

Putting crime out of business

by Peta-Ann Wood and Simon Kelly, QPS Media and Public Relations Branch

Faced with a robber or thief at your place of work, a weapon in your face or personal threats, safety should always be your first priority.

That is why remembering that, no amount of money or goods is worth a life, could be the most important thing you do if a robber ever confronts you.

The best way to deal with the threat of robbery at your work is to do all you can to prevent placing yourself in a vulnerable position in the first place.

In an effort to further tackle the business of crime, Queensland Police have been trialing education seminars for business owners and operators throughout the North Coast and Southern Police Regions since May this year.

BizSafe is an initiative of the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and NRMA Business Insurance, which is supported by the Queensland Department of Communities.

An innovative new education program designed to help small to medium-sized business operators, *BizSafe* aims to reduce the risk of crime against their businesses, reiterating the QPS commitment to crime prevention, and reflecting the emphasis of developing partnerships with the community.

The education seminars provide participants with accurate information about the types and prevalence of crime affecting their local business community and more importantly, it provides them the skills to assess crime risks to their business and implement strategies to combat them.

BizSafe project coordinator, Senior Constable Megan Williams, QPS Crime Prevention Unit said the program had been developed to encourage business owners and operators to take an active role in preventing crime.

“Crime prevention is as much a community responsibility as it is the job of police and through the *BizSafe* program small to

medium size businesses can work together with police to help reduce the risk of crime. Working together, we can put crime out of business,” Senior Constable Williams said.

“During the seminars local QPS District Crime Prevention Coordinators provide the facts on business crime in the local community, including its prevalence and cost.

“But more than that, the seminars include an introduction to risk management and is an excellent opportunity for business operators to learn about the simple ways they can make their business even more resistant to crime,” Senior Constable Williams said.

Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie, launched *BizSafe* earlier this year, with the initiative being piloted in the police districts of Toowoomba, Ipswich, Bundaberg, Sunshine Coast, Maryborough, Gympie and Redcliffe.

BizSafe

BizSafe is the first program to be rolled out under a new Queensland Government initiative, *Smart State, Safe State: Partnerships for a Safer Queensland*.

This new strategy urges corporations, community groups and academic institutions to work with the Queensland Government on new ways to create safer communities

NRMA Insurance, a part of Insurance Australia Group, is the first corporate entity to partner with the Queensland Government under this agreement, which aims to reduce risk, promote community safety and prevent crime.

NRMA Insurance State Manager Dan Musson said small businesses were often exposed to crime because many operators did not have the time or resources to evaluate and reduce security risks.

"The *BizSafe* seminars primarily target businesses that have less than 20 employees

and are less likely to have the capacity to combat crime effectively.

"*BizSafe* gives them first hand help from police and risk experts and helps them take simple and positive steps to reduce the risk of being a victim of crime," Mr Musson said.

The 90-minute workshops, presented by local police, are designed to get small business operators thinking about some of the simple steps they can take to make their businesses more secure.

For example, *BizSafe* explores the best options for dealing with the threat of robbery at work and how to prevent being placed in a vulnerable position in the first place.

BizSafe shows how to address potential security weaknesses in the workplace such as limiting the amount of cash kept on premises, having just one entrance which the attendant can easily watch and isolating staff behind a high counter.

Other preventative strategies discussed include:

- Never publicly discuss your security arrangements, even with friends, and do not provide information about your work to anyone you have concerns about.
- You should also be on the lookout for people acting suspiciously around your workplace.
- Be alert for people who hang around outside your business and watch what you are doing, people you do not know who ask questions about how the business is run, customers whose actions are out of character (such as spending time in a retail outlet without buying anything) and people in your business whose clothing is out of place (such as wearing winter clothes on a hot day or sunglasses at night).
- If you have to do the banking, keep the money close to your body, carry a mobile telephone with pre-programmed numbers



Photo courtesy of The Bundaberg News-Mail

Bundaberg Volunteers in Policing who assisted local businesses while undertaking security assessments are (from left) Roslyn Turner, Wendy Irwin, Maurie Wilson and Wendy Byrne.

for emergency calls, advise someone of your planned movements and estimated time of return, and vary the time and route you use to get to the bank.

- If you are unfortunate enough for a robber or thief to target you, put your safety first.
- Your life is not worth risking for any amount of money or goods so there is no point in putting your life on the line to be a hero.
- The best way you can help yourself and police is to try to remain calm, obey the robber's instructions and remain observant because information you provide could be crucial in catching the offender.
- Do not invade the personal space of the offender and activate the alarm only if you can do so safely.
- Obey instructions but do not provide any money or goods which are not asked for.
- Advise the offender of any movements you may have to make to comply with their

instructions. The offender will be nervous and tense so do not make any sudden or unexpected movements.

Speak only when spoken to because talking to the offender will only prolong the incident.

Try to make a mental note of the offender's features including clothing, scars, tattoos, unusual features, height, hair colour, odours, accent, speech, nicknames and a weapon if used.

- Activate the alarm or call police only when it is safe to do so.
- Do not discuss with anyone the amount of money or goods stolen.

Employees can help police by hypothetically going through a possible offence and considering what they would do in case a robber ever targets them. This helps prevent your mind from going blank and gives you more control if a robbery ever happens.

After activating an alarm, call police with the following information: your name, the address of the premises including the nearest cross

streets, the number of offenders and a description plus details of their vehicle and the direction in which they travelled.

You might not be able to save the day by out-muscling your offender but you can protect yourself and have the last laugh by remaining calm and observant throughout the ordeal.

The *BizSafe* program will be expanded throughout the major metropolitan and regional areas of Queensland in the remainder of 2004 and 2005. For further information contact your local QPS District Crime Prevention Coordinator.

BizSafe is based on a Western Australian Police project, which was first conducted in 2002-2003 by the New South Wales Police Service in conjunction with NRMA Business Insurance and the NSW State Chambers of Commerce.