



Judy Spence MP
Member for Mount Gravatt



**Queensland
Government**

Ref: 8519 F5 LR

Office of the
**Minister for Police and
Corrective Services**

13 SEP 2007

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I am writing to provide my response to petition number 747-07 which was lodged by Mrs Jann Stuckey MP, Member for Currumbin, and received by the Legislative Assembly on 5 June 2007.

The petition seeks the upgrade of the Nerang and Mudgeeraba Police Stations in order to support the operation of a twenty-four hour counter service. The petition cites unacceptable levels of hooning, graffiti and vandalism as the basis for this request.

I have received the following information from the Queensland Police Service on the issues raised in the petition.

I am advised a 24-hour policing service is provided throughout the Nerang and Mudgeeraba Police Divisions. The Nerang and Mudgeeraba Stations operate a minimum of one two-officer patrol for each eight-hour shift. This service is maintained on a seven days per week basis. Additional crews are rostered based upon crime intelligence, calls for service and major events and during peak periods, such as Friday and Saturday nights. In addition, divisional officers are supported by officers attached to Gold Coast Police District support units including the Traffic Branch, Tactical Crime Squad and plain clothes officers.

All patrols have an objective of maintaining a high profile police presence within the communities of Nerang and Mudgeeraba, rather than waiting at the stations for calls for service to be received. Officers actively target 'hooning' offences and known graffiti locations as part of ongoing patrols. The operations of these patrols are overviewed at all times by senior police including District Duty Officers and Regional Duty Officers to ensure the best use is made of the available resources.

Both stations also operate a counter service and have staff available to receive calls for service during normal business hours Monday to Friday. After-hours calls are diverted to the Gold Coast District Police Communications Centre, which has direct communications and control of police patrols operating within the Gold Coast Police District, including the Nerang and Mudgeeraba Divisions. Members of the community who visit the stations after-hours can immediately contact the Communications Centre by using the 'blue telephone' at the front of the stations.

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The ongoing monitoring and management of local policing arrangements have not identified a need to modify the current rostering of police patrols or counter services at Nerang or Mudgeeraba Police Stations. Notwithstanding this, the police are committed to ensuring appropriate and effective policing services are provided to the communities within the Nerang and Mudgeeraba Police Divisions. To this end, the need to modify resource allocations and rosters will continue to be monitored.

On the issue of hooning generally, I can advise that the Government has given police the power to combat hooning behaviour on Queensland roads. The *Police Powers and Responsibilities and Another Act Amendment Act 2002* introduced tough new measures to allow for vehicle confiscation against motorists apprehended for certain offences (type 1 offences) such as dangerous driving, careless driving, conducting speed trials, and making unnecessary noise or smoke by spinning the wheels of a vehicle.

These provisions empower police officers to confiscate vehicles used for 'hooning' for a period of 48 hours. In the case of persons who re-offend within three years, courts may order the impoundment of a vehicle for up to three months for a second offence, or its forfeiture for a third or subsequent offence.

In relation to enforcement of these 'hooning' laws, which commenced in November 2002, I am advised 3,677 vehicles have been impounded across the State to 30 June 2007. During the same period, 766 vehicles were impounded within the Gold Coast Police District.

These tough but fair laws have recently been extended as a result of this Government's introduction of amendments to allow for the impoundment of vehicles for repeat offences (type 2 offences) involving:

- unlicensed driving
- driving unregistered and uninsured (Compulsory Third Party) vehicle
- driving illegally modified vehicle
- driving under the influence of liquor or a drug.

These amendments, which commenced on 1 July 2007, provide for the impoundment for 48 hours of the vehicle of any driver who commits a relevant offence twice within three years. Any driver who commits a third relevant offence within the period will risk having his or her vehicle impounded for up to three months. Persistent serial offenders, who have been found guilty of a relevant offence committed on at least four occasions within the period, will risk having their vehicle permanently forfeited to the State.

The hooning laws are designed to aid the preservation of public safety by making the roads safer and placing reasonable checks on noisy vehicles which disturb the peace.

I am advised the South Eastern Police Region has put in place a comprehensive operational policing strategy to address 'hooning' offences. The strategy embodies a 'whole of Region' policing focus with traffic enforcement based on both internal and external intelligence gathered from a variety of sources. The plans are reviewed on a daily basis and incorporated into local police rosters.

Police from the Gold Coast District and Logan District Traffic Branches, in conjunction with divisional police, are targeting 'hooning' and similar anti-social driver behaviour. In addition, the Traffic Response Group, within the State Traffic Task Force, was established to specifically target traffic problems associated with 'hooning' behaviour. The Group works primarily in south-east Queensland and has issued a significant number of infringement notices and been involved in numerous joint operations with regional police in problem areas.

These policing activities are proving effective and have resulted in a decline in the incidence of 'hooning' behaviour.

Regarding graffiti and vandalism, the Queensland Police Service uses a number of strategies to combat these offences. Proactive crime prevention strategies are implemented to assist in ensuring the safety of property and vehicles as well as personal safety.

Intelligence officers in various police districts monitor the incidence of graffiti within their areas. The intelligence generated is used to initiate intelligence-driven patrols targeting identified problem areas. Profiles of suspected and known graffiti offenders are also produced and circulated to patrols. Problem areas may also be targeted through special operations by divisional police or district-based Tactical Crime Squads.

A Graffiti Unit has been established within the Queensland Police Service Railway Squad to prevent, detect and prosecute graffiti offences on the Citytrain network. The Unit provides a high profile uniformed police presence on the network and maintains a database of graffiti tags, offenders and crews. This database is accessible via the Service's intranet and provides a valuable information-sharing and intelligence tool for regional police.

The Police Service uses static surveillance cameras at specific locations as well as mobile surveillance cameras during police operations in an attempt to elicit sufficient evidence to prosecute offenders. Some local government authorities have also implemented surveillance cameras where it is practical to monitor identified problem areas.

In addition to operational measures, the Police Service actively addresses graffiti through educational programs conducted by crime prevention officers, school based police officers, adopt-a-cops and community beat officers. In a number of districts the Police Service has also entered into partnerships with local government authorities to facilitate information-sharing on graffiti offences and the rapid removal of graffiti.

The graffiti problem cannot effectively be addressed through law enforcement alone and requires a range of responses by government and the community. This Government has therefore implemented a number of initiatives and programs to assist in reducing the incidence of graffiti offences. Examples of these are as follows:

- The Department of Communities' Community Conferencing Program, which deals with young graffiti offenders;
- Under the Queensland Crime Prevention Strategy - Building Safer Communities, the Security Improvement Program, administered by the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation, subsidises local councils to improve physical infrastructure to minimise opportunities for graffiti. This Program has also funded some graffiti management projects around the State;
- The Department of Communities administers a number of recurrent and one-off grants programs to prevent and address youth offending. Information on seeking a grant can be accessed via that Department's website at www.communities.qld.gov.au;
- Queensland Rail has developed initiatives designed to reduce graffiti across the Citytrain network, such as the rapid removal of graffiti; the Security Information Management System that has been instrumental in managing graffiti response across the rail network; implementation of the Tag registry which is used for retaining photographic evidence of graffiti; camera surveillance; upgrading of railway station lighting; and introduction of public awareness campaigns and school education programs;

- A Graffiti Management Fund, administered by the Department of Communities, has been established to enable funding to be provided to local groups and councils for the implementation of graffiti management programs.

This Government reviewed legislation relating to graffiti offences during development of the *Summary Offences Act 2005* which was enacted in March 2005. Section 17 of that Act provides that it is an offence for a person to possess a graffiti instrument that is being used for graffiti, or that is reasonably suspected of having been used or of being about to be used for graffiti.

The maximum penalty for this offence is 20 penalty units (equating to \$1,500) or imprisonment for one year. The section further provides that in addition in imposing a penalty, the court may order the offender to perform community service, such as removing graffiti, or pay compensation under the provisions of the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992*.

In November 2006 I introduced into Parliament the *Summary Offences and Other Acts Amendment Bill* which included proposed amendments to the *Summary Offences Act* to prohibit the sale of spray paint cans to minors (persons aged 17 years and under).

This Bill was passed by Parliament on 7 February 2007 and the relevant amendments commenced on 3 September 2007. These amendments will assist in more effectively combating spray paint graffiti crime. In addition to the ban on selling spray paint cans to minors, the amendments require retail outlets to display prohibition signs and for employers to take standard prevention measures towards their employees who sell spray paint cans. The new offences enforcing the ban relate to sellers generally and to employers and employees in certain prescribed circumstances.

I trust this information demonstrates the commitment of the Beattie Government and the Queensland Police Service to combating this serious community problem.

The Queensland Police Service is committed to investigating all reports of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour and ensuring that, where sufficient evidence is elicited, offenders are dealt with appropriately through the criminal justice system.

Senior Sergeant Gary Symons, Officer in Charge, Nerang Station is available on telephone 5578 1311, and Senior Sergeant Mark Anderson, Officer in Charge, Mudgeeraba Station is available on telephone 5530 6455 for any further assistance required.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Judy Spence MP
Minister for Police and Corrective Services