

# Special Report : THE CHANGING FACE OF CRIME

With a growing multicultural population and the proliferation of highly volatile drugs in Auckland's CBD, BEN BURROWES looks at the dramatic change in the role of police.

Technology, new immigrants and methamphetamine have changed the face of Auckland crime in recent years.

Sergeant Kay Capper, officer in charge of Auckland Central Police station, has nearly 13 years experience. She believes these three factors have begun to influence the types of crimes being committed, and police have had to change their approach in response.

Capper says the introduction and use of methamphetamines, commonly referred to as "P", has had a big impact on policing.

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"P is widely used within society in Auckland and offending in this area has increased dramatically over the last five years. I believe it's fair to say it's the favoured drug of choice."

Capper says there are links between serious violent crime and methamphetamine. However, the links also extend to less serious crime such as burglary, fraud and theft as users commit these crimes to fuel their drug habits.

Statistics New Zealand figures show an increase in violent crime committed in central Auckland over the last decade. In 2000, there were 4215 violent offences committed in the district. Last year there were 5031. Capper says that following the increased offending, the methamphetamine legislation was introduced giving police greater powers to investigate and apprehend offenders.

The change in Auckland's population, particularly in the central business district, has also had an impact on crime.

"We are a multi-cultural city where people from different countries bring with them different cultures and behaviours. In addition, we have seen different and new types of crime emerging, many of which are predominantly related to individual ethnic backgrounds."

The recent Wan Biao murder case, when a Chinese student's body was found floating in a suitcase in Waitemata Harbour, brought Asian crime to the nation's television screens. It followed the triad-gang shooting of Tam Yam Ah outside his karaoke bar last year. Capper says this is an issue Auckland police are actively working on.

"Police have sought to integrate with many cultures in

Auckland. We endeavour to work with people from different cultural backgrounds to learn their individual ways. It's a matter of trying to reduce victimisation and offending within their specific communities.

To establish this, we have formed specialised liaison positions for Pacific Island, Maori and Asian officers in an attempt to build working relationships with leaders from these varying ethnic groups."

In an interview with the *New Zealand Herald* earlier this year, the officer in charge of the Asian crime squad in Auckland, Detective Sergeant Dave Koria, said illegal drugs were the main focus of the squad, followed closely by fraud.

He said violent offences did not figure as often because many members of the Asian community, particularly the recent immigrants, were reluctant to come forward and make a complaint.

Koria said they either did not understand the system, were in fear of the police because of the

amount of offending is not reported, and some may not even be detected. E-crime may now be the most under-reported form of criminal behaviour. The victim is often unaware the offence has happened or that it even constitutes a crime.

"They can turn their hand to anything," he said.

Koria also said Asian crime was likely to remain within the community – one Asian attacking another – because victims from other ethnic groups were more likely to go to the police.

New technology has also brought with it new crime types. Capper says the internet has introduced a whole new wave of offending.

"The improved technology has enabled offenders to be more mobile and accurate with their communications, again facilitating the commission of crimes.

"Police have developed with changes in technology and through new techniques with forensics, DNA, crime lab analysis and we are able to further investigate and apprehend offenders for specific crimes."

E-crime is now prolific in New Zealand. New technology is being used to commit traditional types of crime such as fraud, drug dealing, extortion, harassment and paedophilia.

The New Zealand Police website says the proliferation of technology has brought investigative challenges. A significant

amount of offending is not reported, and some may not even be detected. E-crime may now be the most under-reported form of criminal behaviour. The victim is often unaware the offence has happened or that it even constitutes a crime.

The website also says some responsibility must rest with the public.

**"Officers are confronted with situations involving violence, either against others or themselves, on practically a daily basis."**

"While police will always attempt to detect and apprehend criminals to ensure community safety, enforcement alone won't be enough. The first step is to make people aware of the potential dangers.

"We lock our houses and cars, and mostly we don't leave our wallets lying around. So why let our guard down just because we're operating in the electronic environment?"

Capper believes police are on top of criminal activities in Auckland and says that in general, society can have confidence in the force and perceive them to be doing a good job.

"In general, I believe society has a good perception of police. Most recognise the difficult job that the front-line officers have to deal with."

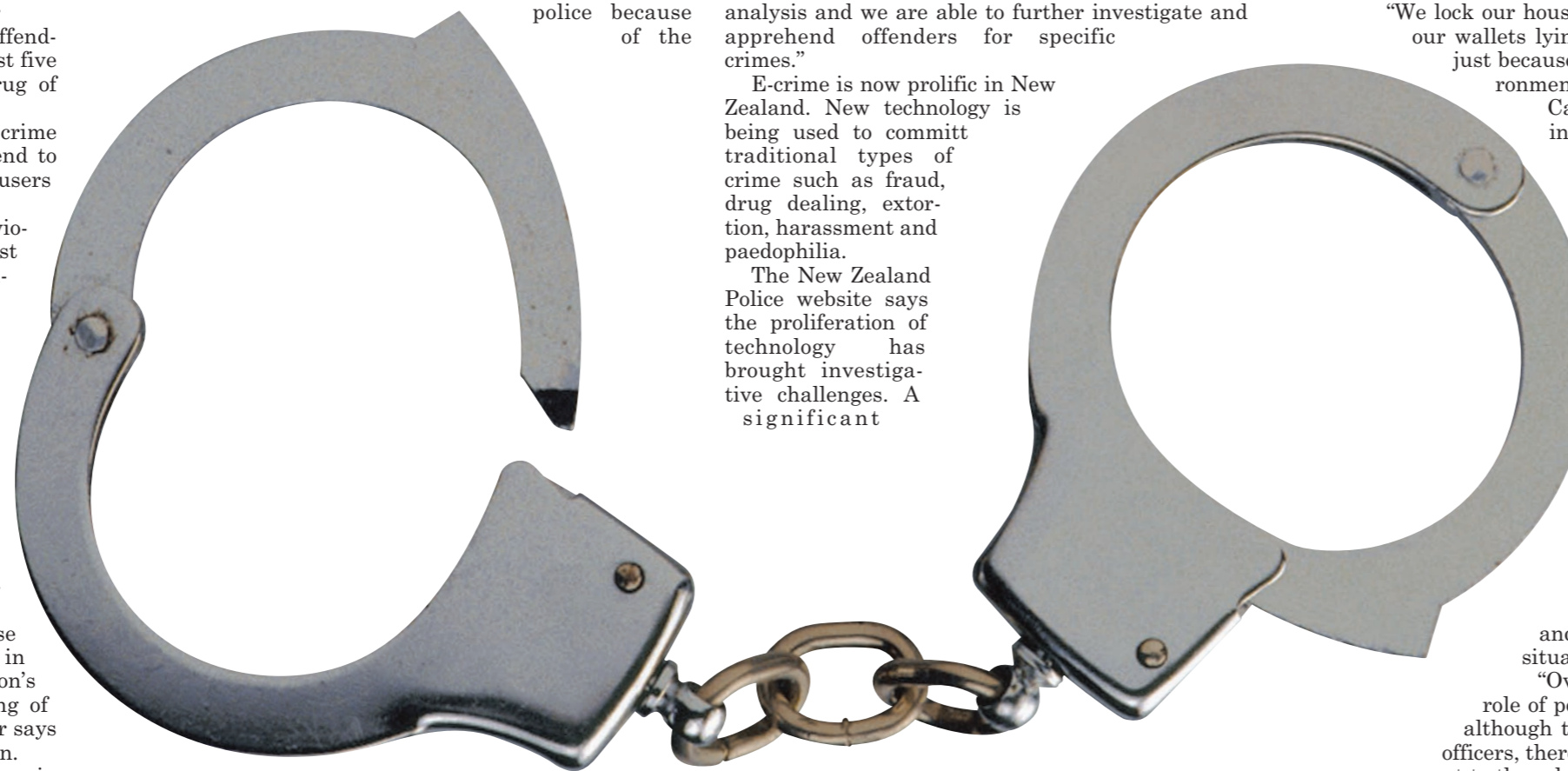
Capper says the changes in society have brought changes in behaviour, the family unit, respect, individual morals and even education.

"This has had an impact on the people we are to police.

"Unfortunately, officers are confronted with situations involving violence, either against others or themselves, on practically a daily basis.

"However, with appropriate training and resources, the staff cope with these situations the best they can.

"Overall, I believe society appreciates the role of police in maintaining law and order and although the job can be difficult at times for the officers, there is a very rewarding and satisfying element to the role."



## How the CBD beat has changed

Te Waha Nui talked to a new policeman, and one who walked the beat 30 years ago.

Glenn Wallace served as a constable in Auckland Central in the early 1970s. At that time, the big issue was the emergence of gangs.

"There had always been motorcycle gangs but they, in most cases, did not cause a great deal of trouble. But the Stormtroopers emerged from Otara, and Black Power from Papakura. They brought with them street issues."

He believes police are far more remote from the public these days, as they are seldom seen out of their cars.

"They do not have the same relationship with the public as they did, no relationship with the man on the street."

And that changing police culture has affected central Auckland, he says.

"In my day police walked the beat in the inner city. With the lack of police presence on the streets, the instances of public disorder, loitering, wilful damage and car theft have increased. The most contact people have with the police today is the highway patrol giving them a speeding ticket."

But his opinion of the men and women in blue is still high. "They still do a great job, considering how under-resourced they are."

Constable Thomas Wells is a fresh face on the city beat. "I came out of Police College in March this year, so have been on the street for about five months."

As well as responding to 111 calls, he spends much of his time "getting out and about patrolling the Auckland City areas, doing proactive policing". He says many of the problems he sees on the beat come from inner city bars.

"We attend a lot of incidents that are alcohol and drug-related." He knows his perspective on how busy police are these days is somewhat limited.

"But I can say the police are constantly busy in the Auckland Central area. There are very few down times in the job. Some days we will go all shift from one job to another without rest."

Despite the frequent incidents, Wells says he does feel safe on the city beat.

"You can never really be fully prepared for what's in front of you, but I have full confidence in my colleagues, and the support we have available to us. I never feel unsafe, although I am often cautious."

— Ben Burrowes & Craig Borley



Glenn Wallace

