

Crime stats

STORY

'Crime stats on your street and at your fingertips'

The clear intention of the *Right to Information Act* (2009) (RTI Act) is to enable community access to certain types of government information. This facilitates community engagement with government. It also informs the community about issues relevant to them.

A key role of the Office of the Information Commissioner is to review agencies' compliance with the RTI Act. A key recommendation of the OIC 2011 Queensland Police Service (QPS) Compliance Review contributed to an important advance in the use of data collected by the QPS.

This information can empower communities. It can –

- galvanise communities into action around problems
- build community capacity
- reduce risk to personal safety
- inform real estate and other markets
- improve accountability in responding to disadvantage in an area
- educate the community about challenges facing police
- improve public scrutiny of police strategies and responses, and
- target locally driven initiatives around crime prevention.

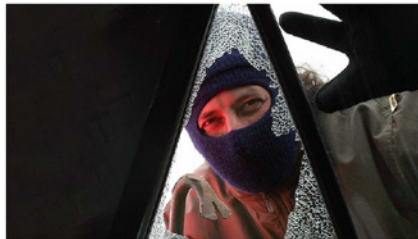
Crime stats on your street and at your fingertips

By Marisa Calligan
October 25, 2012 - 10:08am



Queensland police say they are close to launching a website that will allow residents to access statistics on crimes in their suburb and their street.

The police service has developed a website that will provide people with street-by-street crime figures, under the recommendation of the state's information commissioner Julie Kinross.



Screenshots of crime figures will soon be available to the public. [View more](#)

Deputy Commissioner Ian Stewart said the online portal, which is expected to be similar to one already available in the UK, required some tweaking before going live.

"We think [it] will be very well used by the public and researchers so we have to make sure that the systems are robust to deal with that and that takes some time and testing," he said.

"What we are doing is working hard behind the scenes towards improving this type of data access."

When asked how soon the website would be launched, Police Minister Jack Dempsey said: "we're not talking years."

"We're working on that currently. We want to make sure that we get it right," he said.

"It's very exciting."

Last year, Ms Kinross called for greater transparency, saying existing Queensland police reports, including the Annual Statistical Review released yesterday, were inadequate and did not meet community needs.

She pointed to the interactive UK crime statistics portal, which allows people in England and Wales to type in their street, suburb or town and obtain the relevant data.

The interactive QPS website could have implications on the housing market and retail and business sector in particular suburbs, but LJ Hooker New Farm principal real estate agent Brett Greenhill doubted the availability crime figures would greatly impact potential property buyers.

"I doubt that very many people would use it more than just another point of reference in a context where there's lots of different information available," he said.

"If you like the house, you'll probably still buy it anyway."

Mr Dempsey said residents could feed "nuts and bolts" information back to police in a timely manner via the portal.

"When you see the reported crime often you don't get what the clear up [arrests and convictions] of that crime is in a particular area, so it reduces that fear of crime," he said.

"But also the beauty of having more data out there is that it engages the community, because at the end of the day the police are only as good as the information they receive."

For example, fuelled by this information, a local Neighbourhood Watch joined forces with police to combat a local spike in property offences. The locals knew the area, saw a pattern in the offending, and had a good idea why it was happening. Armed with this knowledge, as well as facts from the crime data, police distributed targeted letters, engaged with people in shopping centres and increased patrols based on local information.

Neighbourhood Watch told the OIC that offence rates went down after this initiative.



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