

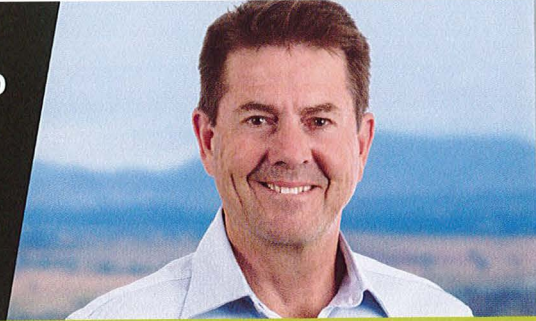
**Submission
No 103**

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Name: The Hon. Kevin Anderson
Date Received: 29 May 2024



The Hon. Kevin Anderson MP
MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH
Shadow Minister for Gaming and Racing
Shadow Minister for the Arts and Heritage



Mr Edmund Atallah MP
Member for Mt Druitt
Chair of the Committee on law and Safety
Chair of the Community Safety in Regional and Rural Communities Enquiry

Dear Mr Atallah

I appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to the Rural and Regional Crime Enquiry.

This submission deals with the need specifically for more police and police resources in our Region.

Rising crime in the Tamworth electorate is a significant problem and combatting that crime and keeping our communities safe is of equal significance. The issue of lack of police to deal with this problem is paramount. Statistics clearly show that there has been an increase in crime in regional and rural areas not only in the Oxley Police District but right across New South Wales. It is clear that NSW Police cannot arrest their way out of this problem and that there needs to be a whole of government and community response.

The New England Northwest region covers an area of 96,000 square kilometres south of the Queensland border, extending from Glenn Innes and Armidale on the New England Tablelands in the north-east, through to Moree and Mungindi in the West.

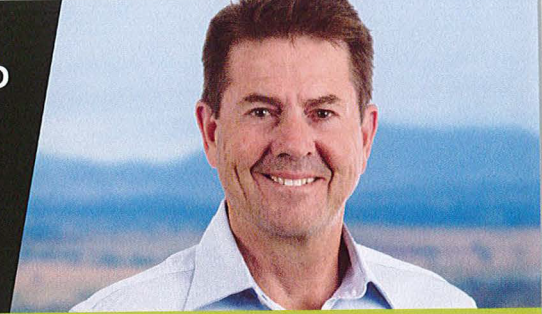
186,000 people live in the region and many community members in towns and cities like Tamworth, Moree, Gunnedah, Inverell, Narrabri, Armidale, Glen Innes and more are deeply disturbed and terrified by a steep increase in crime.

Overall there are less police in Regional NSW than metropolitan Sydney, and that needs to be rectified as a matter of priority. The Country Mayors Association have highlighted the fact that we have significantly fewer police than our city cousins, and, as a whole, New South Wales has less police per head of population than Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. Our police officers are already facing an incredible workload, with only one police officer per 467 NSW residents.

The association, through the chairman, has also highlighted that "We knew crime was increasing, but we looked to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) data to clarify the situation. We were shocked to learn that as well as the alarming incident counts in regional New South Wales, the rate of incidents per 100,000 people was, in some cases, horrifying when compared to metropolitan figures. Up to 90% of crimes including vehicle theft, breaking and entering, sexual assault and domestic assault are happening here, in our regional communities."



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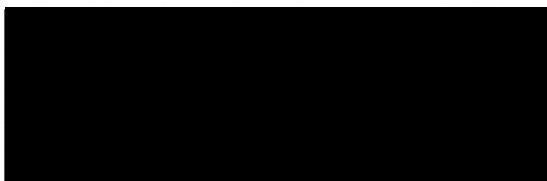
In 2018 the brand-new Gunnedah police station was officially opened with ensured capacity for growth and a view to initiate 24 hour policing for the town. Disappointingly, staffing allocations have not increased over the last six years even though the population of Gunnedah has. To staff the larger police stations, members of the force are often seconded from smaller areas leaving the members of these communities in a vulnerable position. Staffing allocations to the region are just not keeping up with the population increase.

Police in the Oxley District are highly regarded and do a great job in very difficult circumstances, but they need support to assist them and keep our communities safe. The Oxley Police District has capability to request assistance from specialist Police resources such as PolAir to be deployed in our area, which has proven to be very successful in driving down crime and apprehending offenders.

A service that could be implemented to support resources in the Oxley Police District would be a PolAir command based in Tamworth to cover the New England Northwest. The vast distances police are required to cover in the New England Northwest means policing in the region can be challenging, and PolAir would be of significant benefit to local operations while providing comfort to community members.

PolAir is serviced by a fleet of five helicopters and three fixed wing aircraft, and Tamworth is an ideal location for one of those aircraft to be based, ensuring commands in the Northwest have access to a timely support when it is needed.

I would encourage the committee to put recommendations in place to correct the imbalance so that more police and police resources are allocated to rural and regional NSW to help drive down crime and keep our communities safe.



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