



19 November 2024

**Committee Members**  
**Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety**  
**Parliament of New South Wales**  
(via email [lawsafety@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:lawsafety@parliament.nsw.gov.au))

**Re: Legislative Assemble: Committee on Law and Safety – Supplementary questions**

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I refer to your submission of supplementary questions received via email on 12 November 2024 and supply the following responses.

**1. How long has the issue of youth crime been prevalent in your region and why do you think it's continued?**

Accurate analysis of crime trends in Northern Region has been confounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and related environmental conditions, particularly lockdowns that reduced the movement of people.

Since 2018 incidents involving juvenile Persons of Interest (POIs) have increased to different degrees across Break and Enter (Dwellings), Stolen Vehicles, Pursuits, DV Assault, and Non DV Assault. The sharpest increases occurred in BE Dwellings, SVs, and Pursuits, reflecting the impact that 'Regional Mongoose' activity has had on crime in Northern Region.

The continuation of youth crime can be attributed to several factors:

- Socioeconomic Challenges: High levels of poverty and unemployment remain significant issues. These conditions can lead young people to engage in criminal activities as a means of survival or due to a lack of legitimate opportunities.
- Limited Recreational and Educational Opportunities: Many areas in the Northern Region lack sufficient recreational and educational facilities for young people. This can result in boredom and a higher likelihood of engaging in criminal behaviour as a form of entertainment or out of frustration.
- Family Environment: Dysfunctional family dynamics, including neglect, abuse, and involvement in criminal activities, continue to influence young people negatively. Without stable and supportive home environments, youth are more likely to turn to crime.
- Peer Influence: Adolescents are highly susceptible to peer pressure. Associating with delinquent peers can increase the likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. This social influence is a powerful driver of youth crime.

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- Substance Abuse: The prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse among youth impairs judgment and increases the propensity for criminal behaviour. Substance abuse can also be a coping mechanism for dealing with other underlying issues.
- Cultural and Social Factors: For Indigenous youth, cultural disconnection and systemic disadvantages play a significant role. The increase in the proportion of Aboriginal juvenile offenders highlights ongoing issues related to cultural identity, discrimination, and lack of access to supportive resources.
- 'Regional Mongoose' Activity: Specific criminal activities, such as those linked to 'Regional Mongoose' in the Northern Region, have contributed to the rise in certain types of crimes like Break and Enter (Dwellings), Stolen Vehicles, and Pursuits. These organized activities can perpetuate crime cycles among youth.

**2. Could you give the Committee some more information about the Be a Cop in your Home Town program?**

The 'You should be a cop in your hometown' initiative aims to attract applicants to the NSW Police Force who live in identified regional areas where there are currently positions available.

Twelve focus areas have been identified for the initial program, within Northern, Western and Southern Regions. Applicants in these areas can identify their preferred placement locations and will be told at the time of acceptance where they will be placed, removing uncertainty about moving long distances. It means an applicant can continue to live, work, and enjoy the lifestyle they have in their hometown. Placements are still subject to operational requirements and background checks. Even if an applicant is from a regional area not listed above, positions may be available in their area.

Locally, the advertisements have been shared via the Mid North Coast Police District Eyewatch (Facebook) Page. In Port Macquarie, our "You should be a cop" program engaged 40 motivated high school students, paving the way for future recruits. Our community engagement at Ballina Fair resonated well with the 'tradie' audience, while in Lismore, we strengthened relationships with the indigenous community. Coffs Harbour showcased our fitness standards with 12 recruit applicants, and Muswellbrook saw genuine interest from expo visitors in joining our ranks.

Further, displays and promotional material is shared and erected at community engagement events including, NAIDOC, Family Fun Days and Fetes.

Presentations about the Be a Cop in your own town have been done at the 3 PACC meetings across the Mid North Coast Police District held at Kempsey, Nambucca Valley and Port Macquarie.

**3. You mentioned that government and non-government programs aren't coordinated, and that they are running in isolation. (p5) Could you give us some examples of programs or service areas that aren't coordinated across agencies? Do you see any gaps in service provision as a result?**

Across the Kempsey community there are a number of a services who have youth workers employed. Many of these youth workers operate in isolation. There is a localised approach to Kempsey where youth services have a greater presence in the West Kempsey and Greenhill areas and little to no exposure in the South Kempsey area. Clontarf is present in the Melville High School (South Kempsey) and Kempsey High School (West Kempsey) however only engage with children that attend school with little follow up of those

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who are not engaging at school. It would be positive to have the youth services from agencies including but not limited to, Durri AMS, Learning the Macleay, Kinchela Boys Home, Dhina Durriti, Burran Dalai, PCYC, Youth on Track, Youth Justice, Kempsey Neighbourhood Centre, Many Rivers, YP Space and Pathfinders to join together when delivering their programs.

The Kempsey PCYC Unites program on Friday evenings is mainly run by volunteers with some paid staff. Due to the level of staff this program is limited to about 35 children. With the pooling of youth resources from community it would enable more children to attend and expand the program across more days and nights. On the Friday evenings in January of 2023 the PCYC ran a community touch football competition at the Verge Street oval, Kempsey. This event was held over about 4 weeks and was supported by other youth agencies, sports groups and parents. This program was attended each night by 80 to 100 children. This type of large, coordinated event has not been replicated due to the lack of service provider cooperation.

The Mid North Coast identify gaps within youth services focused on disengaged youth, mental health, drug and alcohol treatments, paediatric, cognitive and health assessments.

**4. One stakeholder claimed the Bail and Accommodation Support Service (BASS) has only been used 5 times since December 2023, saying:**

*It is a program that works; we are getting outcomes, but we are not getting the referrals from the police... They didn't even know about it this morning. If this is a police program and they don't know about it locally, then how are we supposed to support our young people?*

**What is your response, and can you provide statistics showing the number of referrals under the BASS from July 2022 – July 2024?**

The Bail and Accommodation Support Service is delivered locally in Kempsey by YP Space. The Mid North Coast Police District refers young people where possible to have their matters dealt with under the Young Offenders Act. When young people are charged, accommodation is factored in as part of the bail decision process. There are no data holdings for BASS referrals from the Mid North Coast Police District. The utilisation of BASS will be reaffirmed and promoted within the district, and data maintained to review.

**5. What challenges do police encounter in monitoring and supporting young people on bail and how can these be addressed?**

Police encounter the following challenges in monitoring and supporting young people on bail;

- Significant numbers of young people (17) are currently on bail with curfew across the Mid North Coast Police District.
- Complex bail conditions that are often unenforceable or unreasonable.
- Unintended consequences of bail decisions including the vulnerability and unsuitability of the responsible people who the young people are released into their care.
- The unsuitable conditions these young people are being exposed to due to family violence, drug and alcohol use within these premises and the poor conditions of the housing.
- The aiding and covering of bail breaches of young people often by the responsible person/s and family members.

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**6. How are you implementing, and ensuring broad awareness of, both the Youth Strategy and the Aboriginal Strategic Direction 2024 in the Mid North Coast region?**

Staff have been advised of the Youth Strategy and Aboriginal Strategic Direction 2024. This has occurred via statewide email dissemination of the new strategies and local sharing of the same strategies. Face to face briefings have been held with the sergeants during training and development days.

The ASD 2024 Strategy Online acknowledgement was mandatory for training year 2023/24 with the Mid North Coast Police District achieving 100% compliance. When required, one on one mentoring of staff occurs from our Youth Liaison Officer, ACLO's and Aboriginal and Youth Engagement Officers. Across community these strategies are referred to and shared at community engagements including but not limited to PACC Meetings.

**7. Are there any programs for young people in the Mid North Coast region that have received grants through the ASD Crime Prevention Grants Program? How do you engage with community representatives to determine suitable initiatives to be funded through this program?**

In November and December of 2023 an ASD grant was applied for and granted to run a program aimed at engaging with 5 of the highest risk of offending young people in the Kempsey Community. The program was run by Delhuntie Outdoor programs and involved staff from the Mid North Coast Police District, Youth Command (Kempsey) and ACLO's. The program provided a hands-on holistic approach aimed at giving the participants both practical and personal skills required in developing character and citizenship. Built on mentoring and experimental learning principles, the program utilised hands-on activities and outdoor experiences to achieve the focus outcomes.

The program enabled participants to goal set, develop a sense of achievement and self-worth while also growing soft skills of resilience, perseverance and stickability. These skills are then shown to be transferable into home, work, school and life through debriefing conversations. Participants helped restore wooden outdoor furniture at the Kempsey PCYC, fill Christmas Hamper boxes and tidy a storeroom at the Dunghutti Elders Council while engaging with their mentors, police and elders.

The hands-on work experience and community programs were designed to meet many outcomes. In one experience the mentorship and work experience days were designed to not only provide hands on skills but give back to the community at the same time.

This Program was tailored for the Kempsey Sector aiming at developing group skills, cohesion, social skills, and personal development, using the experiences and mentorship opportunities to encourage good citizenship behaviour and engagement in education.

Engagement with community representative occurs via structured forums including the Mid North Coast Police District Commanders Community Leadership Group and PACC Meetings and organically from rapport building and broader community networking. Communication occurs view the Mid North Coast Police District Eyewatch page, email contact lists and face to face meetings.

  
**David Waddell APM**  
**Assistant Commissioner**  
**Commander**  
**Northern Region**

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