastern sector. That provides direct access for the community to a senior police officer and also gives the police themselves access to a senior officer.

CHAIR—Do those duty officers actually involve themselves in police work?

Supt Haggett—From time to time they do.

CHAIR—Not as a regular thing?

Supt Haggett—No. They are more there to provide support for the police, to do the management side of things and to make sure of resource allocations in those areas. But, certainly with regard to the major issues, if there is a siege or something they will control that. Occasionally they will participate. If there is no other vehicle available, they will go and do the jobs on a needs basis, but generally they are there to undertake the management role and deal with management issues.

CHAIR—Mr Swan, do you think it would be more useful to have a full-time policeman rather than a duty officer? That was the creation that came under Commissioner Ryan. It costs \$50 million a year, I might add.

Mr Swan—That comes down to allocating budget money. I realise that the bottom line of all our problems is the dollar. Unfortunately the public do not perceive that that is their problem. Governments need to address this. I agree that we need to have not just the duty officers but more police in this area. Our police association in this area threatened to strike, which they have done before. As an ex-policeman I know, as Peter knows, that because of the culture it takes a lot for police personnel to come forward. They are bound by a lot of restrictions in what they can say and do. So I think that makes a statement. When the police in this area, and not just the community—because all the communities are complaining—stand up to be counted, we are right there to support them. I think that makes a statement.

CHAIR—I might ask you the same question, Mr Mason. One thing that has come out of having these inquiries is that a duty officer is paid a lot more money than a regular policeman who is actually doing police work. You could almost have two for the price of one. You are all telling me that you need more policemen actually doing police work. The duty officer was the

creation of Commissioner Ryan. The duty officer was to be a sort of watchdog to make sure the rest of the policemen were not being corrupt. I am really trying to get to the bottom of whether or not we can better use those resources. As I said, I think they cost \$50 million a year.

Mr Mason—That is true, but I do not know whether I necessarily agree with that course. I do not think you can run a police service on a low and flat basis with just a senior officer and nobody in between the non-commissioned officers. I know that duty officers do a lot of work behind the scenes. We have got a lot of very young police out there who need a lot of guidance and training. That is the duty officer's function. The duty officers are also there as the investigators of allegations of complaints. They do a remarkable job. I do not believe that that is the answer. I really think that the duty officers have their role. I was never a duty officer. I was a commander. I was in charge of prosecuting. But I had the equivalent responsibilities of a duty officer. Their work is pretty wide. It is a pretty broad base. They are not just looking to see if there is corruption. They fill numerous roles, they really do.

The original part of the question about the budget and that sort of thing is very valid. The ambulance service, for example, has about 2,000 members. They can supply five ambulances for the area that the Lower Hunter Command can provide one car at night time for. There is someone on call at Stroud, but they have got permanent night shift ambulances from where we are, Tanilba Bay, Raymond Terrace, Nelson Bay and Stroud. I understand there are five of those ambulances available. The recent survey put them at the top as far as popularity is concerned, because they are there.

In relation to the other things, I would like to make a comment. An excellent submission has been submitted to your group by a Mr Kevin Moran, who has a similar history to me. He targets things pretty well. I do not think there is any complaint about the job the police do in relation to serious crime, but 80 per cent of things happen at community level—the things that affect people's lifestyle, such as the damaging of property—where it is perceived that nothing is done about, because the police do not have the powers or the resources to go there. They get there and they can move people along, but they cannot spend the time investigating a simple thing like a malicious damage charge worth less than a certain amount of money, because it is not a commercial proposition. But it is that 80 per cent that is the community's annoyance. The things that really aggravate are the things like that.

As far as the bigger picture is concerned, if you are trying to generate good policing you have to have police logistically based. I will start into what I was really going to talk about. When Peter Ryan came here, he tried to introduce a British policing model. I do not know whether there are six or eight separate police forces in England—

CHAIR—Many more.

Mr Mason—but England fits into New South Wales about six times. He had no idea of the vastness of the problem. When you have all your resources at Maitland, and you have one car operating of a night-time and you get two calls, somebody has to wait. You have those response times, because you cannot prioritise. You commit yourself to the first call, which might be a road accident with people trapped, then you are faced with a second call, which might be a domestic violence matter. But, quite often, domestic violence matters are the starting point for homicides. Then a coroner starts criticising you and saying, 'Why did the police take three hours to get

there?’ and the community is unsettled about it. Part of this inquiry is looking at community fears.

CHAIR—That is right.

Mr Mason—People feel safe if they have a police station, because it is an oasis in the desert; they can go there for shelter. They would feel safe if the second part of the promise were kept—that is, a lot of police out in cars. But we do not have the police out in cars. There are not six or eight cars patrolling the greater area of Port Stephens of a night, so people do not feel safe. I have had literally dozens of letters since we started this campaign about the waiting time people had and how frightened they were. There is anecdotal evidence from Port Stephens that some people are frightened to go out of their houses at night. There is no active police station 24 hours a day. Raymond Terrace is not a 24-hour station and Nelson Bay, which is a very vibrant little community, is not a 24-hour police station.

When you get somebody who works out at Maitland and he is here on, say, afternoon shift and has to arrest somebody, he has to take them back virtually to Maitland to charge and process them. He might live at Mayfield, and he will not get home until two o’clock in the morning. So what is his option? He will exercise discretion and move the person along. People need to see justice administered. If people are victims of crime and do not have any perception that something has happened, it adds to the fear. I think the resourcing situation is not just about financial budgets but about having people logistically located, and that is why we want them to reverse what they did.

When they started forming the local area command model, Raymond Terrace had its own command and it was folded into Maitland. We lost six detectives, the intelligence officer and other police. They went to Maitland and we never got them back. There has been some increase here, but the local police association is threatening industrial action because they are not properly resourced either. Resourcing is really locating police in the area and having the finances and the cars.

I have often questioned the wisdom of giving local area commanders responsibility for a budget, because they are not accountants; they are policemen. When they have to start concentrating so much of their energies on their budget, they lose focus. They have to do things within constrained parameters. For example, we have police up at Tilligerry. One person has a sign on his door saying, ‘This is not a police station,’ and I can accept that because he is not getting paid overtime all the time, unless it has been released. People knock on his door at two o’clock or three o’clock in the morning. That is not good enough. It is not a matter of calling out people at those times. People need to be available at these times. So those budgetary constraints reduce the effectiveness of policing across the board.

Mr CADMAN—I will ask a couple of background questions that will help us understand some of the problems that this community and others face. Who creates the problems? Are they visitors to the area, blow-ins or hoods from Newcastle?

Mr Mason—It is a bit of this and a bit of that. There is a bit of local stuff. There is anecdotal evidence that people know. Last time we had a real problem was when a group of footballers came up from Newcastle. They went drinking somewhere. They had purchased a lot of alcohol

and secreted it somewhere in cars or who knows where. After the closing time of the club they went and got their alcohol. They were down on our foreshores making a terrible noise and threatening people. One of our residents went down to move them along or ask them to stop, after calling the police. He was promptly assaulted for his trouble and thrown off the boardwalk, injuring his shoulder. Of course the hoodlums then just move on. It is very hard to say where they come from specifically. Some of it is local youth; some of it is people who come in on buses, cars or whatever.

Mr CADMAN—It is mostly young males. Is that right?

Mr Mason—Mostly young males, yes.

Mr CADMAN—Lenny, you seem to indicate that a fair bit of blame may be directed at the Indigenous community. Is that right?

Mr Anderson—That is not true. We all have our own problems. The Indigenous community wish to be noticed as a percentage of the people who are trying to address those problems. For example, I was on the state advisory police panel in 2001. We were promised at the time that we would get Raymond Terrace station back. We have never got it back. I was on that regional and state police advisory panel when we were promised that we would get the station back, and it never happened. We counted on that promise.

Also, the module they utilised to address all the issues of police resourcing is a metropolitan procedure. They did not even take into account the operation of geographical isolation. That, to me, is one of the greatest impingements on your resources. They did not address the geographical isolation of our areas. The response time, the call-out time—things like this were not addressed. Indigenous people are very conversant—we were aware of the program. We were trying to get in Indigenous police personnel. That is going okay at this time, but they are probationary constables now. It should have been started 15 years ago, like a lot of other things that I believe should have happened. They are not to blame; the issue to blame is that people can utilise other people's lack of resources against them.

Mr CADMAN—I am not talking about blame; I am just wondering whether there is a perception in the community, maybe unfairly based.

Mr Anderson—No; that is definitely incorrect.

Mr CADMAN—That is good. We have identified a general problem of mainly young males. Is there a professional criminal element behind it as well?

Mr Anderson—There is a professional criminal element in all avenues, especially in the areas where we have youth—male or female. We are addressing issues like break and enter; we are not addressing the issues of domestic violence yet. Of course there are women involved in that, aren't there? We are looking at a one-picture frame which is not correct. We have to look at it overall. I put in the personal part about non-Indigenous or Indigenous people because of the fact that we were voluntary ACLOs. That is another thing that was cut. We had the respect of our people, so we were allowed to go into their homes and take these people to a place where a state

police officer could take them through the charging process or whatever. Once that was stopped and Indigenous people knew this, they went with the hole in the wall.

This is another thing; we were stopped from doing that. We were set up to do it. We did it against our own community. We were seen as pretend 'plastic coppers'. We were seen as not Aboriginal because we were doing it the wrong way. Then all of a sudden they withdrew that facility from us and left us and the community high and dry. We are still suffering from that. A lot of people who tried to do the right thing by the Indigenous people went to ground and said, 'We'll do this; we'll study white man's law and become a part of the principal operation of our protection and security,' and then we were left high and dry when they withdrew. That was detrimental to our people. It is like the old RED scheme—you give them three months work, the poor bugger gets a girlfriend, they get a flat and then the three months work stops and they are even worse off than they were before. That is what I am saying about our people: we are sick and tired of getting tokenism and plastic procedures. We had people in place. Why don't the courts have an Aboriginal liaison officer there, for a start, to help the state police understand?

One of the core procedures that we had here the other day when I was in attendance was the fact that somebody was in trouble because they were told 'Look me in the eyes when I speak to you.' That was a young kid who ran away from school. If you understand Aboriginal history and our beliefs, you know that you never look an elder or a person of respect in the eyes. Nobody bothered to ask that child about this issue. If they had an Aboriginal liaison officer there, these issues would have been stopped. Maybe that child would have stopped carrying out further troubles and being placed back in the system. We have alternate education systems, which is backed by the police.

I will give an example. We had all the kids at Tilligerry Peninsula riding motorbikes through the scrub. One child was injured. We went out to fix them up—okay, we're right. The next week, we had the police bike squad up there. They rode in on these big bikes. The kids were all there in the education program we had. They stood on the back wheel; they did everything kids could do. They jumped off, took their helmets off, and one was a woman—a frail little woman, but a police officer—who could ride a bike just as good as any of those guys. I know Charlie has been a part of this too. The police car was brought into the land council offices when we had the open days. I am sure Bob was there for one of them too. The kids were allowed to look at the computer. They were allowed to do this; they were allowed to do that. They were shown as being user friendly. But halfway through showing all these kids, the car had to be called away because it was needed somewhere else. That is what I am saying.

The Aboriginal people in our area—especially with policing—are getting sick and tired of being to blame. Eighty-five per cent of the crimes committed in south-western Sydney since 1991 were blamed on Aboriginals, because of the dark skin. Now we are finding out there are other components of ethnic groups there. They were the ones doing it. It has just become apparent now. I am an Aboriginal and I am proud of it. But would you blame me for being an Aboriginal if I robbed the bank? No. It is these colour identification things that we have got to address and we have to make sure we do it.

I know we are talking about resources. I feel that some of the training that has happened, where we have sent senior police officers overseas to study what they must do there, is fine. But maybe we should start from the ground level here and study what we should do to address our

own people's issues—all the community. I know Wayne Humphries and Charlie and blokes like that have been trying to do that. But how can you address a clientele or a community's problems? There are so many different facets you must look at. You must have those resources. You must have those people. This one-car situation is no good. We run a security unit. We have assisted the state police in some of the areas there. We have tried to help them. But we have no power to place infringements on our own people.

If you want us to take responsibility for our people and address the issues, then give us the rights by mandate of legislation to do so. We do not want vigilante groups. We just want the same responsibility. I will guarantee you in this area alone that the crime rate which is occasioned by Aboriginal or Indigenous persons will drop dramatically when they know their own people are supervising what is happening.

Mr CADMAN—Is that in some way following a more traditional pattern so that people who are traditional elders or leaders are actually given some authority?

Mr Anderson—This is exactly what I am saying.

Mr CADMAN—Are you saying that part of the problem is that society tends to take away their authority to some degree, or they are bypassed?

Mr Anderson—They bypass the authority of our elders. All our organisations operate on respect—the same as any other statutory body. But do not forget that your laws have been here since 1777—200 years or so. Some of our laws have been here for 40,000 years. One of the most important laws is respect of your elders and direction. Another resource, in addition to what we should be doing with more cars and more police personnel, is setting a panel up. If they know they have to go to their own community with the assistance and the support of the police, then you watch the difference. You cannot say, 'No, I didn't steal it the petrol, uncle,' when he knows you had it all over your hands when you got there. He would address that issue. You would have to be very particular in who is on the panel, and they are not going to be very liked at times. But there is one thing with Aboriginal kids even today—respect of the elders. I did the juvenile justice white papers in 1994 in Taree. The amount of change we have found there compared to here is astronomical. They still have a lot of inherent problems in Taree. Our children, our Indigenous people here, are trying to get ahead. They are trying to work with the other people in the community.

Mr CADMAN—So you see Taree as something of an example. Are there any models that you know of—successful models—that you would like to emulate?

Mr Anderson—We did set a successful model. When Magistrate Cook was in Newcastle we put in place an alternative education program, which we called Naroongi, which is 'start at the beginning'. Before a sentencing situation we took these kids who were having behavioural problems into the bush with some of the elders. In 12 months we took 34 students. For many of the re-offending programs the success rate was that they would re-offend eight out of 10 times. We had one out of 10 persons re-offend after that program.

Mr CADMAN—That is the real test, isn't it?

Mr Anderson—That is the test. You put the onus back on them to perform in front of their own people, not a peer group they don't even understand. We did have maximum support from the police, the council and everywhere else but it was stopped because of lack of resources and because the members at the time turned around and said that it was a program that we could address in other issues through general mainstream.

CHAIR—Perhaps Mr Baldwin would like to come up to the table to add something.

Mr Baldwin—Thank you very much. I have heard in part what these people in the community have got to say. Predominantly the people here are representing the issue pertaining to the Tilligerry community. This issue is widespread. It is in the Tomaree Peninsula, the Tilligerry Peninsula, Medowie, here in the Terrace and in all areas. There are two types of crime. Firstly, there is youth vandalism. It is without any direction; it is purely about destruction, going out at times with alcohol, although it is not always alcohol related. It is just about going out and causing wanton destruction. That is probably the most disappointing of all of the crime that we see. There is no drive behind it except bad behaviour. The other things we see are break and enters; people do not feel safe in their homes any more. That is of paramount importance. The general make-up is quite broad. We have a high number of retired senior people in their homes, particularly single women, who have particular security needs. A lot of these people have come from country and rural areas where, in the past, they have left their doors open and their keys in the car—that type of syndrome, which you have heard of. But no longer can they do that.

The community meeting that was held at Tilligerry only a few weeks ago, which I spoke to you about in parliament, expressed concern. They expressed concern that the area command is too large to address the needs of the local community, that the resources are spread too far, too thin. You have heard examples from Peter Mason, Ron Swan and Sean Brennan—indeed, all of the speakers—that the easiest way to commit a crime out here on any of the peninsulas, whether it is the Tilligerry or the Tomaree, is to phone in a violence or an armed break and enter up at Hawks Nest. They send the cars up there and you can do as you like down here because the drive time is so great. Let's hope that does not happen. Anyone who has a criminal mind who wants to conduct or execute a fairly serious sort of crime can perhaps do that.

The key point is that people don't feel safe. When people don't feel safe in the community it exacerbates a whole bunch of other problems that we have: people don't go out, they don't socialise, they don't interact, and they become more insular. That is not a healthy community that we live in. It is all about having increased police presence. It is about seeing people in blue uniforms out and about in the community, because that is a deterrent. The hardened criminal who is going to go and do a break and enter or steal a car—if they are part of an organised gang—will not be deterred. They will just be a little bit smarter when they do it. The youth problem is a problem with our community and a problem of parents, but most of all it is a problem that can be in part addressed by having a police presence. That can only be solved by increasing the numbers. You have heard we have got 2.6 police at the Tilligerry, which I think has been expanded since the meeting, with an extra person there some time. I have not caught the details on it. It was spoken about. It is not just an extra half a police person here for a period of time; it is about having a defined long-term plan of increasing the numbers.

I turn to population growth. You will go to Forster this afternoon. This whole corridor, from Newcastle north, has this one of the highest population growth rates in New South Wales. That

population growth is predominantly in aged people who are looking to their retirement. I think the argument that young kids would have nothing to do in my town defies belief. This is an area with great beaches and a lot of parks. I believe that the more we pour on for kids today the more they want. They have never had as many personal entertainment facilities—whether it be TV, videos, computer games, public recreation facilities or sporting opportunities—as they have today.

CHAIR—We hear that chant all over the place—youth saying that they do not have anything to do. In reality, the ones that tend to be the troublemakers and get into trouble are the ones that do not fit socially into a group where they are content to do the things that are available to do. They do not want to be involved in sport, because they do not feel happy doing that. They do not want to be involved in something that is intellectual, because they do not feel that they stand out in that. It is the troublemakers that literally do not fit.

Mr Baldwin—There is one thing that I need to make clear on behalf of the communities. I heard the discussions with Lennie about the young Aboriginal kids. It is not Aboriginal kids. It is not even kids from poor economic backgrounds. It is kids from all backgrounds. There used to be a group that would hang around Apex Park at Nelson Bay. Some of the kids that were out there with alcohol at three o'clock, four o'clock and five o'clock in the morning as young as 11, 12 or 13 actually came from some of the 'better' families in the area.

CHAIR—So where were the parents?

Mr Baldwin—So it is not something that is isolated to Aboriginal kids or kids from a poorer background; it is a problem that spreads everywhere. There are two steps to address it. One is the police presence and the other one is perhaps tighter and better disciplinary measures by the community on young repeat offenders. One of the discussions I have had with the police that annoyed me was about all of these rights that are provided directly to the child. They must call someone. I accept that they have got to have proper legal representation and counsel. But the fact is that most of the charges are dismissed with a warning over and over again. That has to be depressing for the police officers, who go and do their work and do it well. We have some of the best police in New South Wales in this area. They do their job well, only to be told: 'You've got to release them or let them off. It's not serious enough.' This is ridiculous. If you do the crime, you have to do the time.

CHAIR—That is very sensible, Bob. One of the things we find—certainly out of overseas stuff that I have looked at as well—is that, by and large, the people who do the minor crimes also do the major crimes. It would be better if you could bring them in at that lesser level. Therefore, giving more and more warnings without charging is going to lead to an exacerbation.

Mr Brennan—I will come in on the back of what Lennie was saying. I think you hit the nail on the head also in terms of lack of respect. I think that over the decades we have disempowered the parents, the police officer and the schoolteacher. We are seeing that now with the gangs in Perth. The gangs of 14-year-olds are not scared to stand up to the police. We now have on the streets of Australia police in full riot gear, which we are used to seeing only in Europe and North America. We are seeing police in full riot gear now having to be ready to charge 14-year-olds, 15-year-olds and 16-year-olds. There is no fear. So we have to ask ourselves what is going on.

Why is this happening? Why are 15-year-olds, 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds not scared of their parents, schoolteachers and police officers—and police officers in full battle gear?

Mr Baldwin—I do not think it is so much about being scared; it is all about being respectful.

Mr Brennan—Yes, it is about what is going on in our society. We did not have these problems in the sixties, so why do we have them today? Where are we heading? These are the questions we have to get to the bottom of. I know that Australia is a country that loves signing UN charters on the rights of the child—

CHAIR—Some of us opposed that.

Mr Brennan—but do we fully appreciate what we are signing and what the ramifications and the flow-back are going to be before we sign these UN agreements? We talk about the rights of the child. Do we sign one on the rights of the parent? Do we sign one on the rights of the police officer? When do those stakeholders come into the picture?

CHAIR—As I said, Mr Brennan, some of us opposed our signing that protocol.

Mr Brennan—Does the parliament properly consult with its constituents before it goes and signs these international agreements?

CHAIR—We do now. One of the new things that was introduced by this government was a treaties committee which now looks at all treaties which the federal government enters into before they are signed. In this country we do not have to ratify treaties; the government by and large can use executive power to enter into them. Some of them require legislation to be enacted to make them effective. In the case of the rights of the child treaty there were some parts which became operational without legislation being passed, and many of us opposed that. I happened to be one; I think Alan was one also. But we are stuck with it. We now have a process whereby we look at such treaties before something is done. They now get an airing; they used to be signed automatically, at the whim of the government.

Mr Mason—I sometimes wonder whether we have really appreciated what is happening to our juveniles. Children today seem to be smarter, bigger, stronger, more aware and more streetwise and to have greater wherewithal—all that—and I wonder why we are still treating them as children up to the age of 18. If I could have a wish I would say, 'Let's reduce it to 17, for a start.' I can appreciate that there are cases where the legislation that protects them with anonymity is justified—for people who fall under the *doli incapax* rule for those under 14 years of age, perhaps—but by the time they get to 14, 15, 16 or whatever they are starting to know and appreciate what they are doing, and they know they can do it with impunity because detention centres are expensive and all that sort of thing. I think there is room for that sort of legal protection on their first offence but, once they get to 15, 16, 17 and 18 and they have been continual offenders, for a start we should start treating them as adults at 17 but we should also name and shame them.

The law that protects them through anonymity is a disgrace, in the community's view, because they do not see anything happening. The 17-year-olds will come down and trash a community centre and trash a park. At Tanilba Bay not long ago we had a situation where some drunken 17-

year-olds—that is the way it was put to me—tore up picnic tables and burnt them for warmth, made fires out of them. If the police do take them in and charge them, they get a bond. I worked as a prosecutor for years and I used to shake my head sometimes. We had one magistrate who put the same boy on 13 consecutive bonds for stealing cars—13 of them. That was before we had the right to lodge an appeal on lack of severity. We are treating them wrongly. They should be adults at 17 and we should name and shame them so that the community can see who the offenders are and deal with them accordingly. I think that we need to make some legislative changes there.

Mr Swan—I would like to make a couple of observations. First and foremost, I was involved in the anti-Vietnam demonstrations, and they were a turning point in Western society. I was a police officer and I was also called up for national service, so I had a view on both sides. This is where the police were used to gain media attention. People would spit on you and kick you—as happened to me—and then walk with you, nice and quiet, to the van where the cameras were waiting. Then of course they would jump up in the air and distort themselves and it would look as if you were trying to rip them to bits, so we had police brutality on the front pages.

The bottom line was that they challenged authority. Being educated young people, mostly from universities in Australia and America, they had found out that the policemen could not just tell you to go home or kick you up the bum, as we all put it, and so on; and that is fair enough. That then flowed on through the community to teachers and parents, and this is where we come back to respect. I have been on a lot of forums. I could not be a policeman in this day and age when young people—as I have seen happen—put their finger up at me and tell me to go away because they are juveniles and they know that there is nothing I can do. People have to stand there—old ladies who have just had their letterboxes trashed or whatever—and watch young people walk away, giving a mouthful not only to them but also to the police. We have lost respect in the community.

The old adage of the local policeman—and you hear of all these legends—that kept communities under control is true to a degree but the bottom line was that every adult male in particular in a community had respect. ‘Young Jonesy, you get home or I’ll tell your old man.’ People interacted. We have a more defensive situation now. Parents are more defensive of their children. We spoil our children more. The bottom line is that I do not think I agree with Peter that children as such are better educated et cetera nowadays. Some children are to a degree. But they are not held accountable. And they know this. They are not capable of handling power mentally and they abuse the privilege they have—that we give them a fair go.

As one of the police officers said, there are minority groups in an area that are generally the trouble. With Apex Park, there was one particular young man who became a Ned Kelly. He was a juvenile. He was as tall as I am. He could walk into premises, pick up cartons of cigarettes and walk out. The young girls would ring the police. ‘He’s a juvenile. There’s nothing we can do.’ He would go down to the park and distribute his booty. He finished up with a gathering of about 30-odd young people. I have a security business so I am at hand to take note of most of these types of things. We need to gain respect for the police; we need to gain respect for teachers; we need to gain respect for parents. To do this we need to empower these people, who need to have some authority, and we need to make the people responsible a little bit more accountable.

I will go onto a little bit of dangerous ground here. I was trying to tell myself not to mention it. I have had a security business here for 32 years. I am well aware that you have repeat offenders. While I agree with a lot of programs that help all sorts of people who have problems and I acknowledge and endorse them I have seen people move out of houses and leave towns because they have been terrorised by young people in the main in their streets and nothing can be done about it.

Incarceration costs money but if someone is in there for 12 months the community gets relief. They are repeat offenders. The police are not chasing the same guys round and round. They may knock off a dozen or two dozen houses. The impact on those families is large. I go to old people's homes that have been trashed. They are in their 70s or 80s. Their husband has passed away. They are living in terror in a house. And people say about these offenders, 'She's right. Let them go.' No-one really gives a damn about the victims of crime. I keep screaming for the victims of crime.

I can refer more recently to Raymond Terrace but I lived in Trafalgar Street. Behind me were aged units. Those aged units are now government housing. There are tonnes of cars everywhere. There is graffiti. These people are impacting severely on that area. The same happened here. It was mooted that they would clean up the area of Redfern for the Olympics. Who cares why? They may want to disperse government housing and they may want to integrate. I do not know. But the impact on a community that is used to leaving doors open and pushbikes down the street or the garage door up when government housing comes in is a major one.

I talk to fellows who smoke dope. I have been there when they have smoked it. I have talked to people who knock things off, people who know things. I talk to a broad cross-section of the community. I know a lot of problems come from these areas. There is concern as to whether our shire or different places like this that are not accustomed to it are targeted for decentralisation and settlement of these sorts of areas.

CHAIR—It would be unfair to say that all people in public housing pose problems for a community because they do not. A lot of them—

Mr Swan—My sister and her family are there. They are good people. I have a lot of friends in there. But the great majority come from that area.

CHAIR—But what you are suggesting is that maybe your area has been targeted to take more difficult people.

Mr Swan—Yes.

CHAIR—One of the things that we have also taken evidence on and which we are interested in is how we can work with people who meet a profile of kids who are likely to get into trouble and have an early intervention program to prevent that, using psychologists and using all sorts of resources to assess that. I guess you have no such resources here.

Mr Swan—No.

CHAIR—Superintendent Haggett, why do people say if juveniles are wreaking havoc we cannot do anything about it?

Supt Haggett—It is not that we cannot do anything about it. We have certain legislation we have to act within. The government has gone some way to reintroducing some powers for police. When we lost our summary offences act some years ago it took away a lot of that ability to work within that. But we have now been given the ‘move along’ legislation. For juveniles, where we have to deal with them in certain matters and certain crimes, we issue them a warning on a number of occasions. It is normally three occasions.

CHAIR—Do you have to give that warning or can you take action?

Supt Haggett—It depends on the crime. If the crime involves violence, we can then escalate to the next level, which is conferencing, a formal caution or charging a person. Each matter has to take into consideration what has been involved, the degree that it has impacted on the victim and the impact on the community. Generally speaking, when we attend a lot of the locations and you have a dozen or so juveniles, we are obliged to utilise the move-along legislation in the first instance if they are not committing offences other than being rowdy and potentially causing fear for anybody. We normally utilise that and get them to move along. Unfortunately, it could be short-lived. They could just turn around and come back 10 minutes after we have left or regather at another location and we get called again.

CHAIR—Do they laugh at you and think it is a bit of a joke?

Supt Haggett—In some instances, depending on the degree of intoxication on many occasions. If they start voicing their concerns with us and swearing et cetera, we certainly escalate the type of action we take. In many instances, we will take the juveniles back to the police station, contact parents and make sure the parents have to take responsibility for them. A lot of the times that we do that, we find that the kids are locals and someone normally can attend to them quite quickly. Unfortunately, we have been off the road for that period of time when we do that, so it is not the action you want to take if you can prevent it because you do not want to be taking the car crew off the street, making them unavailable to attend more serious issues.

CHAIR—Whereas, if you had an extra car, you could perhaps deal with these problems.

Supt Haggett—You could perhaps do that, yes. Everyone seems to be mentioning the setting up of a local area command here. I point out that, in the past when they had their command here, they did have a commander, which was a chief inspector and which is now our duty officer. So when you speak of duty officers being created in country areas, we took the commander from Cessnock, the commander from Maitland, the commander from Raymond Terrace, staff officers from the region office and the personnel officer—all of whom were chief inspectors—and they became our five duty officers in this area. I have tried to disperse them back out so they take on those same sorts of responsibilities again.

With regard to the setting up of the local area command, LAC, at the moment, my local area command has what we call a crime management unit, which has our intel unit that has to service the whole command. We have a youth liaison officer—and I might mention that we only have one youth liaison officer because of resourcing—and that person has to deal with youth issues.

They have to be involved in the conferencing. They also have to be involved with the schools, and we have 112 schools in this command so it is a lot of work for one person. It is nearly impossible. We have one licensing sergeant although we have the second largest number of licensed premises in the state. We only have one crime prevention officer. If we were to split the command and have a separate command here, we would basically have two people covering the area that only one person covers now.

Lennie mentioned before that, a few years ago, it was said that they were going to have their own command here. The previous region commander, Mr Terry Collins, talked about there being a separate command within five years. That was in about 2000-01. We are approaching that five-year mark now. It is certainly an avenue which we are still exploring and an outcome we are trying to achieve. The difficulty is that we do not have the police premises to achieve that to any great degree, particularly in trying to house the number of police that would be involved in setting that up. You would have to bring your commander with you. You would have maybe three duty officers as opposed to the five that are normally available. Then you would have to house your crime management unit and, of course, the charging facilities. Legislation requires that, when we have to charge someone with a serious indictable offence, they have to be taken to category 1 locations for charging. Maitland is the only one in this area that is a category 1, so it has been rightly pointed out that, for more serious charges, they have to take the prisoners to Maitland for processing.

CHAIR—Would it help if they could be charged elsewhere instead of being taken to category 1 facilities?

Supt Haggett—It would certainly make it a lot easier.

CHAIR—It is literally a red tape thing?

Supt Haggett—It is. If someone's bail is refused, Maitland is the only location where we can hold them, or we can convey them into Newcastle.

CHAIR—What percentage would not be given bail?

Supt Haggett—It is pretty low. It is probably 10 per cent of people who go through the processes.

CHAIR—So, really, by taking them in there, you could really do it elsewhere.

Supt Haggett—Yes, that is right. Sometimes you consider bail to be in favour of the offender but sometimes it might be that, if we bail this person, it saves us from having to convey them over to Maitland. That may occur. I cannot say that for sure, but I am sure they would probably take that into consideration as well. Alcohol related crime is quite an issue for this command. It is right across the command. We are developing liquor accords. We have them in the western and central sectors, and we are currently working with the council and other community groups on developing one for the eastern sector. We are also part of the alcohol linking project, whereby when we arrest an offender we always ask where they had their last drink. If we can link that to a particular licensed premises we work with that licensee in developing strategies to reduce the number of people who are coming away from their premises who may be committing offences.

That is in its early stages, but we have had some positive input from both the licensees and the linking project itself in helping to identify some of those places where people are obviously consuming too much and then leaving and committing crimes.

Mr Baldwin—Volunteer policing was a big thing that was heralded a couple of years ago. Are there many involved in that now in our area command? Has it actually released police to go out on the beat more or has it basically dried up and was a promotional exercise of years ago?

Supt Haggett—No. For this command we have one of the highest number of volunteers in policing, and we have some outstanding people working for us. It certainly freed us up in a lot of our administrative roles, particularly in the brief management area. Normally we would have to have a police officer filing and overseeing the briefs and, every time a brief was required for court, we would have to have a police officer obtain that. Now we have volunteers doing that, so that has certainly been positive. As far as the filing and all those sorts of issues go, it has certainly reduced the amount of work compared to what police had to do in the past. I am not saying it works right across the state, but it is certainly very good in this area and we have some very good people.

CHAIR—I know Mr Mason wants to say something, and then we might hear some comments from the people who are in the gallery.

Mr Mason—Having spent 33-odd years in the police force, it seemed to me that every time there was an initiative to do something the police had to do it. An example is the procedures they have to go through with juveniles. They are time consuming. When the brief handling thing came in, they set absolutely silly time frames and the police had to respond to them. There were things they did not have to do before—even before a plea of guilty was entered, initially, although they changed that later on. Every time there is an initiative taken to do something about crime, it is the police who have to do it. I would like to see some police powers restored, even the offence of drunkenness. As Superintendent Haggett said, alcohol is a component in all sorts of things here.

CHAIR—Is it only alcohol or do you have a drug problem as well?

Mr Mason—I think there is a drug problem too. We find needles.

CHAIR—What about ecstasy, methamphetamines?

Mr Mason—I do not know. We find a lot of syringes around different places when we are cleaning up mess. But alcohol seems to be a very dominant factor in a lot of these things. If the charge of drunkenness were recriminalised and, instead of taking offenders into custody, you took them back to a police station, that would remove them without taking them to a place where they can be sheltered—and there is no such place that I am aware of in the Tilligerry anyway. You could take them back to a police station and give them a \$50 infringement notice for being drunk in a public place.

Back in the days when I was walking the streets, before I became a prosecutor, the charge of drunkenness was a great way of fixing a lot of problems. People who were affected by alcohol and got into a fight, for example, you could charge either with assault or, if they were both

drunk, with drunkenness. You would not get a conviction for the assault anyway, because of their intoxication levels and consent issues, but if they were charged with drunkenness that would fix the problem. That would go across a broad spectrum of crime at street level. Street level crime causes 80 per cent of the aggravation to lifestyle.

Reintroduce the charge of drunkenness, with a change in procedure where you do not have to keep them in custody for four hours. Take them back and give them a ticket for their trouble, whether it is \$50 or whatever. Take the example of juveniles. Giving them a ticket for consuming alcohol in the streets is unenforceable anyway. It becomes a nonsense. It is unenforceable. If we could get a ticket that was enforceable, that would give police the power to remove the person from the scene quickly, without putting a time-consuming process in place. I think this needs to be modified at the legislative level, rather than making the police responsible for everything that happens.

CHAIR—That is an interesting point. We will now take one comment from the audience.

Mr Wark—I live in Lemon Tree Passage, which is on the Tilligerry Peninsula. The presentation I want to make this morning is about the hoodlum problem in our vicinity. My wife and I moved to the Tilligerry about four years ago. The lifestyle we looked forward to in our retirement has been substantially degraded by the actions of hoodlums in our area. We have been the victims of personal harassment, abuse, foul language, threats of personal assault and property damage by drunken hoodlums, mainly in the summer months.

I believe that a hoodlum is basically a dysfunctional community member who is merely serving his apprenticeship for his future trade in crime. They know when the lone car is off duty or out of town, and that information is quickly relayed to their mates. To answer the Hon. Alan Cadman's query about who these people are, the experience in our community is that they are usually locals leaving drunken parties or Lemon Tree Passage Bowling Club or Tanilba Bay RSL at closing time, casual visitors from Newcastle and surrounding towns meeting for binge sessions or car hoon meets away from city police scrutiny, or younger adolescents, who seem to cause much of the vandalism on the Tilligerry.

The hoodlums initially start out at a local club or house party, then the club closes or the party dies and the drunken young adults spill out onto the streets. Their initial attraction is the business centre. A trail of bottles and damaged property usually follows the mob to the town centre, together with the tyre screeching of the car hoon element. Any meeting of opposing mobs usually results in brawls or foul language screaming matches, especially between rival females.

In a nutshell, the Tilligerry is akin to a frontier town for youth crime and young adult hoodlums in the summer months. The main reason for this seems to be the isolation of the area and the now ridiculous police response times, a fact that is well known to the locals and to most of the marauding Hunter hoodlums. Port Stephens Council stated that their vandalism bill is doubling each year and is now over six figures. Among the most serious incidents on the Tilligerry were: the Tanilba Bay primary school was set on fire, the Mallabula community hall was vandalised, the local council swimming pool was burgled and vandalised, the Koala Park real estate development was vandalised, the plumbing and fixtures in the toilet block at Cook Parade in Lemon Tree Passage were vandalised and a number of local shopfronts at Lemon Tree Passage and Tanilba Bay were smashed and vandalised.

Whilst there are many problems for our community with hoodlums and vandals, we think that any solution can only be tackled with the help of an effective community infrastructure, on which I think there has already been enough comment, including on the lack of resources.

CHAIR—It sounds like the classic ‘broken window syndrome’, doesn’t it? How long do those things stay vandalised? How long is it before they are fixed?

Mr Swan—It depends on forward works programs, dollars available and community pressure. I think it is a combination of those things.

CHAIR—Mr Wark, in your view, how long does it stay unfixed?

Mr Wark—It depends on the council’s work programs. We have had council signage and other posts knocked down for months and months. Telstra are quite quick to come and fix up the posts that have been run down. We have posts about a metre above the ground for our circuits, and the usual trick is either to run over one or to pull it out of the ground. Many of the signs in the isolated areas have lain around for months and months. As part of the parks and gardens committee, we usually try to get those replaced as quickly as possible.

Mr Brennan—I also work for the state government and we constantly get what is like a mantra from the bureaucracy: world’s best practice, become more efficient—it is non-stop. But listening to Superintendent Haggett, it seems that when it comes to the processing and charging of criminals, be they youths or adults, the bureaucracy seems to be stopping you from world’s best practice. They seem to be putting hurdles in front of you that prevent the process from being quicker and more efficient, which would allow you to get back onto the street and back to policing. Would you agree with that?

Supt Haggett—In reality the processes involved are now far more stringent, and most of the time we are dealing with changes that are favourable to the offender that mean they are more able to be better serviced. Particularly with briefs, where we just get notification that the brief has to be served on the defendant, in most cases it is just the solicitors who can read it. They do not make up their minds whether they are going to plead guilty or not guilty at the time; they say they are going to plead not guilty so they can get hold of the brief. That means the police officer has to go off the road to prepare the brief. Some briefs, depending on their size, can take days or weeks. When they finally go to court they plead guilty anyway. That was probably their intention all along; it was just a delaying tactic to keep the offender out of jail for a little bit longer than might otherwise have been the case. Certainly there have been a lot of changes over many years that have made our job a little more time consuming.

Mr Mason—A lot more.

Supt Haggett—Yes. I suppose it has all been designed in the interest of the offender. When we take offenders back into custody now, we have to have custody managers and, if they are placed in a cell, the offenders have to be monitored all the time to prevent self-harm and those other issues. Particularly with intoxicated people, it is not ideal to place them in the cells in case they injure themselves or become ill. Our alternative is to try to identify someone to come and pick them up or for us to take them home.

CHAIR—How would you feel about it if powers were given back to you to arrest for drunkenness?

Supt Haggett—It would certainly give us more power to remove people from locations where they are potentially going to be causing problems. I suppose issuing a fine for it would deter people from wandering the streets. Many years ago it was quite easy for police to walk up to people who were walking around drinking alcohol and take some sort of action against them. I know we have locations now, particularly in local government areas, where there are alcohol free zones, and we can issue infringements in those locations. I think there is no deterrent anymore to be in public and to be drunk. It is accepted among juveniles or adults that, if you want to have a party in a park, you can get as drunk as you want and do what you want because the police are very limited in what they can do.

CHAIR—What about the concept of consorting laws? Would they help?

Supt Haggett—We can still utilise consorting laws but it is very difficult. You have to get a person on three occasions talking with a known criminal. You have to establish the fact that they knew that person was a known criminal. It is quite a hard and time consuming process to go through.

Mr Mason—I saw consorting rules abused years ago. It just does not work. You cannot put proper transparent processes in place. You have to establish knowledge and all sorts of things. It was a shambles trying to prosecute a consorting matter.

CHAIR—It was used quite effectively back in the forties, wasn't it?

Mr Mason—One could look at it that way but it was also questionable. The royal commission did not go back far enough to reveal some of the things that were behind some of those consorting convictions back then. I agree with what Charles Haggett said just then. The move-on legislation was designed to solve one particular problem. All it does these days, if it is not used appropriately, is move the crime scene.

CHAIR—But you have no resources: for instance, if you identify there is a problem in Lemon Tree Passage, as we just heard, you do not have the resources to clean it up. You would have to leave the rest unattended.

Supt Haggart—It certainly works on a priority basis. In recent times we have been able to utilise Operation Viking and have them come and saturate the area for a couple of hours. We try to do that on a more regular basis. I actually have a request in for funding so that it can occur on an almost weekly basis for an extended period of 12 weeks or so. Again, the timing now probably is not right with the winter months setting in, because it is not so much an issue then as it is during summer. We are trying to organise that. In recent times, if I have had to take resources from other locations, I have tried to ensure that there is at least a car crew working in the Lemon Tree Passage-Tilligerry area every Friday and Saturday night. But, to do that, it means I have to utilise the resources from Raymond Terrace and Nelson Bay—mainly Nelson Bay. Already the staff are getting to the stage where they are not getting any weekends off. It breaches their award agreement as well.

CHAIR—Basically you are saying that you need more resources in this area, aren't you?

Supt Haggart—Yes.

CHAIR—Has there been a crackdown in the area? Did that help?

Mr Wark—Operation Viking came into the area—I was not here; I was overseas—and my wife actually witnessed the operation going on. They asked for the IDs of kids who had been drinking. At the end of the night they virtually moved them on into the park, which is along the waterfront in front of most of the residents' houses. The Operation Viking team went home and then the fun started, and it went on until about 4 o'clock in the morning—after my wife had come back from the restaurant. The community does not really have any confidence in Operation Viking because it happens so rarely—obviously because of funding and lack of resources. It would be ideal if you could run it for a longer period, mainly during the summer months. That would be effective. But, if it is just on a one-off basis, there is no confidence. The cynic would say that it is a PR exercise more than anything else.

Mr Owen—I am a resident of Lemon Tree Passage. My question is about the number of halfway houses on the Tilligerry Peninsula. I think there are far more than the normal ratio of halfway houses to population. One of the reasons that these halfway houses are put in the Tilligerry Peninsula area is that, after eight o'clock—or five o'clock—at night when the last bus comes into Lemon Tree Passage, no buses go out of there. Therefore, there is no way for people to get back into town on a Friday or a Saturday night. There is no transport whatsoever out of the town late at night or early in the evening. Therefore they have to find something to do in the area itself. I do not know whether you are aware, but the Lemon Tree Passage-Tanilba Bay-Mallabula area, or the Tilligerry Peninsula area, is at least a half an hour's drive from the nearest suburb—that is, Newcastle, Raymond Terrace or Nelson Bay. So I would like to see what the ratio is.

Mr CADMAN—Does anybody know?

Mr Mason—I can answer the first part of that about the halfway houses. We raised that as an issue some time ago. Research has indicated that some time ago the tradition was, when rental was cheap, that corrective services did have a large number of houses that they used to release people back into the community. But I understand that they have changed that system now and that Centrelink or the Department of Housing locates people according to priorities. There are no more halfway houses as such: it is public housing. So, whilst it might still exist as a problem, there is no way we can find out what the figures are anyway.

Supt Haggart—On the transport issue, there are probably other considerations to take into account, such as the number of fatal accidents that have happened over the years with young people late at night trying to travel into Newcastle to go to nightspots and returning. So it is not just the issue of getting people out of there; there is also a traffic element as well. Any improvements in transport to the whole area would certainly reduce both road trauma and also address allowing people to get away from isolated locations.

Mr CADMAN—Superintendent, I wonder if you are aware of any community based programs that are working very well to assist police. I am looking for something that might be replicated and that responds positively to you.

Supt Haggett—We have been doing some inquiries through the local member. We have looked at Street Beat as a potential program to work with the local juveniles. We will have a meeting on 18 June to try to launch that in the Tilligerry area. I will be providing youth liaison officers and other liaison officers to work with that program. At this stage I am not 100 per cent up to speed on exactly how the program works, but I know it is based around trying to do things with the juveniles on those nights when they are most active to reduce their involvement in crime and alcohol related issues.

Mr Colley—I work as security at the Shoal Bay Resort and Spa at the Country Club Hotel. We are more hands on than a lot of the locals here as far as dealing with these situations goes. There are quite a few things that do need to be addressed. One is better enforcement of the liquor act by the businesses in town that have liquor licences and another is that drugs are involved in a lot of these crimes. People wander out of a liquor area such as a hotel or a club to either smoke their pot or take their crack—whatever it is—and then wander back in and have another drink. Dave and I work at the same venue, and we have been addressing that issue over the last couple of weeks. We have found it more predominant. We have been pretty forceful in lowering the incidence of violence in our hotel and have been pretty hard on enforcing the liquor act. Over the last 12 months there has been a vast improvement, and I think Charlie Haggett would be able to back us up on that with the figures. We find now that, rather than hoeing into a dozen schooners or more, they duck out and have whatever, come back in, have a couple more drinks and then go off their face pretty quickly. We are more vigilant of people entering the premises. We check their eyes et cetera to try and pick these people up. We have been warning quite of a few of them who we suspect are doing that. We tell them, ‘If you are going to wander out and come back here with a red eye, you’re not getting back in the door.’ We have addressed it in that situation.

We also have the situation where a lot of these people are not bad people. You get them sober and they are great. You might have one or two in a community of a thousand people that are not all that crash hot. I believe if you go to that earlier statement, which is that after one or two warnings you lock them up and get them off the streets, you will find that, even if they are off the streets for only 12 months or more, they will not influence others to go in their direction. Those that may be tempted will have second thoughts about it: ‘God, Jack got locked up the other day, and I’m not doing that sort of thing again,’ and they will come back to the normal path of the community.

If they dealt with the liquor act and better enforced the responsible service of alcohol, a lot this problem on the Tilligerry Peninsula would be addressed and they would not have these problems. It is the clubs in the area that are not responsibly serving alcohol. They are not servicing the local communities by allowing people to get into these states and then letting them wander out and down the street to carry on like they do.

The clubs and hotels should take more responsibility. I know that the police have been coming out our way and checking up on the guards in our area. They come in in force. There might be 10 or 15 police who walk through the hotel to make sure we are doing our job properly. It is paying off, because we are having very little problem in our hotels—and that has been great. I think that really needs to be addressed on the Tilligerry Peninsula, and I can say that because I live on that peninsula.

CHAIR—You are basically saying it is a combination. It is the hoteliers themselves and the club managers—

Mr Colley—The club management.

CHAIR—plus the enforcement.

Mr Colley—There is another club on the Tomaree Peninsula—I will not mention which one. I approached them to look at putting up a submission to take over the security at their club but on one provision, and that was that they allowed the guards to do the job as they do down at the country club. At the country club Dave, I or the other boys walk up to a person and say: ‘Sorry, you’ve had too much. You’ve got to go. Come on, we’ve got the bus for you.’ We drive them home and do whatever we need to to get them back home safely. At times we have even taken their cars home for them and had another guard follow to pick us up and come back. You get a better response.

Sometimes we will say to them, ‘Look, we know that after eight or nine schooners you get really wobbly booted, and you’ve had six or seven. Here’s a jug of water. When you knock that over we’ll give you a couple more.’ That is the way we have been approaching it there. The response we have had is of people coming back and thanking us the next day. They say, ‘Thanks very much. I didn’t have the headache that I normally have,’ and this, that and the other. So it does work. But it is a real issue on the Tilligerry Peninsula. They just do not address it.

CHAIR—Do you pay for the bus? Is it your bus?

Mr Owen—Yes, the country club pays for the bus. It is a courtesy bus. We have two buses—a 22-seater and a 16-seater—and we run the patrons around.

Mr CADMAN—I do not know how this works, but knocking a person’s licence off in this area would be a pretty substantial penalty, I would have thought. If they are being served drinks, they are eligible to drive, they drive and they offend, will the magistrates take their licences quickly or not?

Supt Haggett—It depends on the alcohol reading. We can take a licence automatically if it is in a high range. Even if it is in a mid-range, under certain circumstances we can remove the licence straightaway in the court. Magistrates have been quite proactive in this area with drink driving. It is an issue we have had in the past with a number of accidents. Generally speaking the licences are dismissed straightaway, as soon as the offenders appear in court.

Mr CADMAN—I would have thought that if a person is causing trouble for alcohol abuse then it does not matter whether they are actually in a car or not—they ought to have their licence knocked off.

Supt Haggett—If they are not utilising their vehicle or driving their vehicle—

Mr CADMAN—I understand that.

Mr Owen—The people who do drive home are not abusive; we are just cutting them off early and saying, ‘You’ve had enough.’

CHAIR—‘It’s time to go home.’

Mr Owen—Yes. We say, ‘It’s time to go home; hop in the car.’ It took a few months to get it through but all the locals there now are great—they really love it.

Mr Mason—The clubs on the Tomaree Peninsula from our investigations do not appear to be the key. The key is bottle shops. The bottle shop proprietors have been spoken to, and they have said, ‘Look, if some person over the age of 18 comes in here and orders a quantity of alcohol, I’ve got to sell it to him. What he does with it later on is his own business.’ That seems to be a lot of the underage drinking problem here—people over the age of 18 buying alcohol from the bottle shops, or the clubs, for that matter, and then distributing it to the younger people afterwards.

The only club I am associated with is Lemon Tree Passage Bowling Club, which seems to be very well run. Every time I have been there there has been no evidence of underage drinking or intoxicated people. It is after they close down that people buy alcohol from somewhere and use it. That has been the nub of Tilligerry’s problems from our observations. That is not just my opinion; it is our committee’s. We have discussed all these issues. I do not know whether it is singularly the clubs. I would not put it as high as that.

CHAIR—Nonetheless, the program you seem to have put in place sounds pretty good.

Mr Ritchie—I have made a submission separately but I also happen to live in this local area command. I just wanted to clarify a couple of points. I think there must be a reason why Terry Collins made a promise to open a local command and then did not carry it out, and I might be able to help there. I agree with the gentleman sitting up the back who is sceptical about Vikings. I would like to pose a few questions: what is the purpose of Vikings and what is the purpose of inspectors? We have discussed inspectors before. The inspectors were set up to do three things: to undertake internal affairs inquiries, to manage corruption prevention within local area commands and to report lessons from the street. They do not actually control police. Sergeant team leaders control the police. The inspectors are the tertiary educators, if you like. They are the people who get the information to the intelligence officers.

Another question I have is: when the liquor protocols are broken, as they seem to be pretty frequently, why doesn’t the local area command intelligence officer provide a report to the local people about the protocols being broken? When schools are vandalised, why doesn’t the local intelligence officer produce a report to the community about vandalism and how the inquiries are going? These people who vandalise schools are not geniuses. The police are supposed to be smarter than the vandals.

The other point I would make is that it is a question of resourcing. For every additional police officer you need here on the ground, the police service has to recruit and pay six police. If you want a local area station in this area and you want, say, two cars out with four police, one policeman to answer the phone and two to deal with incarceration—and you have to have two because of duty of care—you need 42 police. That is an administrative factor that people at

police headquarters have to deal with. A comment was made about the local area commander's discretionary budget. I know the discretionary capacity of local area commanders. If Mr Haggett had more than \$6,000 for discretionary expenditure available to him I would be very surprised. One of the largest commands in this state has less than \$6,000 for discretion.

I am leading to a positive suggestion here. Up in the Orange local area command, crime against the elderly has been reduced by 79 per cent—that is, break, enter and steal incidents. Western Sydney Institute has recently done an inquiry into that. I would have thought that the local area command would be onto Orange to find out just how you do that. I am afraid that cars do not work. All of the research into policing around the world shows that. They may work if they are targeting parties on a Saturday night, but generally patrolling cars do not work. Bob Baldwin gave us a very good example. All the young people have to do is figure out where the car is, put in a telephone call and get it to the other end of the peninsula; then they are free to go.

What I want to suggest is that all of these questions that I have posed should go into a policing plan. There is no policing plan for this area. There is no written plan that you have in your hand that tells you how the police are going to solve your problems. Until you have a policing plan you are just going to have a whole series of people raising highly valid matters but not going anywhere. The next commander will come up here, as they promise to do—and it is exactly what Terry Collins did in the past—they will make all sorts of promises and they will go back to the bean counters at police headquarters who say, 'We are not going to be supplying 42 staff.' You need a policing plan in which the police actually describe how they are going to protect this community in all of the genuine concerns. What are they going to do when the liquor protocols do not work—because they do not—and what are they going to do when the vandals get away with it? That is the function of the intelligence officer in the police command. It is simply not happening.

My strong suggestion is that, unless you get a policing plan, it does not matter whether or not you have a police service set up along English lines. The New South Wales police service is not. The command structure was not set up by Peter Ryan; it was set up by Assistant Commissioner Bruce Johnston. The only aspect of English policing that was introduced was the inspectors. Generally, the inspectors have done the first two of their tasks very well and the third one hopelessly. They are not translating the lessons from the community and the problems in the community into writing to give them to the intelligence officer so that the intelligence officer can provide that report back to the community. Members of this council, Mr Baldwin, the state member, and interested parties in the community should have a written policing plan and then you will know whether the written policing plan succeeds or fails.

CHAIR—Thank you—that was a very useful testimony. What is your background?

Mr Ritchie—I am a counterintelligence officer by training, so intelligence is a strong interest. I was one of the reformers of the New South Wales police service. I am a police academic. In particular, I am interested in the issue of crime management. I have done a lot of research, writing, speaking and reading about police effectiveness around the world. What we are talking about is: how effective are the police?

They are decent men and women. They work hard. We have had huge budgetary increases. In the time I was in the police service we had an additional 4,000 police. It does not seem to have

registered much impact. The real issue is: how are police effective? It does not matter about the numbers. What works in policing and what does not is the key issue. So that is what I have been preoccupied with for the last 12 to 15 years.

CHAIR—You did put in a submission to us, I recall. We might revisit that one—it was most interesting.

Mr Whittall—We own the premises where the Newcastle Permanent Building Society is and the one in Sturgeon Street. I congratulate these people on what they have said today. I can only comment on some of the things I have seen. We are just opposite the police station. Just last week we had a break and enter. The people who own the place were told by their security—they are at Mayfield. They came all the way from Mayfield, and the thieves were still in there. The police were over here. The lights were going off, the alarm was going off and nobody came. This is not denigrating the police. They were probably working their butts off and then were probably asleep. When they eventually got the police out there, the police said, ‘Just as well you didn’t catch them’—they chased them down here, into the area around the back here—’because they are dangerous. I think we know who they were.’ But they still have not caught them.

My daughter’s mother-in-law is 83. She just lives in Sturgeon Street here. She has been attacked four times. The last time was by a nine-year-old. The mother has a gang going. I understand that gang goes into the various shops and so forth. It is well known. We are only talking 50, 60 or 100 metres from the police station. We have been broken into so many times by vandals over here. They have broken in at different times over the years. I have just had to put a security gate on where the Maitland Mutual is. I find it admirable that we are having this discussion, but having lived long enough and seen enough I do not know where this discussion will go.

To bring it down to one thing, I own overnight accommodation down in the middle of Newcastle, in an area where there are drugs and so forth. Aboriginal people came in—they were lovely people—and rented one of the premises. Within a matter of six or eight hours, five, six or seven came in and did \$1,000 worth of damage. We were asked not to complain and ATSIK picked up the bill. A few months later the Craigies came in—the footballers. Two units were taken up. We had problems within a matter of hours. The next day we had to order them off the premises. We had to bring in the police to get rid of them. Craigie, the father, said, ‘We will fix you up for it—it’ll be right.’ He was a liaison officer for the Bundarra police. He was in the employ of the police department. He did not pay us, and I ended up having to garnish his wages from the police department. The gentleman here obviously does an admirable job in what he tries to do, but it all comes back to individual responsibility and—to use the old adage—fair dinkumness in regard to what really happens. All this talk has been going on now—and I am nearly 70—for 20 or 25 years at least, or even 30 years.

When we had a shop broken into, they came through the roof. They cut a hole through the gyprock, climbed over a glass ceiling, took all the stuff out and threw it up into the ceiling. The alarm went off, and the police came out, went to Karuah and did not even look into it. Ron Swan has been here. He used to do security. There are something like three or four security firms in this area—would that be right, Ron?

Mr Swan—There are two or three firms that pass through the town and my firm is in the town. So, yes, there are about three or four firms there.

Mr Whittall—Anyhow, when there have been problems, there is not one person that I know of who has been caught by security, and yet we have been paying out dollars, not to the police but to the security firms, and still nothing has happened.

Mr Swan—I have a newspaper clipping about that—

Mr Whittall—I would like to look at that, anyhow.

Mr Swan—I am quite happy to show you.

Mr Whittall—But the fact of the matter is this: I do hope, Bronwyn, that you do some good and the money is put in the right place, because this is basically a state problem, not a federal problem. This gentleman summed it up beautifully: he has been doing it for 15 years, and I do not know how far he has got.

Mr Swan—This is not to respond to what Greg is saying. I have known Greg for a lot of years and I will have a chat with him later. I have no problems with that. But I will say this, and it will answer his question in part: there are three components that were responsible for my early days in this town. I was a police officer at Nelson Bay. I built my home there and did not want to leave the town. I resigned of my own volition and set up a security business in Raymond Terrace. At the time, someone tried to blow up the police station with molotov cocktails to target a police officer who was sleeping in the building. A certain bike gang was wanted for about eight rapes—they went overseas. There was the highest crime ratio basis in New South Wales. At one of Greg's wife's shops, as a matter of fact—along with others—someone backed up trucks and took \$70,000 or \$80,000 worth of stuff, due to a lack of presence.

In the five years after that, on the premises that I was responsible for, there was not a single robbery. I went home sick one night and they did a smash and grab down here on Terrace Jewellery, because I had a diarrhoea attack—excuse the expression—and I went home ill at 5 a.m. They hit at 5.15 a.m. I employed presence: I was here all the time. I was round the town; I hounded them; I followed them—so I had presence. I also had respect. Admittedly, in those days, they were not quite as street-wise, but I carried a shotgun and I had a german shepherd dog. I did not shoot anybody and the dog did not necessarily bite anybody but, along with my experience and ability in talking to the people on the streets, that was part of what enabled me to have this result. Also, there is a perceived power which goes in conjunction with police. I was able to convince everybody out there that I had similar powers to police: that I would apprehend them, I would detain them, I would call police and something would be done. All I am trying to say here is that, at present, respect goes hand in hand with power. For police, parents, teachers, whoever you like, right across the spectrum, we need to get respect and enable adult people, particularly where there are juveniles concerned, to be empowered again with respect.

CHAIR—Mr Swan, was that a description of you the policeman or you the security man?

Mr Swan—The security man—the policeman never carried a shotgun.

CHAIR—I was going to say that it would be unusual!

Mr Swan—I could not do it nowadays, of course, but that was about 1970.

CHAIR—There is the old adage that, if you have power and you do not use it, it atrophies and nobody respects it anymore.

Supt Haggett—Yes. I think sometimes it is not a matter of not using power; it is a matter of how you can use it and where you can use it.

CHAIR—I guess what I am saying is that people know you mean business.

Supt Haggett—Yes. They have those no tolerance policies, I know, in New York.

CHAIR—Zero tolerance.

Supt Haggett—Zero tolerance, sorry.

CHAIR—I spent about 1½ hours with former Mayor Giuliani in New York. The thing that impressed me enormously about his zero tolerance policy, or broken windows policy—call it what you will—was the creation of the Comstat software program and the fact that they measure all crime, not just some categories, and publish it daily on the Internet so that there is transparency and people know what is happening, and that somebody has to pay if it is not fixed up.

Snr Const. Carman—I work at Cabramatta local area command. I have lived in Port Stephens for 15 years and I have been commuting to Sydney for seven years to work. In that time, since the completion of tenure, I have requested numerous times to get back into this area. The current policy in place for police to be transferred into the northern region is inadequate. It does not allow for personal situations. The only suggestion is that you have to do tenure out bush to get into this region. It is not Mr Haggett's fault; it is a policy that is currently in place.

One of the other problems I do not know whether people are aware of is what authorised strength is for certain stations and certain areas and what operational numbers are. You may have an authorised strength of 20 but, especially in this region, you may have 10 of those on permanent sick leave. You need to be aware of these officers who are on permanent sick leave and have no intention of going back to work who you are still paying for. They deserve to be paid, but something needs to be put in place so that these officers can leave their commands and so that Mr Haggett does not have to allow for seven or so staff sitting on his numbers who he knows he can never utilise again on the street.

People like me are going to be stuck in this situation. I travel three hours to work at Cabramatta. I have paid my dues. I have done six years and I want to come home, but they are not going to let me. I have been trying until last week. I have spoken to the commissioner, and I cannot get back into this area. Apparently there are no positions and there are no vacancies outside this area.

CHAIR—Presumably if some of the sick people were moved on you could come back here. Is that what you are saying?

Snr Const. Carman—Yes, I guess so. I had my wallet stolen when I was in Maitland one day and I had to go into Maitland police station to report it. The poor roster girl was running around saying, ‘No-one can work the truck on Saturday; we have no numbers.’ I said, ‘I’ll do it,’ and she said, ‘You’ve transferred here?’ I said, ‘If you put me on that truck, I’ll work’—but it is one of those problems. There are experienced people. Putting probationers up here is great—it is fantastic—but they need care for however long. They are not police officers for a long time as far as being one of us goes. They need training. I know that they need to bridge the gap between senior officers and junior officers, but there are a lot of people like me who have travelled and done their bit in the city and are willing to come home. I live five minutes out of Raymond Terrace, yet I have to travel for three hours to get to work.

CHAIR—To Cabramatta.

Snr Const. Carman—Yes.

CHAIR—I have been to Cabramatta.

Mrs Bradley—I have lived on the Tilligerry Peninsula for about 35 years. I have seen the crime situation deteriorate and deteriorate until it has got to the stage where I do not really like living there. I have one suggestion for Mr Haggett. Yes, his Vikings group are great, but they come in at the wrong time. How about coming in at two or three o’clock in the morning when we have our troubles? They landed here the other week and went to the local club, and while they were there they got a call to say that there was a party somewhere else and they were taken down there. It was a hoax call. The reason is that that went over the scanner, and half of the young idiots in our area have scanners and know exactly what you are doing.

CHAIR—Superintendent, would you like to comment on those people with scanners?

Supt Haggett—Certainly scanners are always an issue. At this very moment we are switching over to digital radio contact, and scanners will not be able to pick that up. So that problem will be solved in probably the next two months, as each car is being refitted for digital radios now. When Vikings operations come to the area there are two ways they operate. There is the way whereby we are given funding—I supply staff on council rest days et cetera and Vikings command pay for them to work those extra shifts. Then there is the way whereby Vikings command will send a number of police, sometimes 20, to the area. The hoax call was quite a serious incident over at Cessnock which they attended and successfully resolved. Certainly we will continue and, as I said, we are looking at ongoing Vikings funding. That is virtually purely for the Tilligerry area, which means that I will be looking at putting four to six additional police there every weekend if the funding is allocated to me.

CHAIR—How long do Vikings come in and stay for?

Supt Haggett—With the proposal that I am putting in at the moment, we would be looking at putting officers there for the full duration of their shift, so probably from 7 p.m. until they finish

at 7 o'clock the next morning or if it is an eight-hour shift they will finish at 3 a.m., so I will be looking at leaving them for the whole time.

CHAIR—No, that is not quite what I meant. You have already heard that there is cynicism as to whether or not they are effective. From listening to Mr Walker, I think that seems to be related to the amount of time that they stay there. Are they there for one or two days? What is it?

Supt Haggett—If we are doing it for the weekend, primarily the crime hot times for the Tilligerry area are the Friday and Saturday nights, so we put them there for the Friday and Saturday nights.

CHAIR—But how often?

Supt Haggett—At the moment it has only been when the funding is available. We have been getting funding once a month.

CHAIR—So that means they come in for a particular weekend and then they are gone?

Supt Haggett—Yes, then they are gone.

CHAIR—So if you are a real troublemaker you do not have to be too smart to work out that is the weekend they are around, so you save that up for the next one.

Supt Haggett—Yes. We try to do them randomly but, as I said, I am looking at doing it on a three-month full-time basis—every weekend for three months. That is the proposal at this stage. That will depend on the funding being made available, of course.

CHAIR—I noticed when a press release was put out last year, at about the time of the election, that crime had gone down and things were getting better, but I had a look at the back of the statistics that were published with it and I found something else out. That is that the number of actual prosecutions since 1999 has actually been declining and the number of warnings has actually risen dramatically. I wonder about this. When the Vikings operation comes in, do you make arrests or do you simply increase the warnings?

Supt Haggett—They are certainly given a mandate to make arrests. That is why they come in such large numbers.

CHAIR—But do they do it?

Supt Haggett—They do, yes. Our arrest rates during those periods are much higher than normal because there are additional resources. As soon as they make an arrest, there are others there to backfill, so we are not taking a car off the road. There certainly has not been the seriousness of the offences in the Tilligerry area when they have been there. There have been a couple of arrests but nothing overwhelming. Certainly when they have hit the Cessnock area there have been 20 or 30 arrested in the evening on drug related matters and stuff.

CHAIR—I ask those of you who live in that area and have been aware of this operation coming in whether or not you feel it does any good. I see a lot of heads shaking. Can you just say yes or no—so it is no.

Supt Haggett—I will not worry about organising any more for them then.

CHAIR—I do not think that is the point. I think the point is that if we go to the fear of crime question it is like our business; it is perception and reality.

Supt Haggett—That is right.

CHAIR—I was not doing that, Superintendent Haggett, to denigrate what you are doing but simply to see if there is a better way of using resources.

Supt Haggett—The only way I can try to get extra police is through Operation Vikings.

CHAIR—In other words, you are stuck.

Supt Haggett—I am stuck with what I have got.

CHAIR—So that is the only way that you can get anybody extra in?

Supt Haggett—I am negotiating with the region commander to try to get some police out of other local area commands to contribute to this area, but to do that other communities within the area have to be disadvantaged.

CHAIR—How many sick people have you got in your command?

Supt Haggett—At the moment I have 13 who are long-term sick.

CHAIR—How long is long-term sick?

Supt Haggett—That is where they have been off for more than four weeks or longer.

CHAIR—Good God! Out of how many?

Supt Haggett—I would prefer not to discuss actual allocation numbers. It is out of a couple of hundred police that I have.

CHAIR—Pardon me?

Supt Haggett—I have a couple of hundred police, so it is about five to six per cent of those who are off as long-term sick. What we are trying to do with those that look like they are never going to be able to return is have them placed in what we call ‘overstrength positions’. We are proceeding down the line of having them boarded out medically unfit, so we can backfill whilst we are waiting for that to occur. We have been quite successful in getting a number of those people placed in overstrength positions.

CHAIR—What would be the most common complaint of the people who are off?

Supt Haggett—Post-traumatic stress and stress itself.

CHAIR—I can take a couple of quick comments and then we must wind up, because we have got to get on to Forster.

Mr Beckett—I live on the Tilligerry Peninsula. The superintendent has been talking about funding. What is this funding he wants? Surely the people who come in here are on the payroll anyway. Wherever they work, they still have to be paid for. What is this extra funding he has to apply for to get them to come in and perform a specific task in this area? What is the cost?

CHAIR—It was for Operation Viking—that was my understanding.

Supt Haggett—It would allow me to have those police work additional days. They work on their days off and they become extra numbers. It is like RTA enhanced funding where we get extra people on the streets because they are working their days off as opposed to—

CHAIR—So they are your people?

Supt Haggett—There are two ways to do it: there is Operation Viking, which sends in a whole troop of people, and then there is the locally run Vikings. If I get that funding then I can seek staff who will want to work additional days and pay them separately.

CHAIR—It is to give you an additional overtime budget?

Supt Haggett—Yes.

Mr Beckett—It is overtime, so there is a shortage of personnel.

CHAIR—Anybody else who has got additional things that they think we ought to know about can contact Bob Baldwin. He can funnel additional information through to us.

Ms Earnshaw—I just had a thought about the kids that congregate and how their behaviour is affected by the alcohol. Perhaps a mandatory fine or amount that cannot be changed—a substantial amount—should be applied to those young people aged 18 and over who supply the liquor. I know it would be hard to prove, but if 19- and 20-year-olds knew they had a \$1,000 fine if they supplied alcohol to teenagers then it would be a real deterrent.

CHAIR—I think it is the 19-year-old teenager who is supplying it to the 17-, 15- and 14-year-olds that is the problem. I thank Mr Anderson, Mr Swan, Mr Mason, Mr Brennan, Superintendent Haggett and Mrs Dover. We are very grateful for your being here today. It has been a very useful process to us in our deliberations. Thank you to the members of the community who have come and participated. I am particularly grateful for that. It will be of help to us in drafting up the report. For those of you who are involved in community groups and who are developing strategies to prevent crime, in the budget there was a \$20 million allocation of funds for which community groups and councils can apply. The forms are on the Internet and I think they have to be in by the end of June to get money from this allocation. The funds will

come direct to you. They will not come via the state government; they will come direct to community groups if they meet the criteria that are set out. You might be interested in looking at that in light of the things you have had to say today. I will ensure that copies of the *Hansard* will be given out.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Cadman**):

That this subcommittee authorises publication, including publication on the parliamentary database, of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Subcommittee adjourned at 12.09 p.m.