

Estimates Committee 2003 Questions Taken On Notice

(01/10/2002 to 01/10/2004)

Date: 06/26/2003 Output:
Sub Output:
Subject: Warrants Served where Applicant Brought before the Court

From: Mr BURKE to Honourable Paul HENDERSON
Minister for Police Fire and Emergency Services

5-5

Question: For a period - and I leave it to the Police Commissioner to get a reasonable trend line - where a person is required, scheduled or whatever to appear at a hearing at the Magistrates Court, we can pick Katherine, and that person fails to appear and a warrant is issued, of how many of the warrants served, how many of the applicants were brought before the court to respond to that warrant?

Answer:

Answered On: 06/27/2003

Answer: On record, there are currently 615 warrants for the Katherine district that remain unexecuted. This is since 1963. However since the 1st May 2003, 82 warrants have been executed, the majority of these are Mense Warrants (49), Apprehension Warrants (17), Warrant for Summons Disobey (7), and Warrants of Commitment (9).

The number of warrants issued for a non-appearance on the Bail and Arrest day average at approximately four. This is not a significant figure - the highest for the period however was 12, the lowest was 1. These figures relate to the period 1st May 2003 to 27th June 2003.

General work practices at the Katherine police station ensure that warrants are executed in a timely manner. For example, the Public Place Patrol has with them an outstanding warrant list and as part of their duties they target offenders in this regard. Where there has been a non-appearance the arresting members are usually aware of this fact given their own interest and will endeavour to locate the offender. In addition, warrant checks are carried out on all persons who pass through the cells and there are the usual alerts posted on Police computer programs, such as PROMIS.

Prosecution protocols exist where any significant warrants issued by the Court are relayed to the members and the ODPP follow a similar procedure. A recent example was when a warrant was issued for a breach of bail for an offender who had stolen a number of lap top computers valued at approximately \$20,000.00, an immediate alert was posted and he was arrested within 24 hours of that warrant being issued.

Failure to appear in Court by an offender is viewed by many members as an "affront" and members will therefore actively seek out these offenders.

Whilst it is a known fact that offenders may use a non-appearance as a delaying tactic (they can only do this once, at the most twice given that the prosecutor would oppose bail), there is also the issue that Katherine has a significant itinerant population who may offend and then return to their community prior to any court case. Many offenders too have a limited understanding of the court process and fail to attend purely because they forgot or did not realise their attendance was required.