

**Question on Notice
No. 735
Asked on 23 May 2007**

MS MALE asked the Minister for Police and Corrective Services (MS SPENCE)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the North Coast Police Region—

Will she confirm that a permanent Police Seniors Liaison Officer has been appointed and detail the background to this appointment and how this officer operates in the community to ensure the confidence and security of Sunshine Coast Seniors?

ANSWER:

In August 2005 the Queensland Police Service began trialling a Seniors Liaison Project within the Sunshine Coast Police District to reduce the fear of crime and social isolation experienced by some people aged 65 or over. The Project involved consultation with seniors who have been victims of crime or who are living in fear of crime or are socially isolated.

Sergeant Di Kirkman, Officer in Charge, Sunshine Coast District Crime Prevention Unit has participated in the trial of the Seniors Liaison Officer position since August 2005.

As a result of the success of the trial, Sergeant Kirkman has recently been appointed as a permanent Seniors Liaison Officer for the Sunshine Coast District. This position is the first of its type in Queensland. The Sergeant will continue to perform the role of Seniors Liaison Officer as part of her core responsibilities.

During the trial Sergeant Kirkman contacted more than 170 seniors who have been victims of break and enter offences or violence-related crimes on the Sunshine Coast. Victims were identified through a weekly analysis of crime reports. As part of the trial, Sergeant Kirkman arranged security audits of the homes of some of the contacted seniors. She also provided them with information on fear of crime issues.

A survey of seniors who participated in the trial found that:

- 73% of respondents indicated they had improved their home security as a result of the advice provided;
- 73% of respondents indicated their fear of crime had reduced;
- 100% of respondents indicated the service provided was either helpful or very helpful; and
- 100% of respondents believed the service should continue.

The Seniors Liaison Officer role, a key recommendation of the Seniors Task Force which delivered its findings last November, works closely with local Volunteers in Policing and the newly-appointed Seniors State Coordinator—another Task Force recommendation.

The functions of the Seniors Liaison Officer include arranging for seniors to be contacted by telephone or correspondence. In some instances, police become aware of these seniors as a consequence of referrals from other agencies. In appropriate cases, trained Volunteers in Policing conduct security audits of seniors' homes. The contacted seniors

are also provided with a copy of the booklet "Confident, Safe and Secure Living in Queensland". In addition, officers of the Sunshine Coast District Crime Prevention Unit and local Volunteers in Policing regularly conduct presentations for seniors' groups and at retirement villages within the Sunshine Coast District.

Queensland crime statistics show we have one of the lowest crime rates involving seniors in the country, yet the fear of crime among seniors is very real. The important message for seniors is that there are many available initiatives to improve their sense of safety—and a dedicated police service is only a call away.