

STRIVING TOWARDS A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO POLICING: THE TOWNSVILLE RAPID ACTION AND PATROLS MODEL

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ABSTRACT

In early 2014, Townsville experienced increasing crime rates and the community expressed fear for their personal safety through various social media platforms. In response, the police commenced intelligence-led proactive and reactive policing strategies to more effectively reduce offending and the fear of crime in the community through an innovative policing unit called the Townsville Rapid Action and Patrols (RAP). This new police unit provided an ideal opportunity for the Queensland Police Service to go beyond merely deterring crime. These police officers would now also be tasked to gather intelligence to assist in identifying the underlying causes of crime; share that information with other appropriate agencies; and help to develop rehabilitative and reintegrative strategies that will engage and support vulnerable people in the community. Whilst there is strong evidence the RAP plays an important role in deterring crime through enforcement, efforts to conceptualise and operationalise the rehabilitative, reintegrative and community engagement tasks given to officers remains ongoing to encourage and cognitively empower them to go that extra mile — beyond mere deterrence — to help vulnerable people divert away from crime and lead more productive lives.

I INTRODUCTION

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) is a law enforcement agency in the State of Queensland. Section 2.3 of the *Police Service Administration Act 1990* (Qld), in part, outlines the functions of the police service to include the preservation of peace and good order, protection of the community, prevention of crime and the detection and bringing of offenders to justice.¹ The Townsville Police District is one of fifteen Police Districts in the State charged with the execution of these very functions of service. The QPS Strategic Plan clearly identifies four Strategic Objectives of the QPS, and they are: Stopping Crime; Making the Community Safer; Strengthening Relationships with the Community; and Equipping our Workforce for the Future.² The Townsville Police District aligns its service delivery to these strategic objectives through the Townsville District Operational Plan.³

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¹ *Police Service Administration Act 1990* (Qld) s 2.3.

² Queensland Police Service, Queensland Police Service Strategic Plan 2018-22 (Plan, 2018)

<https://www.police.qld.gov.au/corporatedocs/reportsPublications/strategicPlan/Documents/2018_QPS_Strategic_Plan.pdf>.

³ Queensland Police Service, Northern Region Operational Plan 2017-18 (Plan, 2017)

<<https://www.police.qld.gov.au/rtpublished/priorities/Documents/2017%20-%202018%20Northern%20Region%20Operational%20Plan%20Landscape%20.pdf>>.

In 2014, Townsville experienced apparent spikes in property crime related offences across the city.⁴ These offences included breaking and entering victim's homes and business premises, stealing vehicles, and stealing property from motor vehicles. According to the Townsville Crime and Alerts Facebook webpage founder, Mrs Torhild Parkinson, her group had been inundated with 'members reporting juvenile criminal activity since the start of the school holidays'.⁵ Other Townsville residents also reported that there had been 'a marked increase in property crime in ... [various suburbs in Townsville] since the start of the school holidays' as well.⁶ Thus, it was no surprise that during this time, the Townsville community became agitated and expressed fear for their personal safety via various social media platforms, for example, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, because of this perceived increase in offending. Around this period, the Townsville Police District conducted a formal review of crime statistics and identified that although offending rates were prevalent across the community, the rates of offending were less than the previous year in the identified crime classes. In fact, the Northern Region Assistant Commissioner Paul Taylor explained that the 'crime rates were still well below last year's figure' but nevertheless reassured the community that the 'police would [still] be tackling the recent spike head-on'.⁷ Thus, in response to this growing public fear over perceived increases in crime rates, the Townsville Police District commenced both proactive and reactive operational policing measures that were driven by intelligence-led policing strategies to more effectively reduce offending as well as the fear of crime in the community.

This paper will therefore explain how this dual approach of reactive policing operations executed to target offenders, and proactive strategies developed to build relationships with the community and other agencies, resulted in the formation of a new policing organisational unit known as the Townsville Rapid Action and Patrols (RAP). This new police unit provided an ideal opportunity for the QPS to go beyond merely deterring crime. Now, these police officers would also be tasked to gather intelligence assist in identifying the underlying causes of crime; share that information with other appropriate agencies; and help to develop rehabilitative and reintegrative strategies that will engage and support vulnerable people in the community. Notwithstanding the ostensibly enforcement-oriented name given to this unit, the Townsville RAP quickly transformed itself from a predominately reactive service delivery model to one that was, and still is, proactive and predictive; as well as focused on improving organisational agility, visibility, legitimacy and engagement.⁸ This paper will thereafter outline the range of benefits achieved through such proactive policing operations and information sharing with other stakeholder agencies.

II THE SETTING UP OF THE TOWNSVILLE RAPID ACTION AND PATROLS

In 2014, the QPS underwent a period of organisational renewal guided by the Public-Sector Renewal process and informed by findings and recommendations from the 2013 Police and

⁴ Christie Anderson, 'Property crime spike in Townsville', *Townsville Bulletin* (online, 1 October 2014) <<https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/property-crime-spike-in-townsville/news-story/daf9c3da78297c353c6da80e13b67722>>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Queensland Police Service, *QPS Integrated Service Delivery Model: Police Hub Trial* (Unpublished Document, 2014) 3 ('*Police Hub Trial*').

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Community Safety Review⁹ and the Commission of Audit¹⁰ report to ensure the department aligned with whole-of-government direction. During this process, the QPS undertook the task of developing an Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM) to promote agility, visibility and legitimacy by working in partnership with other government agencies, external service providers and the community. One of the components of the ISDM was the implementation of the Hub policing initiative.¹¹

To that end, the Townsville Police District commenced a Hub policing model known as the Townsville RAP on 28 November 2014, after this new policing initiative had been initially trialled in the Gold Coast commencing on 1 July 2014.¹² The RAP is an intelligence-driven policing model where officers primarily focus on proactive operational strategies however still remain available to respond to calls for service when required by the local Police Communications Centre. According to Chantler and Thorne, this intelligence process is important because it provides the police with ‘an ordered way of thinking critically....[and hence] the very best chance of not having missed anything; regardless of whether it is used at a basic level for solving street crime, or at the strategic level’.¹³ This policing model therefore provides a flexible and agile capability to deploy police into the right places at the right times through the use of local intelligence analysis.¹⁴ To that end, all officers are equipped with a mobile service device with a ‘QLiTE’ application (app) which allows them to access real time information and intelligence through searches on Persons, Licence, Vehicle, Organisation, Location, Vessel, Custody and Offender History — in the field. The information submitted via the QLiTE app is pushed back into the Queensland Police Records and Information Management Exchange (QPRIME) in real-time, thereby leading to rapid information sharing throughout the QPS.¹⁵ This allows officers to collect information in the field, including photographs, using the device to upload the information directly into the police data base. This important advancement in technology used by front line police officers allows for the immediate analysis of information and data which is sanitised (i.e. where particularly sensitive and/or confidential information has been removed) and converted into real time intelligence. It is

⁹ Mick Keelty, *Sustaining the unsustainable: Police and Community Safety Review, final report*, (Report, 2013) <<https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/en/publications/sustaining-the-unsustainable-police-and-community-safety-review-f>>.

¹⁰ Queensland Government, *Queensland Commission of Audit: Final Report Volume 1* (Report, 2013)

<<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/TabledPapers/2013/5413T2498.pdf>>;

Queensland Government, *Queensland Commission of Audit: Final Report Volume 2* (Report, 2013)

<<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/TabledPapers/2013/5413T2499.pdf>>;

Queensland Government, *Queensland Commission of Audit: Final Report Volume 3* (Report, 2013)

<<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/TabledPapers/2013/5413T2500.pdf>>.

¹¹ *Police Hub Trial* (n 8).

¹² Queensland Police Service, *2014-2015 Annual Report* (Report, 2015) 31

<<https://www.police.qld.gov.au/corporatedocs/reportsPublications/annualReport/Documents/2014-15/QPS-Annual-Report-2014-15.pdf>>.

¹³ Nicholas Chantler and Colin Thorne, ‘Intelligence led policing’ in Roderick Broadhurst and Sara E Davies (eds), *Policing in Context: An introduction to police work in Australia* (Oxford University Press, 2009) 129.

¹⁴ *Police Hub Trial* (n 8) 6.

¹⁵ Mark Ryan, ‘Opening of the QPS Mobile Capability Centre’ (Media Statement, Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services, 29 January 2018)

<<http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2018/1/29/opening-of-the-qps-mobile-capability-centre>>.

interesting to highlight here that the QPS, through QPRIME, was, as noted by Chantler and Thorne, the first police service in Australia ‘to adopt an ambitious single integrated information system, thus consolidating numerous and various data systems ... [.] consequently saving time and improving data management’.¹⁶

An example of the important use of the mobile services technology is the ability for police to immediately record details of a person intercepted in the community and include detailed information in the form of a ‘street check’. This information is primarily used by investigators as an instrument of detection but soon became an important intelligence tool to assist in identifying vulnerable people in the community and providing accurate and timely information to support early intervention and engagement strategies in the future.

To sustain currency in broad operational policing methods and personal development, RAP officer positions are designated as District Appointments which allow for the flexibility to rotate officers to other stations and sections and to relieve in different areas, thereby broadening their skill sets. This rotational strategy provides a platform to continually enhance and expand the HUB policing initiative by integrating officers across the District through internal relationship development and information sharing. This human resource methodology is a crucial component to ensure the RAP is able to sustain a flexible and agile workforce in an ever-changing environment.

Prior to the commencement of the RAP, the Townsville Police District implemented a targeted property crime operation, code named ‘Operation Mike Adamant’. The operation was launched in February 2014 with a mission to identify and prosecute property offenders and Stop Crime across the Townsville Metropolitan area.¹⁷ This policing operation was an internally resourced task force model where officers were drawn from the Townsville Police District to inject officers into crime hotspots to identify offenders and stop crime. This operation delivered a highly visible policing presence across the Townsville community and formed the basis upon which the Townsville RAP would be operationally built upon. Consequently, the RAP initiative clearly has its roots in hotspots policing,¹⁸ a model that employs physical police presence as a tool of ‘general deterrence and increased risk of apprehension’.¹⁹ However, its mandate was more than just that – more than just the traditional ways of policing the community through the deterrent quality of reactive policing and strict enforcement. Through intelligence collation and analysis as well as stakeholder partnerships, the RAP would also proactively focus on known offenders within the community,²⁰ and in effect, attempt to pre-empt crime and implement engagement strategies to stop crime from occurring.

¹⁶ Nicholas Chantler and Colin Thorne, ‘Intelligence led policing’ in Roderick Broadhurst and Sara Davies (eds), *Policing in Context: An introduction to police work in Australia* (Oxford University Press, 2009) 133.

¹⁷ Queensland Police Service, ‘Concept of Operations: Operation Mike Adamant’ (Unpublished, 2014).

¹⁸ Chris McMahon, ‘New police to increase capabilities by one full team’, *Townsville Bulletin* (online, 30 June 2017) <<https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/new-police-to-increase-capabilities-by-one-full-team/news-story/ecb136c32fcc0ac30b01e7b69f913709>>.

¹⁹ Anthony Braga, Andrew Papachristos and David Hureau, ‘The Effects of Hot Spots Policing on Crime: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis’ (2014) 31(4) *Justice Quarterly* 656.

²⁰ Victoria Nugent, ‘New police hub open for business’, *Townsville Bulletin* (online, 3 December 2014) <<https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/new-police-hub-open-for-business/news-story/988837f8ba2cf2a6944d9469d430aee4>>.

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This intelligence-led policing approach has been described as being a fusion of traditional and community policing models, the latter of which concerns itself with ‘engagement and consultation with local communities to identify local crime problems’.²¹ An excellent illustration of how the Townsville RAP moved beyond mere deterrence and reactive policing, can be seen in its role in working with partner agencies and ensuring compliance by known offenders with their court or community-based orders. This included conducting checks on offenders through police visitations to ensure compliance with court ordered curfew and conditional release orders under the supervision of Queensland Probation and Parole.²² Perhaps more importantly, such regular encounters with these known offenders have also been used to build positive relationships with them. In tandem with this role, Townsville RAP officers would likewise build bridges with the community by working and interacting with the residents ‘from within the neighbourhoods’ to create positive relationships with them as well.²³

III THE HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL ROLE OF THE MASS MEDIA

As argued by White and Perrone, ‘[t]he electronic and print media have a significant influence on the general portrayal of crime in society ... [because] they are the principal generators of crime images that permeate popular consciousness’.²⁴ Such influence is particularly felt when media outlets sensationalise crime as this ‘has important implications for the fear of crime among certain sections of the population’.²⁵ This fear of crime is essentially ‘about emotions’, the basis of which ‘may be rational or irrational, depending upon specific types of evidence and specific types of harm’.²⁶ Take for example the full front page on the Townsville Bulletin on 17 May 2015 that had as its headline ‘Crimsville’, and read:²⁷

Special Report: Data reveals Townsville is Queensland’s undisputed crime capital

Assaults No.1

Robbery No.2

Car stealing No.1

Drug offences No.3

²¹ Rob White and Santina Perrone, *Crime, criminality and criminal justice* (Oxford University Press, 2nd ed, 2015) 364.

²² Queensland Police Service, *2016-2017 Annual Report* (2017) 47 <<https://www.police.qld.gov.au/corporatedocs/reportsPublications/annualReport/Documents/2016-17/performance.pdf>>.

²³ Brad Taylor, ‘Townsville RAP offices work from the roadside, Vincent’, *MyPolice Townsville* (Web Page, 11 January 2017 <<https://mypolice.qld.gov.au/townsville/2017/01/11/townsville-rap-officers-work-roadside-vincent/>>).

²⁴ Rob White and Santina Perrone, *Crime, Criminality and Criminal Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2nd ed, 2015) 37.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Townsville Bulletin Editorial Board, ‘Crimsville’, *Townsville Bulletin* (Townsville, 17 May 2015).

While certain aspects of this front page may be true, it is also arguable that the fear of crime it generated within the community was *unreasonably* heightened because it potentially portrayed crime in Townsville as being ‘random in nature, with anyone and everyone a possible target for victimisation’,²⁸ which as previously highlighted, may not actually be borne out by a detailed analysis of the relevant data.²⁹ Despite various crime enforcement and prevention measures that had positively impacted upon offending rates in the region,³⁰ the local media continued to report on rising crime rates in 2016, and in particular, echoed what was said by a member of parliament in the state legislature that Townsville was the unofficial ‘crime capital’ of Queensland.³¹

This constant media barrage relating to property offences continued in 2017 when the media reported property crime being out of control³² and again in 2018, graphically comparing property crime offences in the cities of Mackay, Townville and the Capricornia area.³³ It is arguable that the local media, through this relentless reporting, was a major influence on the perceptions of the residents in Townsville in relation to their own personal safety, in particular, and their fear of crime in the community, more generally. This relationship between media coverage and fear of crime has been explained, to a certain degree, by the cultivation thesis. Weitzer and Kubrin pointed out that ‘the greater one’s exposure to the media, the more likely it is that one’s perceptions of the real world will match what is most frequently depicted in the media’.³⁴ More pertinently, Weitzer and Kubrin highlighted that:

with regard to crime, the media disproportionately report on violent crime ..., largely neglect crime patterns, give little attention to the causes of crime, and leave the impression that crime is often random and inexplicable This media world, especially television, differs greatly from the real world of crime and may cultivate a perception that the world is a scary place. Repeated exposure to media coverage of crime may thus generate fear and insecurity among viewers....³⁵

Another theory that may shed further light on this relationship between the media and levels of fear of crime is the resonance thesis. Weitzer and Kubrin expounded that ‘when media images are consistent with lived experience (e.g., criminal victimisation, residing in a high-crime community), media and experience mutually reinforce citizens’ fear’.³⁶ Both

²⁸ White and Perrone (n 21) 37.

²⁹ Anderson (n 4).

³⁰ Operation Oscar Merchant; Townsville Rapid Action and Patrols; Townsville Stronger Communities Action Group.

³¹ Chris McMahon, ‘Townsville branded crime capital of Queensland in parliament’, *Townsville Bulletin* (Townsville, online), 24 May 2016 <<https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/townsville-branded-crime-capital-of-queensland-in-parliament/news-story/ecde7d56ec593cb10659be044a81d80f>>.

³² Sam Bidey, ‘Property crime in Townsville is out of control’, *Townsville Bulletin* (online, 22 November 2017) <<https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/townsville/property-crime-in-townsville-is-out-of-control/news-story/77398cf78e5b0ca41f17a24ee6ea5844>>.

³³ Madura McCormack and Andrew Backhouse, ‘Shocking truth about crime in Townsville’, *Townsville Bulletin* (online, 10 May 2018) <<https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/shocking-truth-about-crime-in-townsville/news-story/0c48a0d40d52d8a5b0cd52ae5089cb6d>>.

³⁴ Ronald Weitzer and Charis Kubrin, ‘Breaking news: How local TV news and real-world conditions affect fear of crime’ (2004) 21(3) *Justice Quarterly* 449.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.* 500.

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of these theories could be reasonably used to explain how the influence of the traditional mass media (for example, newspapers, television, and radio) as well as that of the new media (for example, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp) has impacted upon levels of anxiety and fear of crime across the community in the Townsville Police District.

IV STRIVING TOWARDS A HOLISTIC APPROACH: GOING BEYOND MERE DETERRENCE

While it still remains true that the primary objectives of the police are to prevent crime as well as to detect and bring offenders to justice³⁷ through targeted policing operations like Operations Mike Adamant and Oscar Merchant, it should however be highlighted that the RAP policing initiative actually established a platform to do things differently — to not just focus on the aim of deterrence but to go beyond it — to strive towards a holistic approach to policing. In fact, the QPS readily acknowledged that the police alone cannot resolve community safety issues that impact on the fear of crime experienced by members of our community simply through the arrest and prosecution of offenders.

To that end, the QPS Commissioner of Police, Ian Stewart, in his reappointment to the helm of the QPS in 2017, advised the community that the police would seek to expand its crime prevention programs aimed at keeping young people out of the criminal justice system.³⁸ He went on to say that while serious recidivist offenders will be prosecuted, those facing minor matters however could be made subject to a range of diversionary programs.³⁹ As a consequence, the police in Townsville, more generally, and the RAP, in particular, work closely with other public service agencies through formal referral pathways for identified vulnerable people to assist with the development of early intervention initiatives.

The creation and maintenance of such inter-agency and agency-community partnerships have been strongly encouraged by the State, and in 2016, the Queensland Government through the Townsville Stronger Communities initiative implemented a ‘Five-point plan to reduce youth crime in Townsville’.⁴⁰ The very first point of this plan was ‘Targeted Policing’, and was put into effect through a task force operation, code named ‘Operation Oscar Merchant’, where 30 additional police officers⁴¹ were deployed into Townsville for 30 days⁴² as part of its first phase to boost the intensity of the policing response to reduce offending, enhance community safety and restore community confidence. This operation

³⁷ *Police Service Administration Act 1990* (Qld) s 2.3.

³⁸ David Murray, ‘Queensland police chief Ian Stewart says more arrests, more jail time not the best way to treat crims’, *The Courier Mail* (online, 1 August 2017) <<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/crime-and-justice/queensland-police-chief-ian-stewart-says-more-arrests-more-jail-time-not-the-best-way-to-treat-crims/news-story/892a5aba7b9c90f330c257d575c06c2e?login=1>>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Queensland Government, *Townsville Stronger Communities, Five-point plan to reduce youth crime in Townsville* (Plan, 2018) <<https://townsvillecommunities.premiers.qld.gov.au/>>.

⁴¹ Samantha Healy, ‘Minister tiptoes around tough line’, *Townsville Bulletin* (online, 25 November 2016) <<https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/minister-tiptoes-around-tough-line/news-story/e111911b75fc5ee74f044aa70414b7d2>>.

⁴² Queensland Premier, ‘Community engagement to help tackle youth crime in Townsville’ (Media Release, 4 November 2016) <<https://www.thepremier.qld.gov.au/newsroom/townsville-stronger-communities.aspx>>.

continued into a second phase after the initial 30-day deployment with further support from outside Townsville. The operation was executed during the period September 2016 through to March 2017 and resulted in the arrest of 1449 persons on 3772 charges predominately for drug, traffic and property offences.⁴³ The success of the operation to reduce youth crime was acknowledged by the Queensland Police Minister, the Honourable, Mr Mark Ryan, in a Ministerial Statement in parliament outlining the results of the operation and progress of the Stronger Communities Initiative.⁴⁴

This whole-of-government approach resulted in the forming of the Townsville Stronger Communities Action Group (TSCAG). TSCAG is essentially a collaboration of seven senior representatives from the following agencies led by an Inspector of Police appointed as the government coordinator for the group. TSCAG includes QPS, Youth Justice Services, Townsville Health Services, Department of Child Safety, Department of Housing and Public Works, Department of Education, and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership.

TSCAG was formed in October 2016 as part of the five-point plan, mentioned earlier, to break the cycle of youth crime across Townsville, with staff co-located at the QPS premises at the Townsville Policing Hub alongside the RAP and the Townsville District Intelligence office. TSCAG's main objective is to work intensively with young people and their families by coordinating the services that are designed to support these families to become positive contributors to the community and to break the cycle of offending.⁴⁵ This approach clearly evidences a rehabilitative and reintegrative ethos, as opposed to one that is primarily focussed on deterrence and retribution. This is really important to bear in mind because the Townsville RAP is actually 'the operational arm of the Townsville Stronger Communities Action Group'⁴⁶ Consequently, while the Townsville RAP certainly conducts tasks that are deterrent in nature, it is likewise holistically 'tasked to perform joint visits of vulnerable persons of the community in support of the Action group to locate and engage ...' young offenders, at risk youth, and their families to help them lead more productive lives.⁴⁷

The co-location of this Action Group strategically positioned, as it were, with the Townsville RAP policing unit is no coincidence, as the former actively receives information from front line police officers (i.e. RAP) relating to suspected criminal behaviours and activities of vulnerable persons. The opportunity to refer known young offenders, at risk youth, as well as other vulnerable people to various programs and initiatives through such information sharing arrangements with TSCAG occurs daily. As a consequence, this collaboration has led to numerous success stories where there has been an 'improvement in school attendance, reduced offending, fewer street checks at night

⁴³ Queensland Police Service, *2016-2017 Annual Report* (2017) 47

<<https://www.police.qld.gov.au/corporatedocs/reportsPublications/annualReport/Documents/2016-17/performance.pdf>> ('*QPS 2017 Report*').

⁴⁴ Mark Ryan, 'Ministerial Statement on Townsville Crime' (Media Statement, Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services, 25 May 2017) <<https://www.markryan.com.au/news/speeches/ministerial-statement-townsville-crime/>>.

⁴⁵ *QPS 2017 Report* (n 43).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

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involving vulnerable people, and improved parental involvement in the children's lives'.⁴⁸ As the first author pointed out, with additional officers, the Townsville RAP will be able to 'do even further work to engage with the community and do more work in the proactive space to identify those people who may be at risk of offending and implement some alternative strategies for them'.⁴⁹ In fact, the role that partnerships play in this regard is critical, and that by the RAP 'combining with other agencies hopefully we can make some changes in their lives, without having to turn to offending'.⁵⁰

V CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the Townsville RAP plays an important role in potentially deterring crime through its enforcement powers, and the deployment of intelligence-led hotspot policing operations. For example, from April 2017 to June 2017, Operation Papa Advance led to 405 charges being preferred, with 163 persons arrested for property crime.⁵¹

What is not so clear however, is the extent to which the Townsville RAP's rehabilitative, reintegrative and community engagement efforts have resulted in similar successes. This is potentially more difficult to measure as compared to simply calculating the number of arrests and charges laid as a result of a police operation. That said, an independent evaluation of the Hub policing initiative, including the Townsville RAP policing model is currently being conducted, with the results yet to be released.⁵²

In the meantime however, there are some indications that the RAP is performing its various tasks well. As early as March 2015, the then Police Minister, the Honourable, Ms Jo-Ann Miller, commended the work done by this policing unit, highlighting in particular how over a period of three to four months, 'RAP has responded to around 1,300 calls for service, attended to 7,750 street checks, issued 389 infringement notices and conducted more than 3,000 random breath tests.... [resulting in] a total of 728 charges ... laid against 351 people'.⁵³ In June 2017, twenty extra RAP officers were earmarked to be deployed to Townsville which, according to the Queensland Police Commissioner, Mr Ian Stewart, was in recognition of the Townsville RAP's pivotal role 'in addressing community safety concerns across the city over the past twelve months'. He also said that he was confident that 'by increasing the capability of the unit ... RAP will continue to build on its achievements across the district into the future'.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Bob Atkinson, 'Report on youth justice to the Queensland Youth Justice Taskforce' (Report, Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, 2018) 80.

⁴⁹ Chris McMahon, 'Crime rate goes down', *Townsville Bulletin* (online, 3 September 2016) <<https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/crime-rate-goes-down/news-story/8e3794a1c15aa38904f50e8cc6f70a0c>>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *QPS 2017 Report* (n 43).

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Jo-Ann Miller, 'Minister hails Townsville Rapid Action and Patrols Group trial as a success' (Media Statement, 30 March 2015) <<http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2015/3/30/minister-hails-townsville-rapid-action-and-patrols-group-trial-a-success>>.

⁵⁴ Mark Ryan, 'Extra 20 police officers to join Townsville RAP' (Media Statement, Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services, 23 June 2017) <<http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2017/6/23/extra-20-police-officers-to-join-townsville-rap>>.

While there is evidently strong institutional support for the RAP, particularly in relation to its intelligence led operations, it is arguable that more effort should go into conceptualising and thereafter operationalising the rehabilitative, reintegrative and community engagement tasks that the RAP is already performing as part of its current proactive role of being ‘the operational arm’ of TSCAG. To that end, clear performance indicators and outcomes must be explicitly articulated, and as a consequence, RAP officers must be able to immediately discern how their rehabilitative, reintegrative and community engagement efforts will ultimately result in the reduction of crime, anti-social behaviours, and fear of crime within the community. These clear linkages will encourage and cognitively empower RAP officers to go that ‘extra mile’ — to go beyond mere deterrence, because they will know that their holistic efforts (including that of deterrence) will be able to help some ‘young people back on track to lead more productive lives’!⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Queensland Police Service, *2016-2017 Annual Report* (2017) 47
<<https://www.police.qld.gov.au/corporatedocs/reportsPublications/annualReport/Documents/2016-17/performance.pdf>>.