

**Submission
No 28**

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

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My submission to this inquiry relates primarily to police visibility in regional towns. Over the 2 decades that I have lived in Australia, I have resided in many NSW regional towns. One of the biggest issues I have seen is that police visibility is almost non-existent and response times are extremely slow. Police need to be visible and interact with the public regularly for people to feel safe and for crime to be suppressed. I understand that there are finite resources, particularly in regional areas. I do, however, believe that current resources can be much more effectively utilized. In my current place of residence, we mainly have 2 patrol cars which are crewed by 2 officers each. For a large part of the day, at least 1 of these patrol cars is parked at the station, presumably to undertake paperwork. Visibility can effectively be doubled by crewing each car with a single officer and by ensuring that officers complete all paperwork whilst out on patrol where possible. This deployment strategy also greatly decreases response times and increases community satisfaction. Officer safety is addressed by having a minimum of 2 patrol cars (2 officers) attend all high risk or potentially high risk incidents. Routine incidents such as taking reports of crimes that have already occurred or taking statements can be attended by only 1 patrol car, therefore tying up only 1 officer rather than 2 as is currently the case. This deployment strategy is used to great effect in almost every police agency in the USA. Police are more visible, are spread further, backup cars are always closer and more cars available for cordons etc.

Another consideration in this regard is the establishment of police beats. Granted, this is only likely feasible in larger regional towns or cities, however, there are immense benefits to this. An officer is assigned a particular beat usually made up of a few neighborhoods and patrols and responds to incidents primarily in that area. This means that the officer becomes familiar with the people in the area, knows where the trouble makers live or spend their free time and is much more connected with the local residents and / or businesses. A relationship can be built with the community. Even in some of the relatively small towns I have resided in NSW, no one knew their local police as they were often from a larger town sometimes over 50+ miles away. Again, this deployment strategy is also used to great effect in the USA and compliments the single officer patrol strategy above. I would encourage the committee to seriously consider these changes which I believe would make a significant difference to public satisfaction with the police service and apprehension of offenders.