

Lock your doors: police

By SHANA MORGAN

POLICE have issued a warning for Wangaratta residents to lock their doors after new statistics showed burglary offences rose 32 per cent to 194 in the past year.

The Victoria Police statistics were released last week and also revealed a 1.4 per

cent drop in total crime across the Wangaratta Police Service Area (PSA) in the 12 months to March.

But Wangaratta itself had a total crime increase of 5.8 per cent, including a 2.5 per cent rise in crime against the property, which includes burglaries, thefts and criminal damage.

Wangaratta PSA commander, Inspector David Ryan, said the city had a spike in burglaries at the end of 2012 and start of 2013.

"We've had significant issues of late with residential properties," he said.

"We've now returned to where we were."

Police increased the num-

ber of property searches around Wangaratta following the spike in burglaries, resulting in an extra 42 charges of handling stolen goods compared to the previous year.

Insp Ryan said Wangaratta has now returned to an average of one or two burglaries per week and there were only three during May.

He urged residents to be more wary of their own personal security and lock their homes.

"We are in the country, but you can't live like you used to," he said.

"People will break into your house."

Wangaratta had a similar problem last year when cars

and the cash and belongings inside were being stolen because people left their cars unlocked.

Police began a public awareness campaign and caught the recidivist offenders, and the recent statistics are more positive, showing a 48.7 per cent drop in car thefts and 26.4 per cent drop in thefts from cars.

Keys left in car, car stolen

A BENALLA man has been taken into custody after breaching his parole with an opportunistic car theft in Wangaratta.

Detective Senior Constable Peter Evans, said a 33 year old Benalla man was arrested and charged on Thursday for the theft of a Mazda sedan that was left unlocked with the keys in the ignition on Norton Street on May 21.

"It was parked for a short time while the owner went into a business," he said.

"It was just an opportunistic theft."

The man was bailed on the theft of motor vehicle charge, but then remanded in custody on a warrant for breaching his parole.



Turtle time at The Centre

THE public will be able to get up close and personal with turtles this weekend.

Turtles Australia is visiting Wangaratta for two events to help people understand how they can help local turtle populations by protecting nests and wetlands, while managing turtle habitat.

Sessions will be held on Saturday night from 6pm at The Centre in Chisholm Street, and a barbecue will be held at Bachelor's Green in Tone Road on Sunday from noon.

The event is being presented by the Wangaratta Sustainability Network, Turtles Australia, The Centre and North East Catchment Management Authority.

To RSVP to the free event call Di on 0439 020448 or Suzanne on 0409 225605.

Leagues don't see violence problem

By SHANA MORGAN

THE heads of local football leagues do not have the same concerns about on-field violence as Wangaratta police.

Wangaratta Police Service Area commander, Inspector David Ryan, told the *Wangaratta Chronicle* last week that violence in football could be leading to a culture of violence off the field.

The comments came as Victoria Police statistics showed 263 assault charges were laid in Wangaratta over the past 12 months.

Ovens and King Football Netball League general manager, Zac Guilfoyle, said he was "very interested to hear those kind of statements" from Insp Ryan.

"We've been very blessed about the way the guys have gone about it," Mr Guilfoyle said.

"Melees, fighting and off the ball incidents have no place in footy."

Ovens and Murray Football Netball League general manager, Aaron McGlynn, said emotions can get high during contact sports, but he does not believe violence is a major problem in the league or country football.

"It's not something that happens on a week to week basis," he said.

"Players need to be aware that they out themselves up for legal ramifications if they breach the laws."

Police asking for input

POLICE are asking for opinions on how they should behave when asking for people's details and dealing with different cultures.

Chief Commissioner Ken Lay said Victoria police "need to provide a service that is culturally competent, ethical and professional at all times".

For more information visit police.vic.gov.au.

Plight of single parents, sex abuse victims at top of Bishop's address

WELFARE demands for single parent and poor families were high on the agenda at the Anglican Synod last Friday.

Bishop John Parkes spoke at GOTAFE's auditorium about the plight of single parents, highlighting the financial strain lower government payments is already having on low income families.

The discussion followed a Federal Government decision in March to shift some 84,000 single parents from the fortnightly \$663 Parenting Payment to the fortnightly \$533 Newstart Allowance in a bid to save around \$700 million.

Bishop Parkes said the pressure for single parents to return to work when children reached school age was exacerbated by the lack of employment opportunities due to the unstable economy.

"I think moving single parents to Newstart and therefore reducing their payments is going to lead to a lot of difficulty for people," Bishop Parkes said.

"Already we're noticing an increase in folk coming to us for help."

In partnership with Anglicare, the church provides emergency relief and debt counselling while working with other welfare agencies to help families with bills and food.

"Families are complex and poor families are particularly complex be-



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cause they have challenges other families don't have," Bishop Parkes said.

"While I'm not naive, I understand the government has to work with its budget, it seems sad to me that quite often it's the vulnerable who suffer.

"I think it's a regrettable decision."

Bishop Parkes also discussed the church's support of the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Victorian Government's parliamentary inquiry into child abuse, calling for any victims to report their case.

"First of all I want to point out that no part of the church is untouched by this," he said.

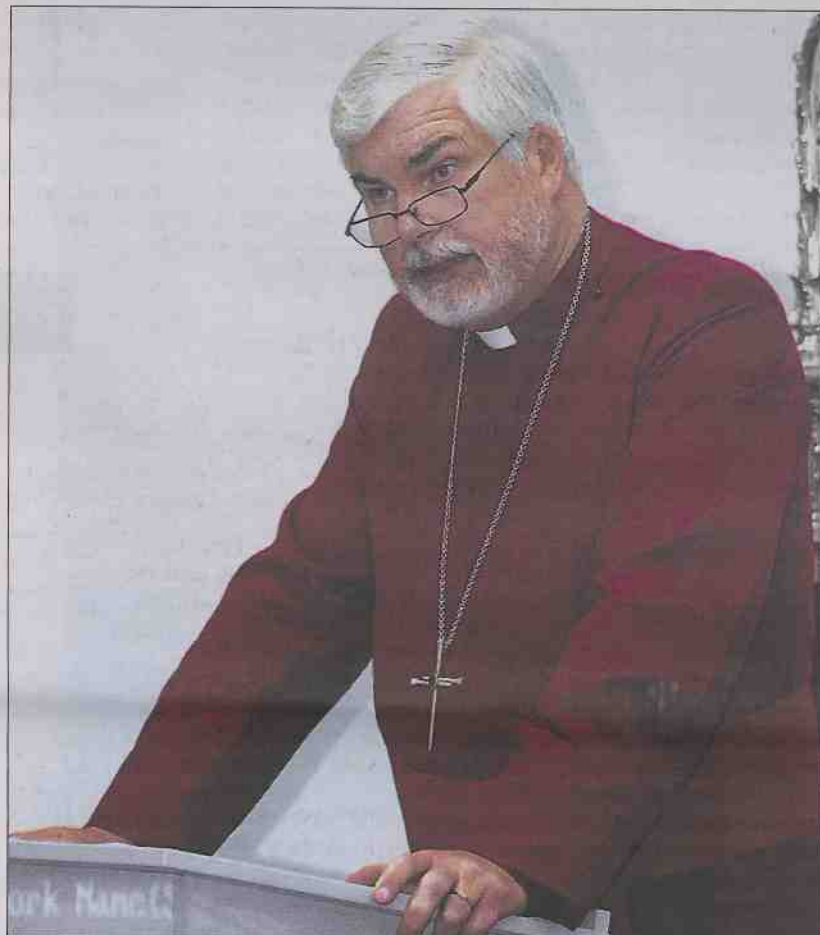
"Where I find abuse, I will deal with it and deal with it forcibly.

"There is a zero tolerance in this diocese."

Bishop Parkes also touched on the outlook of the church and made note of the need to plan for the future.

"There are many people around who want you to believe that the church is dead," he said.

"But in the words of Mark Twain, 'rumours of our death have been greatly exaggerated' - there are signs of life all around the diocese."



STRONG STANCE: Bishop John Parkes made it clear at the Synod that the church would deal with any claims of abuse, while (right), about 100 people attended the opening address at the GOTAFE auditorium.

PHOTOS: Luke Plummer