

**Submission  
No 105**

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES**

**Organisation:** Ellerslie Flowers

**Date Received:** 29 May 2024

As a business owner I am extremely concerned about the level of violence and unacceptable behaviour clearly visible in our community. We have owned a small business in Kempsey for approximately 15 years and the current level of crime is the worst we have experienced to date. Here are some of the things we are dealing with on a regular basis

- shoppers being verbally abused on the street
- domestic violence on the street, punching, dragging etc
- I have been threatened in our shop by a man after his partner sought shelter in our store, he threatened to stab me
- people using our car side mirrors to inject themselves with drugs in their neck in our work car park
- staff have been verbally abused in store
- vandalism of our surrounds
- arguments in the street threatening violence
- people using public space to engage in alcohol

#### Consequences

As a result we have reduced our opening hours to protect our staff so they are not leaving work in the dark- resulting in loss of potential sales. Many shoppers avoid our CBD reducing the overall number of shoppers. The overall impression of our town has declined considerably resulting in fewer opportunities for new businesses to open or for visitors to stop and spend in town. Overall loss of confidence in our community to sustain a viable CBD and consequently employment opportunities in the retail and hospitality industries. Our elderly and disabled live in fear of attack or confrontation.

We have called our local police station many times to individual incidents- often they are unable or unwilling to attend. There is a danger in letting the current situation become the norm. Living in fear is unacceptable, the behaviour of violent individuals is unacceptable and to do nothing is unacceptable.

Our community needs help now.