

**Submission
No 1**

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Name: Miss Hannah Jackson

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21st of March, 2024

To the NSW Committee on Law and Safety,

My name is Hannah. I write to you today as a resident of Alfredtown, a 20-minute drive from the Wagga Wagga CBD. My fellow community members and I are desperate for answers to increase policing presence in the rural areas of the Riverina.

I am a nurse, and my partner, David, is a hard-working diesel mechanic. David and I are volunteer bush firefighters in the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. We work hard and have resided within the Riverina our whole lives. On the 2nd of December 2023, our usually quiet home was broken into, and unfortunately, both money and valuables were stolen. We came home after a Christmas party, and our house was turned upside down. I can't begin to describe the sheer feelings of violation, panic, disgust, anxiety, and anger we experienced. As soon as we realised what had happened, my partner David and I immediately called the Wagga police station, who promptly attended to the scene.

The police who eventually attended got lost along our dirt road, possibly because they weren't locals. They were filling in at the Wagga police station from other small rural areas, so they didn't know the area. Nevertheless, they were great and did everything required of them. That got me thinking: "Why aren't the local police attending local incidents?" and "Who is filling in for them in their hometown?"

Sometimes, the local café being short-staffed on the weekends can be a little inconvenient, resulting in people maybe having to wait an extra 5 minutes or so for that latte. Don't we all hate it when we rush for a Macca's coffee on the way to work and instead find ourselves in the waiting bay? As a nurse, I am sure you have seen or at least heard about the impact of staffing shortages within the hospital, causing a magnitude of disruption and chaos. So, what happens when our community is short-staffed? Who shows up, then?

I have seen time and time again the craziness of a backed-up emergency department with more incoming trauma. Now imagine that, instead of patients in a hospital, we have victims

of crime who are left waiting for answers or for police to even show up. Can you imagine coming home to find your belongings, family heirlooms and possessions all in disarray or not even there? I never thought I would have to either in our lucky country, but unfortunately, that was my reality, and it is the same for other rural crime victims of the Riverina. Victims of these crimes are often left with long-term mental health challenges after a traumatic event such as these, and many never get any answers or follow-up to check in afterwards.

In November of 2023, a friend of ours woke to people stealing two cars from their farm in Tarcutta in the early hours of the morning. A neighbour of ours the year before woke to 3 strange men in her house. Another neighbour of ours had their wallet stolen from their locked vehicle. In 2020, my partner David and his family also had motorbikes stolen, and the list of people affected and missing belongings unfortunately goes on. My neighbours and I have had to fork out thousands of dollars out of our own pockets to put towards security cameras and systems to give us what our local police can't- peace of mind.

To the committee on law and safety, I implore you to investigate further why our invaluable policing communities are short-staffed in rural and regional areas. I would love to meet with you all to attend and advocate for rural crime victims of the Riverina, discuss these issues and actively find solutions that are beneficial in increasing rural police presence.

Sincerely,

