

**Submission  
No 192**

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

**Name:** Cr Debra McGillan

**Date Received:** 27 June 2024

To whom it may concern,

My name is Debra McGillan, and I have served as a councillor on the Richmond Valley Council for the past two and a half years. I reside in Coraki, a small community within the Richmond Valley area.

During my time living in Coraki and engaging with the community, one recurring concern that consistently arises is the alarming increase in crime rates.

Recently, I organized a Crime Prevention meeting with the assistance of Andre Els. The meeting aimed to address the pressing need for enhancing community safety measures, such as installing security cameras, ensuring windows and doors are locked, fostering neighbourly support, and promoting the use of the free "WeWatch" app.

Prior to this meeting, our community had been grappling with unruly behaviour, particularly among youths. Visitors to the area, including those staying at our small caravan park, reported feeling harassed and unsafe. Incidents of harassment, vandalism, and theft were distressingly common. For instance, tourists were often accosted by youths soliciting cigarettes and money, and their property was frequently vandalized while they were away. Regrettably, some individuals even suffered physical harm, such as a lady who was pushed and subsequently suffered a hip fracture while returning from the toilet facilities.

The situation has escalated to the point where our own community members no longer feel safe in their own homes. Numerous households have been targeted by thieves multiple times, with vulnerable residents subjected to terrifying experiences such as being confronted by intruders while they slept, threatened with weapons, and coerced into relinquishing their belongings.

The repercussions extend beyond residential areas, affecting local businesses as well. Incidents of violence and theft against business owners and employees have been reported, including an assault on a pharmacist resulting in serious facial injuries and an altercation at the Spar supermarket that led to a staff member sustaining a concussion. Even organizations providing care for the elderly, such as Baptist Care, have not been spared, with intruders disrupting residents' peace of mind and stealing valuables. Additionally, establishments like the Golf Club have experienced repeated break-ins, despite fortifying their premises with security measures.

Furthermore, Coraki Takeaway, a beloved local establishment, has faced a harrowing ordeal as well, with reports of attacks involving machetes. The severity of these incidents has not only endangered lives but has also led to significant financial losses. Compounding the issue, businesses in our area are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain insurance coverage due to the high frequency of claims related to criminal activities.

In response to these pressing concerns, our community is advocating for the implementation of additional security measures. Specifically, we request the installation of security cameras at intersections and the enhancement of street lighting to improve visibility and deter criminal activities. These proactive steps are crucial in safeguarding our residents and businesses from further harm.

The alarming frequency and severity of these incidents have instilled fear and anxiety in our community, with residents and business owners alike facing disruptions to their daily lives and livelihoods. The safety and well-being of our residents, particularly the elderly and vulnerable, are at stake, and urgent action is needed to address these pressing concerns.

We appeal for support and assistance from relevant authorities and agencies to implement effective strategies for combating crime and restoring peace and security to our community.

Sincerely, Debra McGillan

