

MINUTES

Attendees:

The Hon Martin Pakula MP, State Member for Keysborough and Attorney General
Charlotte Gray

Councillors:

Mayor Jim Memeti (Chair and Red Gum Ward Councillor), Cr Roz Blades (Paperbark Ward Councillor), Cr Heang Tak (Paperbark Ward Councillor), Cr Tim Dark (Paperbark Ward Councillor), Cr Matthew Kirwan (Red Gum Ward Councillor), Cr Angela Long (Red Gum Ward Councillor), Youhorn Chea (Lightwood Ward Councillor)

Victoria Police:

Inspector Mark Langhorn (Local Area Commander), Stuart Dawson (Acting Senior Sergeant), D Bales (Senior Constable)

Council Officers:

John Bennie (Chief Executive Officer), Sharon Sykes (Senior Coordinator Community Development), Lisa Roberts (Manager Governance), Jo Thorn (Mayor & Councillors Executive Assistant)

Community Members:

110 attended

Business:

Formal business started at 7.05pm

Speaker	Comments
Mayor Jim Memeti	Welcome to everyone here tonight. I would like to thank the Honourable Martin Pakula for being here tonight and welcome my fellow Councillors for Paperbark Ward Crs Roz Blades and Heang Tak, for Red Gum Ward Cr Angela Long and for Lightwood Ward, Cr Youhorn Chea. Welcome also to Area Commander for Victoria Police Inspector Mark Langhorn and Council's Senior Coordinator Community Development, Sharon Sykes. Martin Pakula will provide you with an overview of the State Government's roles in community safety followed by Inspector Langhorn who will outline initiatives in combating local crime. Sharon Sykes will then discuss Council's role and responsibilities in community safety and then we will open the floor to your questions.
The Hon Martin Pakula MP	Thank Jim. I am appreciative for the opportunity to be here and am grateful to have representatives from Victoria Police (VicPol) here. It's great to also see so many members of the community. Collectively there is a strong desire to improve community safety. I have dual roles as the State Member for Keysborough and as the Attorney General (AG). Work on the ground in combatting crime is fundamentally done by VicPol. As AG, I can give some insight as to changes in legislation that are due to occur and what has already occurred. We saw the release of the Victorian crime statistics today with the primary drivers being family violence and theft and I've had several meetings with constituents in regards to these areas.

	<p>From the perspective of the government we are working very closely with VicPol to get on top of the issues. One of the messages that has come through very clearly is the need for more police resources and the Government has committed to an additional 3000+ officers and a new model for rolling out those resources. There is also a desire for more police to be placed in or around Keysborough.</p> <p>I cannot state how many of the 3000 would be in the south eastern suburbs but the south east will definitely benefit from the increased resources. I will also continue to work with VicPol on the continuation of the Springvale Police Station and increased numbers there. We also have to strike a balance on police on the counter versus police on the streets.</p> <p>In regards to legislation, there have been changes made in how some crimes are treated. For example, in car-jacking and home invasions, both of which are well reported and where VicPol have made hundreds of arrests, changes have been made to statutory minimum sentences and community correction orders availability. As a consequence of these changes, more offenders get custodial sentences. Also probationary and bail law reviews have been requested by the State Government with contributions from both VicPol and the Victorian Police Association, and we expect a full response in a couple of weeks and hope to see a change in the way probation and bail are treated.</p> <p>There have also been changes to the treatment of a range of offences including baseline sentences for low, midpoint and high offences and some consideration has been given to a youth justice package which was triggered by the Moomba riots last year. While the overall rate of youth offending is down, there is an increase in youth repeat offenders and youth violence is escalating. We have made a number of commitments and considerations in this area such as youth control orders as opposed to detention where they may be required to take on education, work or service instead of detention in order to address the needs of the particular youth offending; consideration must be given to what kind of offences must occur for a youth be tried in an adult court as opposed to a youth court; what sort of offences are lower level offences where an offending youth can be diverted at the right time as opposed to being detained for a higher level offence; youth recidivists need to be considered more seriously than a one-time offender. While we are moving in a positive direction there is more work to do and it is important to give VicPol the powers it needs to get things done and you will see those powers come into play particularly in the second half of this year.</p>
Inspector Mark Langhorn	<p>Greater Dandenong is vibrant and heading in a really positive direction. Yes the crime statistics came out today and we can see that some of those statistics are actually reducing in Greater Dandenong. In addressing community safety in Greater Dandenong and in Keysborough we break it down into three main areas – visibility, tasking and prevention:</p> <p>When VicPol members are visible this is a major deterrent of crime. We also task toward particular problems. To be able to do this we need to know about a problem. This is dependent on people who live in an area telling us what is going on. In this way we can gather intelligence. To help us do this we do have a “Coffee with a Cop” initiative where you can sit and have a coffee and a chat with a member at places like Parkmore shopping centre. Before we can undertake dedicated operations, we have to know as much as possible about the issue to understand how to deal with it. As an example we would target repeat offenders because we can understand their patterns and focus on what they will do rather than drive around randomly waiting for something to happen. It is a better use of time. Front line tactical units are tasked to problem areas and will patrol a problem area where trouble is expected. That does not mean we won't respond to trouble as it is called in, but we need you to call Triple 000 and log the crime.</p> <p>In relation to statistics also, a higher number doesn't always mean more crime. For example, in relation to trafficking and possession of drugs statistics, these have increased because we have specifically targeted those areas, not necessarily because there is more crime.</p>
Sharon Sykes	<p>Council plays a role in community safety in a number of ways.</p> <p>Firstly, it facilitates a Community Safety Advisory Committee which is represented by members from Neighbourhood Watch, VicRoads, VicPol, the Department of Justice, Councillors and Council staff to implement Council's Community Safety Plan, copies of which are available to take away with you tonight. Through the meetings and collaborations of these partners, Council works on a number of strategies and priorities of the Community Safety Plan. These are predominantly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting diversity and promoting harmony • Preventing family violence

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating safer public places, upgrading open space, installations of lighting, visitations etc • Safety on the road, creation of safe roads and safe railway precincts and through public transport • Addressing alcohol and other drug harms • Emerging technologies and safety <p>Implementation of Community Safety Plan is important. Progress on the Plan is reported annually to Council and the Committee by Council officers.</p> <p>The Committee also talks about crime statistics.</p> <p>In relation to Council and the installation of CCTV cameras, funding for these projects generally comes from the State and Federal Governments and locations in major centres are decided on by Council.</p> <p>Council also engages with community because it is the closest level of government with the community and can advocate on community safety issues with other levels of government, for example this forum tonight. It is important to understand that Council does not solve crime but does work closely with the right organisations to try and support them in the work they do.</p>		
Speaker	Statement/Question	Response By	Response
Resident	I have CCTV around my home and on the occasions when we have collected footage we have shared that with our neighbours – what is your connectivity with social media platforms?	Inspector Mark Langhorn	We now have an EyeWatch page which has been running for a couple of months. We also have a central media watch group which is helping us to improve our online interaction. I would encourage you to send any footage into us when a crime has been committed. We do however have to be cautious on what is actually shared on social media due to privacy legislation.
	Everyone is busy. How do we get the information to you simply and quickly?	Inspector Mark Langhorn	VicPol will come to you and take the report. But we need to get the information and link it with what is happening in the area.
Resident	I live on a street where a shooting happened and there were 4-5 break ins prior to the shooting and I had CCTV footage and I rang the police and it never got followed up. I shared it on social media. Prior to moving in to the area near Ascot Place I called the police every two days because I saw suspicious things happening all the time. Police were slow to react and I think my concerns were not taken seriously and then later there was a shooting and now those people are gone. I felt I got no support from the police at that time.	Inspector Mark Langhorn	I was not Area Commander then but I take your concerns on board. I can tell you now that, statistically, you live in a safe suburb. Resident – Now I would call my neighbour before I call the police.
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	I live in the Somerfield Estate, neighbour got their car stolen and they rang the police. Another neighbour had an altercation with someone and was threatened with a screwdriver. Another time someone was watching his house while his wife was at home. I started a petition which has been tabled at Council. We want CCTV, better lighting and a long term strategy to tackle crime in the Somerfield Estate. People there feel disregarded.	Inspector Mark Langhorn	I understand what are you saying. What do you suggest we do? I hear you are feeling unsafe. I hear that you think there is not a sufficient response. So firstly we need to have a presence there. Secondly we need to improve environmental factors.

Speaker	Statement/Question	Response By	Response
Resident	We have the same concerns. I am also concerned that you have to come from either Dandenong or Springvale. Also there is hooning along the Dandenong Bypass We would also like to know what are the crime rates in our area? Could we have our own Neighbour Watch in our own area? How do we protect ourselves? Why can't you put CCTV into our area or along Dandenong Bypass?	Sharon Sykes	When I talked about the implementation of CCTV, Council has implemented the program in the three main areas of Noble Park, Dandenong and Springvale where it was perceived that top priority was needed. Council has received funding and can talk further to the State Government. At this stage, Council has not put CCTV into local streets.
		Inspector Mark Langhorn	We have made targeted responses along the Dandenong Bypass and our highway patrol is operating 24/7. We will ask them to monitor the area. Statistically, Somerfield Estate for the second half of last year had 87 incidents of crime and it has been fairly stagnant for the last 12 months. In Keysborough there were 514 incidents of crime and 8000 incidents in Greater Dandenong overall.
Speaker	Comments		
Dawn – Greater Dandenong Neighbourhood Watch	Greater Dandenong Neighbourhood watch covers all of Greater Dandenong and all are welcome. In relation to hoons, VicPol Highway Patrol is coming on 17 May at 1.30pm and 7.30pm. We have fliers here which you can take away with you tonight. Anyone who wants to receive a regular a newsletter can contact us and we will send you one. We get a huge amount of police support. Some people don't like to contact VicPol directly, they can tell neighbourhood watch and then we can pass it onto the police for you.		
Crs Tim Dark and Matthew Kirwan arrived.			
Speaker	Statement/Question	Response By	Response
Resident	In relation to Car-jacking and house breaking which was reported, why has it taken so long for some action to be taken that the State Government has had to intervene.	The Hon Martin Pakula	VicPol have always been arresting offenders in these instances but there was no specific legislation for these offences so the State Government has changed at the request of VicPol.
Resident	It's good to hear that we can talk to VicPol members at Parkmore and they are approachable but my main concern is hooning in industrial estates. What do I do when it is happening?	Inspector Mark Langhorn	If it is happening call Triple 000 at that specific time. Resident – what would you do.
	What will you do?	Inspector Mark Langhorn	We would sometimes place cars in the area and wait for events to occur in order to disrupt or prevent them.
Resident	What are the statistics from the previous year? If I'm at home and my car is being broken into and I take them on, am I liable if they get hurt?	Inspector Mark Langhorn	In 2016, there were 156 incidents of crime and in 2017, there were 155 incidents. We would never recommend you take on an offender but if you needed to use self-defence it should not be disproportionate to what is being used on you.

Speaker	Statement/Question	Response By	Response
Resident	What are you doing as a Council that we voted in to make sure we live in a safe community?	Mayor Jim Memeti	We also live in this community and we are very passionate about Greater Dandenong being a safe and harmonious place where we live ourselves. We advocate to those organisations that fight crime and we bid for funding to aid the environment..
	What role does a developer have in the Somerfield Estate now?	John Bennie	Intrapac still does have an ongoing role and we may well talk to them about how they can assist you with your concerns – if the residents would like to talk about more tangible supports for their communities then Council may well be able to facilitate that.
		The Hon Martin Pakula	I also liaise with Intrapac about many things from time to time and I would also like to be a part of that meeting.
Resident	Have you got statistics for other areas of Keysborough such as Keysborough South?	Inspector Mark Langhorn	In Keysborough last year there were 514 incidents of crime as opposed to 420 the year before so there has been an increase. 25% of our work is in Keysborough. Another statistics for the Somerfield area is 136 calls for police assistance in the second half of last year, with a 23% increase in arrests from offences in that area.
Resident	I understand we can't have a police officer on every corner. How can we help if we see someone walking off with something or committing an offence?	Inspector Mark Langhorn	The smartest thing to do is call Triple 000. We don't recommend anyone confronting people who are committing an offence. There are also some preventative safety aspects that police can talk to you about.
Speaker	Comments		
Mayor Jim Memeti	We will finish the formal part of the evening there and residents are welcome to speak to us informally over coffee. Thank you to everyone for attending tonight, particularly the Honourable Martin Pakula, Council staff and the residents.		

Formal meeting closed at 8.33pm. (Informal discussion closed at 9.30pm)