Blacktown LAC’s Proactive Team, led by Sgt Andrew Knight, has formed a regular operation around a core idea: that the people who steal from retail outlets are often the same offenders who break into houses and vehicles.

The method developed by the team begins with apprehending shoplifters through close cooperation with retail loss prevention officers (LPOs), whose primary role is detecting retail theft as it occurs.

The next step, achieved by thoroughly debriefing offenders, is about cultivating registered sources and obtaining information that may help to identify and prosecute receivers of stolen property.

Operation New Generation was established at the start of 2009 and has received positive feedback from retailers, LPOs and Westpoint management.

It involves an open line of communication with LPOs who contact officers as soon as shoplifters strike, so they can be apprehended on the spot.

To date, Blacktown LAC has successfully executed Operation New Generation on seven occasions in 2009, six occasions in 2010 and on one occasion this year.

Each operation averages around 20 arrests, but on the best days there can be as many as 30. Det Insp Paul McHugh, Blacktown LAC, said the operations also strengthen relationships with local businesses.

“It fosters a better working partnership with retail chains and loss prevention staff, as well as reassuring the community that police are proactively targeting crime,” Det Insp McHugh said, adding that other LACs have commenced similar retail theft initiatives based on the Operation New Generation model.

An operational model for tackling retail, residential and car theft that initially enjoyed success at Blacktown has inspired other LACs to follow suit.