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BY:.....



Ms Gillian Gould  
Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Legal &  
Constitutional Affairs - R1-109  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gould

**INQUIRY INTO CRIME IN THE COMMUNITY: VICTIMS, OFFENDERS AND FEAR OF CRIME**

I commend your Committee for taking on the challenging task of inquiring into crime in our community. I understand that you have received many written submissions on the issues, including one from Lgov NSW. The purpose of my writing is not to canvas all aspects of crime and safety issues or how they are experienced in Fairfield City. I am aware, however, that you have received representations regarding one of this City's town centres, Cabramatta. I would like to offer my comments on crime in this particular community as well as providing a general outline of the role this Council has adopted in crime prevention.

**Cabramatta**

While Cabramatta has previously experienced significant crime problems, much has improved over the last few years. Council's understanding of the level of crime in Cabramatta is mostly derived from intelligence obtained from its closed circuit television system (CCTV), which currently includes 23 cameras. The CCTV data clearly supports NSW Police reports and anecdotal evidence that the incidence of crime is no longer at the extremely high levels experienced a few years ago.

Cabramatta does, however, continue to be the victim of crime, most likely linked to the illicit drug trade. Illicit drug trafficking, illicit drug use and the crime and antisocial behaviour associated with illicit drug use continue to have an adverse impact on the residents, visitors and businesses in Cabramatta. While research shows that the CCTV improves community perceptions of safety, Cabramatta continues to attract negative media coverage and safety concerns continue to impact adversely on the area.

Council is committed to working closely with other agencies and the community to address ongoing crime issues in Cabramatta. For example, Council is an active participant in the NSW Government's City Watch Council, which seeks to improve community/police relations.

Council has also recently completed a further safety audit of the area and will be implementing a range of strategies to improve both actual and perceived safety in Cabramatta.

While Commonwealth Government policies and programs are many and varied, it is probably in the area of illicit drug control that it can make the greatest contribution to tackling issues of crime and safety in Cabramatta. It is generally agreed that the recent "heroin drought" has been a significant factor behind reduced crime rates in Cabramatta. The Commonwealth's efforts in areas such as investigating organised crime and preventing the importation of illegal drugs can have a direct and beneficial impact on the quality of life for residents of this City.

### **Crime Prevention Plan**

Fairfield City Council's Crime Prevention Plan is an investment in a range of crime prevention and public safety programs that are in addition to traditional law enforcement and crime fighting by our local police. The Plan encourages a collaborative approach to crime prevention and supports community based responses to local crime issues. Experience shows that with police, all levels of government, the business sector and the broader community working together, opportunities for crime can be reduced and public safety improved.

The Crime Prevention Plan has four key focus areas: -

- **Reduce the fear of crime and improve public awareness of crime prevention**, for example, "Safe Families" domestic violence education program; business crime prevention handbook; Women and the Elderly Street Safety project
- **Increase interagency partnerships and collaboration**, for example, through Mayors Crime Prevention Reference Group; community safety information kits; and Fairfield Drug Action Team
- **Improve our physical environment and infrastructure systems**, for example, through development of the CCTV system; community safety audits; and graffiti removal program and
- **Support community development programs**, for example, the "Family Connections" early childhood intervention project; Youth - Managing Your Anger project; and community garden in Hughes Street, Cabramatta.

The Commonwealth Government can play a vital role in assisting local communities with crime and safety issues including:

- Providing accessible information and advice to support local crime prevention activities
- Undertaking research and pilot projects to identify effective crime prevention strategies
- Developing information and education resources that can be used or adapted for local use
- Providing financial support for local crime prevention initiatives.

I have attached a copy of Council's Crime Prevention Plan, which provides further information on the issues and strategies currently being pursued by the Fairfield community. If you would like any additional information, I would be happy to provide further details on this City's experience of crime and safety issues.

Yours faithfully



CLR NICK LALICH  
**MAYOR OF FAIRFIELD CITY**

1 November 2002