



COMMUNITY SAFETY AUDIT REPORT

DATE: 13/2/2014 & 18/2/2014

LOCATION: Laneway behind Foodworks St. Georges Rd. between Beavers St. Gladstone Avenue, Northcote

FROM: Patrick Buchanan, Community Safety Officer

TIME: 12pm & 6.45pm respectively

Issue

The audit has been prompted due to safety concerns by residents of the area. The concerns centre around the high volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic using the laneway. There are areas of dumped rubbish and graffiti in the area which gives the sense that the area is either unsavoury and undesirables are attracted to the area. The residents feel drug users have also moved into the area.

Area profile

The location subjected to a safety audit is a stretch of laneway located behind the Foodworks convenience store on St. Georges Rd, that runs between Beavers St. and Gladstone Avenue. It is an old bluestone lane with a large number of garage doors facing into the area. There are three access points that create a T-intersection in the middle of the stretch in question.

The location in question is located in Northcote West, an area with an approximate population of 8,760 and a SEIFA index score of 1,046, significantly higher than the Darebin average of 990.3.

Areas of interest include a heavily frequented Foodworks convenience store that adjoins the laneway in question.

The area is well serviced by the 112 West Preston tram line, the closest stop located less than 50 metres from the location in question.

There is no government housing in the direct area surrounding the location.

The area is frequently a target of graffiti which reduces perceptions of safety in the surrounding area. While there are a number of crimes associated with the main road including driving offences and anti-social behaviour, there are no specific crimes directly linked to the area in question.

During site inspections the laneway appeared to be used as an access route for the Foodworks store and between the streets of Gladstone Avenue and Beavers St. A number of people were seen accessing the laneway including elderly people and schoolchildren.

Safety checklist

General impressions

A first impression of the laneway is that it appeared well used and well maintained. The private fencing that lined its sides were in good repair. There was an insignificant amount of litter and very minimal graffiti, and signs of some that had been removed recently. During daylight it was well lit, with clear lines of site in all directions due to the width of the lane. There were minimal alcoves for anyone to hide.

Being a laneway there was a degree of isolation, however this was significantly alleviated by the presence of a highly frequented store adjoining the laneway and the proximity of a main road. During observation a number of people walked directly to and from the Foodworks into the lane as an access route. Lines of sight from the laneway to the Foodworks and vice versa were disturbed by large dumpsters that created alcoves and blocked lighting from the store.

The most significant factor impacting on perceptions of safety is the high levels of graffiti on the Foodworks and nearby derelict Windsor Smith building on St. Georges Rd. The quantity of graffiti, coupled with the derelict and abandoned building make the area seem neglected. The premise directly opposite the Windsor Smith building and adjoining the laneway has the appearance of neglect due to high levels of graffiti and unkempt exterior. A truck parked directly out front is also heavily graffitied and seemingly abandoned.

The night time lighting in the area is poor, other than what makes its way in from either end of the street and from the shop. Lighting in the middle of the lane was non-existent. The lack of lighting in the laneway is in line with crime prevention guidelines that state that laneways not intended for night time activity should not be lit as it may indicate a false sense of security.

There was no signage in the area other than street signs near the entry and exit points of the laneway

A significant sensitive site in the direct area is Batman Park on the corner of St Georges Rd and Arthurton Rd. The park has a highly frequented children's playground and a maternal health clinic on site.

Density of alcohol supply

In Darebin, there are approximately 313 licensed premises, or around 25 licensed premises per 10,000 people.

Research has revealed that communities with more than 22 licensed premises per 10,000 people experienced the most crime-related problems. Although the number of premises exceed this number in the suburb of Northcote, the vast majority are restaurant and café licences.

Significantly the Foodworks adjoining the laneway is a packaged liquor licence outlet while there is a second directly across the road.

Significant concerns

Consultation with Victoria Police has not revealed any significant crime issues in the direct area.

A significant concern affecting perceptions of safety is the state of the premises along St. Georges Rd between the Windsor Smith Factory and the Foodworks. The sites along this stretch are heavily graffitied and allow for a snowball effect on graffiti in the direct area.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Responsibility
Activate derelict site of Windsor Smith building on St. Georges Rd.	Council to contact Windsor Smith building owner.
Clean graffiti from buildings along St. Georges Rd between Windsor Smith building and Food works	Council (Infrastructure Maintenance) to work with relevant property as part of existing graffiti removal program.
Foodworks to move shop dumpsters against wall to minimise alcoves.	Foodworks Advice provided from Council and Victoria Police.
Ensure street lighting along Gladstone Avenue and Beavers St. are lit to Australian standards.	Council (Environment and Natural Resources) to review lighting