

REVIEWS CREDITED WITH CRIME REDUCTION

By Simon Kelly, Media and Public Affairs Branch

Many workers undergo annual performance reviews but few can say the process results in falling crime rates and better service to all Queenslanders.

The Queensland Police Service's Operational Performance Review (OPR) process can, having done this and more in the five years since being introduced by Commissioner Bob Atkinson.

Police driven by the OPR process are being credited with significant reductions in the types of crimes that are most likely to affect ordinary Queenslanders - unlawful use of a motor vehicle, armed robberies and unlawful entry to dwellings and other premises.

In the five years since OPRs were introduced, the number of break-ins to homes and buildings have fallen by nearly 36,000, car theft by 13,000 and armed robberies by almost 1,000 offences (when compared to 2000/01 levels).

Superintendent Peter Savage, QPS Operational Performance Review Unit said OPRs were based on the four key elements of good intelligence, rapid responses, effective tactics and relentless follow up.

"One of the priorities was to introduce a sound process of accountability within the QPS that would go a long way to not only ensuring that we were meeting the expectations of government, but most importantly we meet the expectations of the community."

OPRs might not be a new concept - a number of other police services in Australia and overseas use similar reviews - but the QPS has developed its own unique system.

It is closely aligned with the New York Police Department's highly praised COMPSTAT system which is credited with a 39% decline in serious crimes and a 50% reduction in homicides.

The Queensland Government is following the QPS lead with Cabinet insisting the recently created Department of Child Safety incorporate an OPR model into its strategic reporting framework.

The OPR process involves senior officers from each of Queensland's 29 police districts holding annual performance-

OPR

OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

focused meetings with Commissioner Atkinson and other senior QPS members.

Officers from each district take this opportunity to showcase initiatives aimed at problem solving based on intelligence gathered in the district.

These meetings are followed six months later with remote OPRs in which Commissioner Atkinson or Deputy Commissioner Dick Conder travel to the regions to review how issues identified at earlier OPRs have been addressed.

The system focuses on the key

operational areas of personal safety (including domestic violence and road trauma), property offences, client service, major events and unique and emerging issues.

Three additional internally focused areas incorporate human resources, financial management, professional standards and ethical practices.

Superintendent Savage said OPRs had aligned senior and middle managers across the QPS to focus on core business and consider better policing strategies. "Since the implementation of this process

there have been significant adjustments made, particularly to make better use of our extensive information resources."

Other benefits include the system's transparency, its ability to break down the tyranny of distance between police districts and its emphasis on continuous improvement of policing procedures.

"Ultimately, the key aim of the OPR is to ensure that an effective and efficient service delivery is being provided to our key clients, members of the community," Superintendent Savage said. ■