

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 17 November 2008



Mandeville residents discuss boy racer controls

Around seventy local residents gathered in Mandeville last week to discuss possible controls on the boy racer problem which may be spreading to rural areas outside Christchurch.

At a special meeting held to discuss the issue and attended by local residents, the mayors of Waimakariri, Selwyn and Hurunui Districts, the Christchurch City Council, the police, local members of Parliament and a small group of boy racers, concern about the expansion of the problem to rural areas near Christchurch was raised.

Local residents say they are being intimidated and kept awake by the noise and there was concern expressed that boy racer activities could exacerbate the risk of fire in the dry north-westerly conditions prevalent in summer. Both Selwyn and Waimakariri Districts reported experiencing the problem but it does not appear to have spread as far as the Hurunui District at this stage.

There was also some discussion as to the appropriateness of the term 'boy racers', its accuracy in including genuine car enthusiasts and the effect it can have of glorifying the group's activities.

Christchurch city has four different options currently in use to address the problem, only one of which is readily applicable in the case of the Waimakariri District Council. In Christchurch a light vehicle ban for industrial areas which include cul-de-sacs can be implemented – a remedy that is not easily transferable to a rural or arterial road network. Christchurch has also used no-stopping signage, prohibiting stopping at night time in specific areas – again, the applicability of this to a rural setting is limited. Similarly physical constraints in urban car-parking areas which prevent some of the group's activities does not apply to rural roads. The fourth option, the use of existing road rules and legislation to curb the problem, can and does apply in the outlying rural areas.

The mobility of boy racer activity creates difficulties in allocating police resources to the problem - for control to be effective there is the need to react at different times in different locations. Police encouraged the public to contact them as soon as any activity is noticed – in co-operation with the local community they are setting up a direct contact system with local police. In addition the introduction of encrypted police radios in the future will help to prevent offenders 'scanning' and tracking police activities.

The meeting resolved to take a series of actions to address the problem. The local community will be organising a Neighbourhood/Community Watch almost immediately with the assistance of the police and the Waimakariri District Council Road Safety and Community Teams. In addition the council's Utilities and Roding Manager, Gerard Cleary will be submitting a report to the next Council meeting, outlining the problems and discussing future options.

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Police said that any identification details, number plates, photos or videos of any offending that can be obtained will be acted upon. However they emphasised the importance of people not placing themselves at risk in order to provide this type of information.

There is another meeting scheduled with the community for December 10th at which a Neighbourhood Watch/Community support group will be formalised and feedback will be given from the Waimakariri District Council.

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