

Solving the riddle of crime at the Queensland Police Museum

by Lisa Jones, Curator, Queensland Police Museum



Queensland Police Museum's perfect crime... The Museum's mock crime scene allows visiting students to find evidence and make links to the forensic and legal uses of this evidence.



A Museum, of sorts, has existed within the Queensland Police Service (QPS) since 1893. It first took the form of a few glass cases and shelves, which held oddities, derived from Queensland murders, suicides and other crimes. Its function was to educate police officers about different types of crimes and the weapons and methods used to commit them. It was, by all accounts, a pretty gruesome collection of bits and pieces.

While the modern Police Museum still contains the more macabre of objects, its main aim is to educate the public about the history, traditions, skills and achievements of the Queensland Police Service through displays about and images of its police officers.

Education Program

The Museum runs a popular education program that caters for students in years 5 to 12. The majority of school aged visitors are in years 10 to 12 and are completing study in Forensic Science, Multi-strand Science and Legal Studies.

Museums learned long ago that to survive you need to cater to the curriculum of the day and happily the Police Museum

can do that very well. The lure of forensic science to students is strong, hopefully not just because of the blood and gore usually associated with this type of scientific investigation, but because it represents an interesting police activity and is often at the forefront of technological advancement.

Solving crimes

Museum staff aim to explain the underlying theory behind forensic science and to use Locard's Principle of Exchange to explain the investigative process behind one unsolved and three solved Queensland murders (Betty Shanks 1952; Maria Nozic 1992; Melissa Ryan 1993; and Kathleen Marshall 1998 respectively). Principally the aim is to describe to the audience the teamwork, technologies and investigative techniques required to solve crime. Museum staff focus their informative talks on the need to match evidence from a crime scene to a suspect or a suspect's belongings.

The Museum's mock crime scene illustrates, from a policing point of view, a 'perfect crime'. It contains at least 20 pieces of evidence and is designed to allow students to find the evidence and to

then make links to the forensic and legal uses for them. The education kits are at two levels – primary (years 5–7) and senior (years 8–12).

The Primary Kit is along general historical policing lines and encourages a bit of detective work and riddle solving. It also includes a section on the mock crime scene and collecting evidence.

The senior kit is quite involved and contains activities centred on the crime scene that can be completed before, during and after the Museum visit. The investigative process is rounded out for students so that they get some idea of the complexity of an investigation, what is required for collecting evidence, how evidence can be used and the matches that need to be made between the crime scene and a suspect to solve a crime.

Legal Studies students can use the information provided to take the process one step further. They are required to think about which evidence could be used in court and whether the information and evidence gathered would be reliable enough for use in the legal process.

Group visits can book for between 1 February and 20 December. Informative talks are given to groups visiting on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10.30am, 1pm and 2.30pm, and on Wednesdays at 9am, 10.30am, 1pm and 2.30pm.

BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL.

Education kits are posted, faxed or emailed to schools after a booking has been made. Groups are booked in for periods of 75 minutes. Please contact Police Museum staff for information and bookings on 3364 4013

or email Jones.LisaA@police.qld.gov.au.