

Shut the door on sneak breaks

by Cassandra Glanville, QPS Media and Public Relations Branch

You are enjoying a leisurely Sunday morning reading the paper, savouring your first cup of coffee and enjoying the view of your garden. Meanwhile intruders could be in your bedroom going through your jewellery for some 'quick sale' items, grabbing your wallet from the kitchen bench or walking out the front door with your laptop under their arm.

What started off as a relaxing end to the weekend is ruined by the realisation that you have just been the victim of a 'sneak break'.

Sneak breaks differ from break and enters because during a sneak break, the offender enters the premises through unlocked doors or open windows. Even going so far as to enter through an open door while the resident is in the backyard, perhaps hanging out the washing, rather than smashing a window or door to gain access.

The incidence of reported sneak breaks in the Brisbane metropolitan area is on the rise and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) has seized the opportunity to remind residents to be vigilant when at home or away.

More often than not residents are becoming the victims of opportunistic thieves who enter homes with easy access enabling them to enter and flee the scene quickly. Unfortunately some householders are helping thieves enter their homes by leaving items such as ladders and wheelie bins out, providing easier access into the house.

Acting Inspector Anthony Graham, Patrol Services, North Brisbane Police District said offenders were looking for an easy way into houses, units and apartments.

"They are using ladders from nearby garages, climbing on wheelie bins or climbing onto

verandahs to gain entry to open windows.

"Recently Brisbane's northern suburbs such as Aspley, Stafford, Stafford Heights, Wavell Heights and Nundah have been targeted.

"In a bid to rid our community of sneak breaks the QPS are coming together as a team at all levels to attack the problem head on.

"Crime Prevention Units are flagging occurrences and providing statistics to Neighbourhood Watch groups and supplying comfits of people to look out for when available.

"The Tactical Crime Units are informed of particular problem areas and in turn create a presence in that community in the hope of discouraging any budding thieves.

"Take a look around your house and take measures to stop someone gaining easy entry to your home," he said.

Preventing theft starts with everyone doing their bit.

Acting Inspector Graham urged community members to continue to be observant, as police investigating reports of theft still needed input from residents and neighbours.

"Come together as a community, be aware of and report any suspicious behaviour or vehicles in the area and investigate why local dogs are barking.

"Keep an eye out for your neighbour and report all suspicious behaviour around your house or theirs.

"Don't become a victim by being complacent and saying it won't happen to me. Take a look around your house and take measures to stop someone gaining easy entry to your home," Acting Inspector Graham said.



Dramatisation only



Community members can assist police to reduce the occurrence of sneak breaks by using the following tips to secure their home.

Tips to prevent the 'sneak break' are:

- Do not leave external doors open when out in the yard or in the back room.
- Lock all doors and windows when you are out.
- Place items such as cash, wallets, laptops and mobile phones in cupboards and drawers as these are the most targeted and easy to remove items.
- Never put yourself in a dangerous situation, try to put something between yourself and the intruder and don't be afraid to ask questions. Ask them who they are and what they are doing there.
- Store ladders and wheelie bins securely under the house or chained to fences away from windows.

In the event that you are robbed, taking the following steps may make the recovery of your goods and possible insurance claim easier to deal with:

- Keep photographic records of jewellery, heirlooms and other items of value.
- Engrave property to make it more difficult for thieves to sell goods through reputable dealers.
- If you have disturbed the intruder do not be a hero, call police immediately.
- If you saw the intruder, write down a full description as soon as you get off the phone to the police. The quicker you write it all down, the more detail you will be able to provide which will assist police in finding the offender as quickly as possible.
- Be prepared to talk with the attending police. They will require a description of the offender and a list of what is missing. The attending police will also need to talk with your neighbours as they can often provide valuable information regarding time and direction of travel.