



## PETROL THEFT HOT SPOTS

July 2017-June 2018  
**Greater Geelong:** 599  
**Whittlesea:** 412  
**Brimbank:** 261  
**Frankston:** 259

APCO director  
 Peter Anderson  
 and Sergeant  
 David Campbell  
 yesterday.  
 Picture: MARK  
 WILSON

# WAR ON DRIVE-OFFS

OLIVIA SHYING

## Police pump up efforts on petrol thieves

A POLICE crackdown has led Geelong officers to investigate more reports of petrol theft from local service stations in the past 12 months than in the eight years prior.

A Geelong-led pilot program that sees police actively investigate all reports of petrol theft has reaped such promising results it will be rolled out across the state.

Geelong Divisional Intelligence Unit Sergeant David Campbell said since the August 2017 launch of the trial local police had spoken to all petrol service workers to en-

sure they called triple-0 after the theft of fuel.

He said police had recorded a 240 per cent rise in Greater Geelong petrol drive-offs in the 12 months to June this year.

The huge surge, in which offences rose from 171 to 599 in a year, made Geelong the state's top location for fuel theft.

"We took a hit statistically but that figure has now plateaued from 70 to 100 petrol thefts a month to 30 or 40," Sgt Campbell said.

It follows years of concern from industry leaders, including APCO director Peter Anderson, after Victoria Police changed its policy in 2013 to treat petrol theft as a civil matter.

In June the force reversed its policy, a move it says will increase the number of fuel thefts being investigated but will assist police in prosecuting other criminality and repeat offenders.

"We started the pilot back in August 2017 and we saw a massive surge in petrol theft,

but that was basically because of encouraged reporting," Sgt Campbell said.

The shift in police response was sparked by a realisation that the majority of petrol thieves were recidivist offences driving stolen cars to commit other crimes.

"We saw the vehicle as an enabler to other crimes," Sgt Campbell said.

"It's a bit of a funnel effect — petrol stations are equipped with CCTV, usually good CCTV, capturing people on lots of different angles. We

can get information about the offenders, descriptions of vehicles.

"Yes we have a surge in petrol theft, but associated crimes and linked crimes are dropping."

Sgt Campbell said the pilot program had led to improved information sharing and better cross-unit police co-ordination that had lowered offending.

Mr Anderson said recent police response had been "terrific".

"The petrol thieves are

going to come under real pressure, these people are committing an offence and they will be tracked," Mr Anderson said.

"It's something that APCO has lobbied hard for. We were very disappointed with the previous policy because it basically supported crime."

The State Government, police, service station owners and Crime Stoppers have teamed up to establish an education campaign urging the public to do b in offenders.

Anti-theft messaging will be displayed at petrol stations that have high prevalence of fuel theft including Geelong.

# CAN YOU HELP?



**GEELONG, WEDNESDAY, AUG 22, 4.50AM**

Police want to speak to a man driving a white tip truck with concealed number plates and no commercial signage who filled up at a Princes Hwy service station before allegedly leaving without paying. The man is described as being European in appearance and aged in his late 50s with grey hair. He was wearing blue jeans, white T-shirt, an orange high-vis jacket and brown shoes.



**LARA, THURSDAY, JULY 26, 7.15PM**

Police want help identifying a man who filled up his car at a Mill Rd service station and allegedly left without paying. He was driving a white Toyota Landcruiser. It is believed the car had false registration plates. He is described as caucasian in appearance with a solid build. He was wearing a high-vis jacket, light-coloured tracksuit pants, a dark top and cap.

**MOOLAP, MONDAY, JUNE 25, 11.20AM**

A man attended a Portarlington Rd service station about 11.20am, filling up his car with fuel before allegedly leaving without making payment. The man is described as caucasian in appearance and aged in his 20s. He was wearing dark pants, a white T-shirt and dark zip-up hoodie. He was driving a light coloured Ford Falcon sedan.



**LARA, SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 2.59PM**

Police want to identify a woman driving a black Toyota coupe with stolen number plates who filled up at a Mill Rd service station before allegedly driving off without paying. The woman is caucasian in appearance with long brown hair. She was wearing dark pants, dark-long sleeve top and dark shoes.