

# David Koch

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **Police not at home in Lexton**

Lexton has a police officer but he doesn't live in Lexton and he is seldom seen around town, says David Koch, Member for Western Victoria.

Raising community concerns with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Bob Cameron, in the Parliament this week, David Koch said that although a police officer had been appointed to Lexton, the community was disgusted that earlier commitments for the police member to be housed in Lexton had been reneged.

He said this matter had been brought to the Minister's attention early last year following concerns in the Lexton community of a proposal being considered to rationalise or close the local police station even though more than \$350,000 was spent in 2002 to build a new station and residence.

"The Minister responded by letter, stating that under the former Bracks Government, the Victorian police force had been increased by over 1,400 officers, funding had been provided to construct or refurbish over 140 police stations across the State, Victoria's crime rate was down 22 per cent since 2000-01 and that there would be a further increase of 350 police by 2010 plus additional equipment including an extra 100 police cars.

"The Minister also said that *'in small rural towns such as Lexton, police play a vital role in not only crime prevention and control but also in maintaining and building strong community networks and relationships in an endeavour to create social cohesion'* and in meeting this goal, *'Victoria Police developed a Local Priority Policing strategy to underpin the work of all officers working in the Victorian community'*.

"The focus on this strategy is supposed to be on local safety and security that allows active participation by the community in shaping police service priorities. So with the retirement of Lexton's Senior Constable Nelson in September 2006, Victoria Police met with the community to discuss policing needs and after consultation with local government, the Police Association and the community, it was decided to advertise to fill the vacant position at Lexton.

"The community was assured the successful police member would reside in the Lexton police residence and the officer would operate from both Beaufort and Lexton police stations, with the officer required to service Lexton at least two days a week.

"But despite assurances that a permanent police officer would reside in Lexton, 12 months later, the police residence remains vacant and poorly maintained even though Senior Constable Richard Henderson was appointed to the vacant position in July last year. As he is seldom seen in Lexton, the local community feel there is no real police presence in the town.

"The contradiction of the Minister's boast in recruiting record numbers of police and not discriminating against the safety and security of small rural towns such as Lexton is not only remarkable, but it is a further blatant deception. I am again calling on the Minister to deliver on his earlier promise of a resident police officer at Lexton", said David Koch.

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