



Policing Fact Sheet

Wanganui District Council (Prohibition of Gang Insignia) Act 2009

Prepared by:

Policy and Organisational Performance Groups Police National Headquarters, and Whanganui Police

Introduction

This fact sheet summarises key enforcement findings from the first nine months of the bylaw prohibiting the wearing of gang insignia in Whanganui, and the views of Whanganui Police about the impact of the bylaw.

Wanganui District Council (Prohibition of Gang Insignia) Act 2009 (the "PGI Act")

The PGI Act came into effect on 1 September 2009. It prohibits the wearing of gang insignia within specified public places in Whanganui as defined by the local bylaw. The bylaw specifies that all urban areas plus a few other outlying areas of Whanganui fall into the areas where the wearing of gang insignia is prohibited. Seven gangs are specified within the PGI Act and a further three are specified within the local bylaw.

Number of prosecutions

Within the first nine months of the bylaw being in place there has been 13 prosecutions¹ for wearing gang insignia within it (see opposite graph). After October 2009 the number of prosecutions has settled down to either none or one per month. There has been only one prosecution to date for wearing full gang regalia i.e. leather gang patch. This occurred on the first day that the bylaw was introduced. The remaining prosecutions for breaches of the bylaw have been related to wearing clothing, usually t-shirts, that show a gang affiliation.

Whanganui Police view on the impact of the bylaw

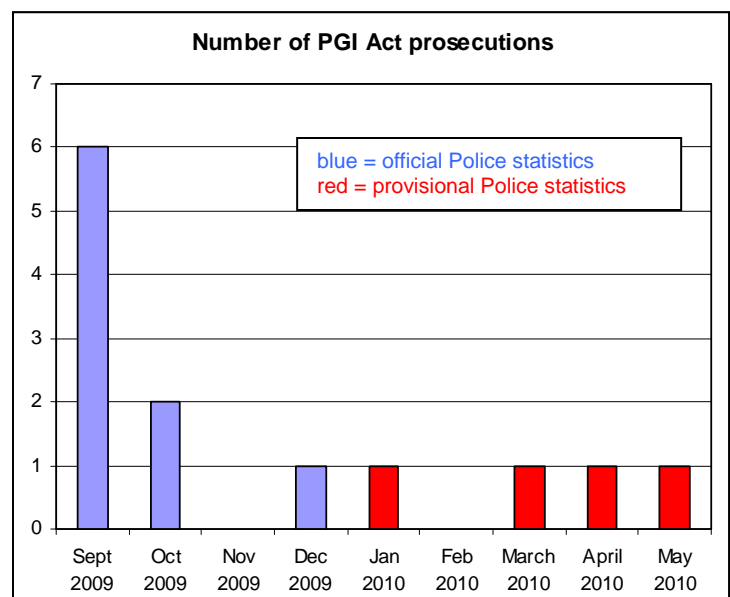
Whanganui Police consider that the bylaw is working as an effective deterrent. They consider the bylaw has contributed to:

- overt gang presence being less noticeable by the general public in Whanganui;
- a reduction in levels of intimidation for the community of Whanganui;
- a reduction in confrontations between gangs.

It is important to note that since 2009 Whanganui Police has implemented a number of anti gang policies. These have combined with the bylaw to reduce the impact of gangs on Whanganui.

Key points

- 13 prosecutions occurred between September 2009 and May 2010 for breaching the Whanganui bylaw prohibiting the wearing of gang insignia.
- Whanganui Police consider the bylaw is working as an effective deterrent and that an overt gang presence is much less noticeable. There has been a reduction in public confrontations between gangs, and there are reduced levels of intimidation for the community of Whanganui.
- The estimated number of gang members in Whanganui has reduced between March 2009 and March 2010, with evidence that some gang members have relocated to nearby locations. This relocation may be due to the implementation of the bylaw in Whanganui, but also strong anti-gang operations by Police have contributed to gang members moving from the Whanganui area or receiving custodial sentences.



¹ Data between 1 January and 31 May 2010 is still provisional data and liable to change.

Relocation of Gang members

Prior to the bylaw coming into effect Whanganui Police, through their local Iwi Liason Officer, consulted the gangs about the bylaw and how it will be enforced. Whanganui Police report that some gang members have moved from the area since the bylaw came into effect and the stronger policing of gangs in the area. There has been an estimated 15% fall in the number of patched and prospect gang members in Whanganui between March 2009 and March 2010. Of those gang members who have permanently relocated from Whanganui, a number have relocated in the near vicinity of Whanganui (e.g. Marton, Patea), while the remainder relocated further afield. A number of gang members have also received custodial sentences in this time period.

Further Comment

For further comment please contact Inspector Duncan Macleod, Whanganui Police Area Commander.