



Media Release

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A Zero Tolerance Approach to all Crimes

We need to send a strong message of zero tolerance on crime in Mornington.

The policy of treating fuel drive-offs as a civil rather than criminal matter hasn't worked.

Fuel retailers have reported an increase in drive-offs and other associated criminal behaviours. Across Australia, fuel theft costs retailers \$60 million per annum.

Further, fuel drive-offs can sometimes also be associated with attacks on retail staff and theft of other retail products, putting employees, customers and business owners at personal risk.

Recently, more and more crimes aren't being treated as crimes – from low level drug taking to tap and go fraud, to treating fuel drive offs as a civil, rather than a criminal offence and prisoners having their fines wiped.

In response to this increase in fuel drive-offs, the fuel retail industry has invested tens of millions of dollars in better surveillance, security and crime prevention but it's now time for this investment to be backed by the police and justice system.

A Guy Government will by 1 July 2019:

- Work with Victoria Police so that all fuel drive-offs with non-innocent, criminal intent will be treated as criminal theft offences and not as civil matters. If required, legislation will be introduced to mandate that fuel theft is treated as a criminal offence.
- Work with Victoria Police to recommit to the presumption that all fuel drive-offs are initially investigated as criminal offences.
- A 'zero-tolerance' investigatory and enforcement regime to be established, the treatment of fuel drive-offs as civil matters has absolutely no deterrent effect on would be or recidivist offenders. Allowing fuel drive-off offenders to get away with theft can lead to an escalation in the seriousness of offender behaviour.
- A Victoria Police centrally administered fuel drive-off/theft online reporting system to be developed and introduced. This will ensure an improved assessment and investigatory process for alleged offences, as reported by fuel retailers, modelled on the fuel drive-offs central reporting process introduced by NSW Police in 2013.
- Introduction of a new specific Victoria offence code, to the Crimes Act 1958 offence of theft, detailing 'fuel drive-off', by Victoria Police in consultation with the Crime

Statistics Agency, which will improve data integrity and investigatory efforts in identifying offenders and patterns of offence behaviour.

- The establishment of an improved information sharing interface system or virtual 'stolen plate clearing house' between Victoria Police and VicRoads to quickly identify stolen numberplates in a more timely and efficient manner thereby leading to earlier detection of offending plates and assist in mitigating fuel drive-off offences.
- Work with industry to continue to implement improved security and video surveillance measures, including technology for the recognition of stolen plates, unregistered and stolen vehicles, to assist retailers in mitigating offending in the first instance as well as improving investigatory outcomes in the identification of offenders and proving criminal intent.
- The establishment of a taskforce to oversee the implementation and ongoing effectiveness of these reforms, co-chaired by the Police Minister and the Small Business Minister and to include the Chief Commissioner or their representative, the Australasian Association of Convenience Stores and other representatives of industry as required.

Comments attributable to Leader of the Opposition, Matthew Guy:

I want a safer Victoria and that means adopting a zero tolerance approach to crime.

Victorians who do the right thing and live by the law have had enough of excuses from criminals.

Victorians will have a choice at the next election of more of the same on law and order from Daniel Andrews or real change and a tougher approach from a Liberal Nationals Government I lead.

Comments attributable to Member for Mornington, David Morris MP:

Local fuel retailers have been telling me they need this policy to help stem the financial losses their small businesses are facing.

That's why we are sending a loud message that we won't make excuses for people who break laws by stealing.

Comments attributable to Jeff Rogut, CEO Australasian Association of Convenience Stores Ltd:

Fuel drive offs in Victoria have escalated alarmingly in recent years adding cost pressures for businesses and consumers and alike.

I welcome the policy of the Liberal Nationals Coalition which is the most comprehensive response to fuel drive offs of any Australian jurisdiction.

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