

**Submission
No 86**

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Organisation: Narrandera Shire Council

Date Received: 27 May 2024

Our ref: GC/MJ: F- 5228
Your ref: n/a



27 May 2024

Committee Secretary
The Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety

Inquiry into Community Safety in Regional and Rural Communities

Dear Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the inquiry into community safety in rural and regional communities.

I am the General Manager of the Narrandera Shire Council (NSC) and have been in this position for seven years following a career in local government of some 50 years.

So, I approach this inquiry from the perspective of a rural NSW council. NSC is located in the western Riverina area of NSW and is an area where agricultural production is the most significant aspect of the economy.

Council strives to maintain the highest living standards for its residents. 12% of our population identify as aboriginal.

The Terms of reference include...

That the Committee on Law and Safety inquire into and report on:

- (a) the drivers of youth crime across regional and rural NSW, particularly since the COVID pandemic.
- (b) how a whole of government approach can reduce the drivers and root causes of youth crime in regional and rural NSW.
- (c) the wraparound and diversionary services available for youth and families in the regions and rural areas and how they can be better matched to individuals, measured, improved and integrated into a coordinated approach to divert youth from crime, having regard to the NSW Government's commitment to working in partnership with Aboriginal people.
- (d) staffing levels and workforce issues, including police staffing, in regional and rural areas and how services can be improved to reduce youth crime in these areas.
- (e) recidivism rates in regional and rural areas, and related impacts on the community, services and law enforcement.
- (f) the range of functions being performed by NSW police officers, including mental health assistance and youth welfare, on behalf of other agencies in regional and rural areas, and the supports required to assist police; and
- (g) any other related matter.#

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Council submits the following specific matters for consideration by the inquiry.

- Council invests heavily in sporting and recreational facilities. These are maintained to the highest standards and are generally provided free of charge or for a nominal sum to young people.
- In 2019 Council established a Youth Advisory Council (YAC). The YAC is an advocacy and advisory committee whose role is to represent the voice of young people aged 12 – 21 who live, work, study in or have significant links to Narrandera Shire. The YAC brings together young people and provides a platform for programs, activities, cooperation, and discussion. They may also run several programs and events aimed at involving young people and inspiring future leaders within the community. The YAC runs programs and events throughout the year and has proven to be a very successful forum providing development opportunities for the youth of the shire.
- Some years ago, a Clontarf academy was established at Narrandera High School. The academy is a focal point for the support of young aboriginal males providing a balance between traditional schooling and cultural and life skills. I believe the academy has played a critical role in supporting students through to the end of their high school education, reducing truancy and crime rates and in developing young people who are ready to take their place in society.
- NSC has had a CCTV system in operation in the main business area for many years and we are presently replacing it with a more sophisticated and widespread system.
- The Mayor and I meet quarterly with the leaders of the Murrumbidgee District Police and are provided with the stats on crime rates in the shire. Those stats show that we have an oscillating rate of break enter and steal from motor vehicles and dwellings that is of concern to residents. Usually, a spike in these rates follows the return to the district of a repeat offender. This is reflected in the crime stats for the region.
- NSC highest crime categories are for Amphetamines, Marijuana use and domestic violence. Considerable police resources are consumed in managing AVO's. At our last meeting over 1800 bale and Avo checks had been conducted in the March quarter.
- Many of the social and affordable houses in Narrandera are owned by the Aboriginal Housing Office and or Department of Housing or by the local Aboriginal corporations. Some of these dwellings are in very poor condition.
- Mental health services for our community are based in Griffith and Wagga Wagga. This has led to lower use of the services and local resentment.

I can be contacted on [REDACTED]

Yours Faithfully
[REDACTED]

Mr George Cowan
General Manager

Enc: Nil