

DEPUTY PREMIER



MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT & MINISTER FOR POLICE

JOHN WATKINS MP

NEWS RELEASE

LOCAL COMMUNITIES HELPING POLICE TACKLE CRIME

State Plan Priority R1: Reduced rates of crime, particularly violent crime.

R3: Reduced levels of antisocial behaviour

R4: Increased participation and integration in community activities

Monday 15, January 2007

Deputy Premier and Minister for Police John Watkins today announced the establishment of Community Safety Precinct Committees aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime throughout NSW.

Mr Watkins said the new committees would include representatives of NSW Police, local government and agencies with responsibility for health, housing, education, urban planning, transport and employment as well as community members who want to help prevent crime in their local area.

“NSW Police will encourage committees to set up in towns and cities throughout NSW and ask them to identify the crime and safety issues they believe are important to their area,” Mr Watkins said.

“The committees will help police devise a plan to deal with those issues.

“This is all about recognising the fact that everyone has a role to play in tackling anti social behaviour and street violence and ensuring the safety of our community.

“And no-one is better at identifying grass-roots issues than people living and working in those communities.

“Existing Safety House Committees and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes will be invited to join precinct committees and take advantage of the resources and expertise available.

“Community Safety Precinct Committees will give everyone living in the community, whether they are parents, teachers, safety campaigners or just interested individuals, the chance to work with the police in keeping their town safe.

“Once each committee is formed it will help police crack down on anti-social behaviour, vandalism and other hooligan behaviour in our streets and suburbs.”

Community Safety Precinct Committees will work towards:

- Increasing community awareness of crime risk and prevention strategies;
- Encouraging community involvement in local community safety;

Phone: (02) 9228 4866 -- Fax: (02) 9228 4857 -- Email: dp.office@watkins.minister.nsw.gov.au

- Identifying actual and potential community safety problems;
- Developing local community safety plans;
- Co-ordinating crime prevention efforts; and
- Using local police services to target early intervention programs for children and young people.

Each Community Safety Precinct Committee will have its own child safety sub-committee.

These will look at areas specific to child safety including road safety, bullying and harassment, internet and chat room safety and the identification of safe adults and safe places in the community.

Mr Watkins said Safety House Committees had been invited to join the precinct committee program after a NSW Police review found there had been a marked decline in their use and many had folded across the State.

The review found Safety Houses were not being used in many areas as a result of:

- Increases in both parents working, leaving fewer homes with an adult at home when children were walking to and from school;
- A growth in high density housing (townhouses, villas and units) near schools, which had reduced the pool of suitable properties and increased occupancy turnover;
- The growth in after-school activities and other school childcare arrangements;
- More parents dropping off and picking up their children from school;
- The growing number of children with mobile phones; and
- Improved child safety education at schools.

Mr Watkins said during 2004, just 10 children had used a Safety House - four for bullying incidents, two for car breakdowns, one for missing a bus and one to evade a dog (two other incidents were not detailed).

“Police Crime Prevention officers and the Commissioner’s Inspectorate will provide administrative support and coordination to each precinct committee,” Mr Watkins said.

“NSW Police have also recently launched Keeping Me Safe – a new program for children, parents, teachers and other adults involved in working with and caring for children.

“Keeping Me Safe will be used by Community Safety Precinct Committees in their work on child safety and protection.

“This is aimed at identifying what can best be done to protect children within their homes, when they are walking to and from school and when they are lost or frightened.”

Contact: Martin Wallace 0431 474 541