

**Submission
No 121**

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Name: Mrs Stephanie Matthews

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My husband and I live in a small country town called South West Rocks, on the North Coast, NSW. We and many others in our town would like to see tougher penalties in place for crimes like break and enter, to deter offenders, especially young offenders. We feel the consequences need to be much greater than they are.

We would love to see people channelled into using their hands for good and helping others, as the Bible says: "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." Ephesians 4:28

Last September we were broken into, but by God's grace and protection the offenders didn't steal anything and left soon after entering via the second bedroom's window. I recalled hearing the sound of people moving inside, through the night. But as I had been in a deep sleep and thought to myself it didn't make sense, I went back to sleep, shortly after. When we reported the crime to the police in the morning, they told us another lady in our town had unfortunately had her car stolen the same night. The offenders seemed to have gone right around our house, looking for a place to enter, as the side gate was left open and a downpipe near the laundry window was broken off, before they entered through the second bedroom window.

In April, 7 months later, I noticed the screen was again removed from the second bedroom window, but nothing else on the outside of the house was amiss, like last time. This indicated it was probably the same offenders. Thankfully they were unable to enter our house, as we have locks, etc on windows now. The forensic officer who came out was very excited to get great finger prints which may have hopefully led to some convictions.