City of
Greater Geraldton
a vibrant future

COMMUNITY SAFETY & CRIME PREVENTION PLAN

2024-2029

The City of Greater Geraldton would like to respectfully acknowledge the Yamatji Peoples who are the Traditional Owners and First People of the land on which we stand. The Nhanhagardi, Wilunyu, Naaguja. We would like to pay our respect to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of the Yamatji Peoples.

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Message from our Mayor

Jerry Clune

For many years, the City of Greater Geraldton (the City) has been actively working with our community to develop strategies that aim to increase community safety and crime prevention.

The City recognises that crime and the perception of crime can have a negative effect on the community and Local Government plays a vital role in encouraging collaboration to design localised solutions and to achieve outcomes.

Community safety is not just the responsibility of law enforcement agencies or government officials. We acknowledge it is a shared responsibility that requires the active participation and cooperation of all members of our community.

This Community Safety Plan has been developed through a collaborative effort involving community leaders, law enforcement agencies, social service providers, and key stakeholders.

The Plan outlines initiatives and strategies that build on previous successes and further develops community safety in Greater Geraldton. The strategies include a range of initiatives such as community policing, neighbourhood watch programs, public awareness campaigns, youth engagement programs, community outreach and education and other measures aimed at reducing crime and promoting safety.

As an ongoing and top priority for the City, we aim to create a safer, vibrant and more resilient community that is better equipped to address the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Jerry Clune

Statement from Police

SUPERINTENDENT STEVE POST

WA Police are committed to serving and protecting the members of our community. We are committed to working collaboratively with community members and other stakeholders to create a safe and secure environment for all.

We support the Community Safety Plan that has been developed through a collaborative effort involving community leaders, law enforcement agencies, social service providers and other stakeholders. We believe that this plan provides a comprehensive and effective approach to addressing the safety concerns that have been identified in our community.

We recognise that WA Police cannot solve safety problems on its own and that community members must be active partners in identifying and addressing safety issues. We are committed to building strong partnerships with community members and organisations to prevent crime and promote public safety.

We also recognize the importance of addressing the underlying social and economic factors that contribute to safety problems. We are committed to working with stakeholders.

We invite all members of our community to join us in our efforts to create a safer and more secure community for all. Together, we can make a difference and build a brighter future for our community.

VISION

To create a vibrant harmonious city where people have pride in their community, residents feel safe in their homes, neighbourhoods and public spaces. A city where visitors feel welcome and share in our relaxing lifestyle.

OBJECTIVE

This strategy aligns with the City of Greater Geraldton's Council Policy 1.2 Youth and the Geraldton Strategic Community Plan 2031. The strategy will guide Council direction and resource allocation over the next five years. The strategy is informed by comprehensive engagement with young people aged 12-25 years living in Greater Geraldton. The strategy will inform how the City engages with young people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of Greater Geraldton would like to acknowledge all the agencies and individuals who have contributed to the development of this plan. The City recognises the input of agencies devoting their time to ensuring our community is a safe place through program development and delivery. Building strong partnerships are critical for achieving effective community safety outcomes. They assist in achieving community outcomes, via collective efforts and collaboration with like-minded bodies working together to make the Greater Geraldton community a safe place to live, work and play. The City also recognises members of the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Committee including the community representatives.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Located 419 kilometres north of Perth, Greater Geraldton is a thriving city with a population of over 41,000. The City and the Midwest are recognised as having the most diversified economy in the state through industries including mining, fishing, aquaculture, agriculture, manufacturing, construction, retail and tourism. As one of Western Australia's top places to live, work, study or invest, Geraldton is the capital of the Midwest. With the best of coastal and rural living, and stunning weather all-year round, Greater Geraldton makes a truly perfect place to visit and to make home. Geraldton's coastline is a huge tourist attraction and has beautiful Foreshores to match.

Engagement

The City conducted the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Community Survey from 30 October 2023 to 20 November 2023

The survey was promoted in a media release and in a series of social media posts and advertisements in the Geraldton Guardian. A dedicated website page with links to the online survey and information on the location of hard copy surveys was also published. Hard copies of the survey were available at the City Civic Centre, Mullewa District Office and QEII Seniors and Community Centre. The survey was promoted at the QEII Centre during Seniors Week and on various social media channels including the City's Facebook and Instagram accounts, Mullewa Community Group and Over 50's Geraldton Life. The City received 387 responses of which 300 were submitted online and 87 submitted paper copies.

As part of this process the City invited all relevant parties and contributors to the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Committee and relevant internal City staff to two separate stakeholder engagement workshops to define the vision and priority areas of the plan.

Summary
The majority of respondents own their homes, know their neighbours well and have at least eight home security measures in place. Most feel safe in their home and neighbourhoods during the day and at night. They also feel safe in the CBD during the day but not at night.

The majority lock their doors when they are at home or when they go away and also lock their cars. Although most respondents have not been a victim of crime in the last five years, more than half had reported crime or anti-social behaviour within the same time period.

The majority of respondents believe Geraldton has a reputation of having a high crime rate and a crime problem. Additionally, nearly 20% believe that youth are associated with crime and anti-social behaviour and are not being held accountable for their actions by their parents or the judicial system. Nearly 20% also said keeping youth off the streets, in school, participating in activities and programs or offering them a safe place to go such as a youth centre would make a difference.

Nearly 40% of respondents said that people need to take responsibility if safety is to improve and crime reduced through Police reporting, locking up and getting to know their neighbours.

Better communications and information sharing such as a crime and anti-social behaviour reporting app, website that lists crimes that have been solved, holding community meetings or forums to educate the community and discuss issues and more sharing of incidents on community social media pages would improve safety, reduce crimes and change the perception that the City has a crime problem and reputation of having a high crime rate (Community Safety and Crime Prevention Survey Report , 2024)

Regional WA Offences Police Data

Regional WA Offences per calendar year
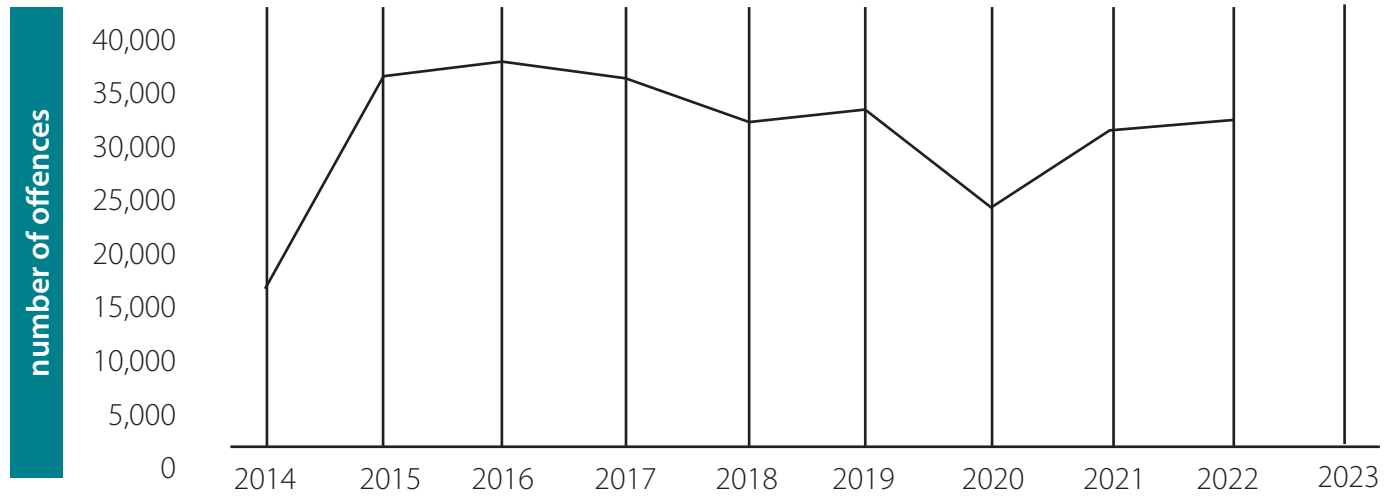
Type of Offence	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Dwelling Burglary	2,653	5,892	5,881	6,307	5,544	5,854	3,775	4,668	5,223	2,384
Non-Dwelling Burglary	1,267	2,794	3,186	2,757	2,478	2,505	1,596	2,654	2,775	1,300
Stealing of Motor Vehicle	779	1,727	1,793	1,682	1,640	1,666	1,285	2,990	2,143	1,035
Stealing	6,966	15,276	15,241	14,574	13,266	13,377	8,635	10,795	11,941	6,650
Property Damage	4,664	9,957	10,627	9,958	8,538	8,698	8,058	9,528	9,392	4,763
Arson	240	412	317	392	395	378	353	398	434	237
Graffiti	231	381	363	425	405	358	285	659	471	257
Total	**16,800**	**36,439**	**37,406**	**36,095**	**32,226**	**32,836**	**23,987**	**30,792**	**32,379**	**16,626**

Interpreting the Data

Community Connection

Of the 387 respondents to the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Survey 41% reported not knowing their neighbours or only having spoken to them a couple of times. In a regional centre like Geraldton, neighbours interacting collaboratively could significantly reduce crime and create a greater sense of safety.

When neighbours are familiar with each other, they are more likely to notice and be vigilant about unusual or suspicious activities on their street. This increased surveillance can deter criminals who are less likely to commit crimes in areas where they know they are being watched. Close-knit communities often result in quicker reporting of suspicious activities to the authorities. If neighbours know each other well, they are more likely to communicate and share information about potential threats. During an emergency, knowing your neighbours can be crucial for mutual support. Strong community ties can lead to quicker responses and assistance during challenging situations, helping to mitigate the impact of criminal activities.

Initiatives that promote, encourage or foster community and neighbourhood connection should be encouraged.

Neighbourhood Watch and Home Security

Of the 387 respondents to the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Survey only 8% reported being members of the Neighbourhood Watch program.

The Neighbourhood Watch program prevents crime, increases safety and promotes community cohesion. The presence of vigilant residents who actively observe and report suspicious behaviour can discourage criminals from targeting streets and suburbs. Neighbourhood Watch promotes a heightened sense of awareness among residents regarding safety and security issues. This increased awareness can lead to a more vigilant community where individuals actively look out for their neighbours and report unusual activities promptly. Participation in Neighbourhood Watch fosters a sense of community cohesion, in the event of an incident or emergency residents who are actively involved and in communication with each other are more likely to respond promptly to developing situations and provide assistance until the Police arrive. Neighbourhood Watch encourages collaboration between residents and authorities. This partnership can lead to improved communication, trust and a more coordinated approach to addressing and preventing crime. As a result of increased awareness, active deterrence and community support, residents may experience a reduced fear of crime. Feeling safer in their neighbourhood can contribute to a better quality of life for community members (Neighbourhood Watch, 2023)

A majority of respondents to the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Survey have some home security measures but not all available options. 40% of respondents reported having security cameras. This is likely to increase as the quality of home security systems improves year on year and the costs are decreasing. WA Police have reported that home security deters criminal activity and property crime.

Of the 387 respondents to the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Survey 33% reported not feeling safe in their neighbourhoods at night and 25% reported not feeling safe in their homes at night.

The promotion of Neighbourhood Watch and the installation of home security devices should be a focus area for residents in the Greater Geraldton area. Detering and preventing opportunistic crime is one way of making Greater Geraldton a safer community, enabling WA Police to focus on other areas.

Central Business District

Of the 387 respondents to the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Survey 30% reported not feeling safe in the Central Business District (CBD) during the day and 62% reporting not feeling safe in the CBD at night.

The CBD is the heart of Greater Geraldton, a public space for shopping, socialising, and going out and therefore requires a multifaceted approach.

- Additional Police patrols in the CBD
- CCTV
- Lighting and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- Place Activation
- Reporting of antisocial behaviour

Additional Police patrols will discourage antisocial gatherings and public drunkenness. While simultaneously creating a sense of safety and encouraging foot traffic in the CBD. The additional foot traffic will discourage antisocial behaviour and public drinking.

The additional monitored CCTV will enable WA Police to react in real time to incidents of antisocial gatherings and discourage public drinking. Coupled with additional lighting in dark areas, the sense of safety will improve. This will encourage foot traffic at night in the CBD. This is part of CPTED and should be an over aching principle to planning, design and maintenance in the CBD.

Place activation involves the promotion and facilitation of events and activities that increase the number of people visiting the CBD. Place activation reduces antisocial behaviour and discourages antisocial gatherings and public drinkers.

Actively reporting antisocial behaviour to the Police by residents, businesses and City staff in the CBD is a part of the overarching strategy to improve safety.

Crime Prevention

An overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) to the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Survey reported that they always locked their homes and cars. WA Police have reported that the number one contributor to property crime is opportunity, unlocked doors, windows and valuables left on display in vehicles.

To reduce opportunistic property crime residents must continue to take precautions by removing valuables from vehicles, parking vehicles off the street at night, locking garages, locking doors and windows and installing security devices. Undertaking these measures will free up Police resources to other areas.

Youth

There were numerous suggestions from respondents to the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Survey regarding how to improve community safety and crime relating to youth.

Some of the suggestions called for harsher punishments for young people and accountability by parents for young people's criminal actions. However, these areas sit within the remit of State Government legislation and policy. Where Local Government can contribute is to the primary prevention of juvenile offending through diversionary programs and youth centres. Looking to target specific cohorts during specific periods such as school holidays and key nights of the week when young people are street present.

Priority Strategies

1. **Breaking Cycles**
2. **Safe Spaces and Places**
3. **Perception and Personal Responsibility**
4. **Advocacy and Partnerships**

Strategy 1 Breaking Cycles

Breaking cycles and building futures through social development is a strategy that aims to address cycles of disadvantage, isolation and other social problems that can lead to future offending behaviour. Intervention strategies are important to break patterns of disadvantage and cyclical intergenerational offending.

The City runs at risk-youth diversionary programs such as Late-Night Basketball and Back to Country Camps as well as youth centres. The Community Connections Transportation program has been a key factor in the success of youth programs.

There are numerous youth and community services that can be supported by the City as a mechanism to break cycles of disadvantage. The key focus of this strategy is to support organisations in developing social interventions that promote the empowerment of individuals, families and communities.

Community events like Iwarra Wilungga, Festival of Lights and NAIDOC Week that celebrate diversity, multiculturalism and Indigenous culture are a strong indicator of a tolerant community. This plan supports intergenerational projects like Battle of the Bands that break down barriers between older and young people.

Strategy 2 Safe Spaces and Places

Through environmental design and management, local places and spaces will be designed in ways that makes people feel welcome and safe.

The focus of this plan will be to design built environments in a way that discourages antisocial activity. This will be done by applying a range of design principles including signage, increased community participation and involvement, CCTV, natural surveillance, limited access points, and other approaches.

Rapid graffiti removal and public art (murals) are a mechanism to prevent areas falling into states of abandonment and promote foot traffic.

Place activation in the CBD, Rocks Laneway and along the Foreshores is an important part of this plan to ensure community safety as are events like Christmas on the Terrace and a Day in the Lane Way.

A key measure of success in this area will be the CBD activation, and overall appearance of this area. Vacant private properties and carparks create a sense of abandonment. Focusing on this issue will create an inviting inclusive space which gives a sense of safety.

Reporting antisocial behaviour creates a safer environment. City workers are encouraged to report antisocial behaviour in the course of their everyday work to WA Police.

Strategy 3 Perception and Personal Responsibility

Crime is a significant concern for many people, especially those living alone. Even if crime rates are low, the fear of being a victim of crime can have a significant impact on people's quality of life, limiting their mobility and restricting their activities. Fear can be created from various factors including personal experiences, media coverage and community perceptions. This strategy aims to reduce the fear of crime, change how crime is perceived through the media, reduce preventable crime, encourage reporting, and improve home and personal security.

Greater Geraldton has a legacy reputation for crime that conflicts with WA Police statistics, which impacts its position as the gate way to the Coral Coast. As part of the plan, promotion of the City a safe and welcoming place for resident and tourists is critical.

Supporting and facilitating crime prevention expos and seminars including the promotion of Neighbourhood Watch are opportunities that the City can focus on as and when they occur.

Strategy 4 Advocacy and Partnerships

This strategy area focuses on working with relevant stakeholders in areas of importance for community safety such as, homelessness, alcohol and other drugs misuse, family and domestic violence and criminal recidivism. Although, these areas do not fall within the City's service provisions, the City has a role to play and should continue to support other stakeholders through engagement. The City can support other organisations by sharing funding opportunities, for example the City's Community Grants program.

40% of respondents reported having security cameras. This is likely to increase as the quality of home security systems improves year on year and the costs are decreasing. WA Police have reported that home security deters criminal activity and property crime.

BREAKING CYCLES

Strategic Area	Objective	Actions
BREAKING CYCLES	Future proofing through primary prevention Integrated engaged and cohesive community	• Support, facilitate and deliver diversionary programs for at-risk youth. • Deliver and support school holiday activities for young people. • Deliver and support intergeneration events that promote harmony between demographics. • Operate youth centres in Geraldton and Mullewa. • Support, facilitate and deliver programs focused on inclusivity and diversity. • Support facilitate and deliver community safety and crime prevention initiatives.

SAFE SPACES AND PLACES

Strategic Area	Objective	Actions
EMPOWERMENT & PARTICIPATION	A safer community through planning, design and maintenance Place activation of key areas	• Support and facilitate place making initiatives and activation in the CBD, Foreshore and identified public spaces. • Ensure CBD and Foreshores are clean, inclusive, and inviting. • Continue the extension and upgrade of the City's CCTV network. • Continue the rapid removal of graffiti in the CBD by the City. • Apply CPTED principles to planning, design and maintenance of public buildings and spaces. • Ensure road sight lines are maintained through verge vegetation maintenance. • Empower City staff to report crime, graffiti and anti-social behaviour via **online reporting apps** such as "Snap Send Solve".

PERCEPTION AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Strategic Area	Objective	Actions
PERCEPTION AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY	Increase crime prevention awareness and responsibility for personal safety Change the City's perceived reputation	• Support and facilitate crime prevention awareness initiatives. • Support and promote the Neighbourhood Watch program. • Promote Greater Geraldton as a safe city. • Advocate for and release positive news stories around youth and minority groups. • Advocate for and release positive news stories around community groups improving their neighbourhoods. • Develop joint messaging between the City and WA Police regarding hot topic issues.

ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic Area	Objective	Actions
ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIPS	A safer community through planning, design and maintenance Place activation of key areas	• Advocate for Community Connections Transportation program. • Support the Community Wellness Plan. • Support the Geraldton Liquor Accord. • Support the Community Respect Equality program. • Advocate for WA Police and Dept. Corrective Service to publicly report on crime statistics and sentencing. • Advocate for more Police foot patrols in the CBD and Foreshore. • Advocate for continued youth and community policing. • Advocate for solutions to homelessness and rough sleepers. • Promote community funding opportunities to external organisations delivering projects and programs to improve safety and reduce crime.

Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plan measures

The City will determine the success of the Community Safety and Crime Prevention plan through several measures which will be captured through regular reports to the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Committee on achievements relating to the four strategic areas. Reports will focus on the following areas:

• an ongoing Community Safety and Crime Prevention survey,
• the quality of diversionary programs
• attendance numbers at the two youth centres.

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