

Malicious damage to property offences in Bourke Local Government Area

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Aim: To describe the nature of malicious damage to property offences in Bourke Local Government Area (LGA). This paper considers the characteristics of both the offence and known offenders.

Summary: In the 12 months to March 2014, the rate of malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA was the highest in NSW (5,003 incidents per 100,000). Overall, while the number of malicious damage to property offences in NSW has been declining, the number of offences recorded in Bourke LGA has remained stable. The majority of incidents in Bourke are recorded as general malicious damage to property offences (94%), with only nine incidents recorded as graffiti. Malicious damage to property incidents mainly occur between 3pm-6pm on Sundays and Mondays in the vicinity of the town centre. The average cost of these offences in Bourke is \$769. Almost all malicious damage to property offenders in Bourke were young, Indigenous males.

Keywords: malicious damage to property, crime statistics, property crime

Introduction

The rate of recorded crime in the Local Government Area of Bourke is amongst the highest of any community in New South Wales. In the 12 months to March 2014, Bourke LGA had the highest recorded rate of any LGA¹ for the following offences:

- domestic violence related assault
- non-domestic violence related assault
- sexual assault
- indecent assault, act of indecency and other sexual offences
- break and enter dwelling
- steal from retail store
- steal from dwelling
- steal from persons
- malicious damage to property

In addition, the recorded rate of a further three major offences: break and enter non-dwelling; motor vehicle theft and steal from a motor vehicle were significantly higher in Bourke LGA than the corresponding NSW rates.

In terms of volume, malicious damage to property was the most frequently recorded offence in Bourke LGA in the 12-month to March 2014. The rate of malicious damage to property offences in Bourke was almost five times higher than the NSW rate, ranking Bourke first in the state for this offence (5,003 incidents per 100,000 compared to 1,022 incidents per 100,000 for NSW). This report seeks to describe the nature of malicious damage to property in Bourke. By better understanding the problem it is hoped that opportunities to respond to this issue might become clear. The paper considers the characteristics of both the offence and the known offenders.

Method

Data used in this report were derived from the NSW Police Force's Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS). They reflect criminal incidents of malicious damage to property that were reported to or detected by NSW Police. Data covers the 12-month period between April 2013 and March 2014.

Malicious damage to property describes offences that cover the wilful and unlawful destruction, damage or defacement of public or private property, including graffiti.

Malicious damage to property incidents

Type of incidents

In the 12 months to March 2014, police in Bourke LGA recorded 153 incidents of malicious damage to property. These consisted of 143 incidents of general destruction, damage or defacement to property offences, nine graffiti incidents and one incident of damage to a shrine or monument.

Trends over time

Figure 1 shows the number of malicious damage to property offences recorded by the police in Bourke LGA between April 2009 and March 2014. Both the medium-term (5 year) and short-term trends (2 year) were both stable. By comparison, NSW showed a significant downward trend for malicious damage to property offences, declining by 7.7 per cent over 2 years and 6.9 per cent over 5 years to March 2014.

Month of year

Figure 2 shows the trends in malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA by month. This figure shows that the number of incidents recorded by the police fluctuates monthly but without any clear seasonal pattern. The months with the lowest prevalence were November and December with only nine incidents each compared with a peak of 18 incidents in August.

Day of the week

Figure 3 shows the day of the week that malicious damage to property incidents were recorded in Bourke LGA. Offences were slightly more commonly reported to or detected by police on Sundays (18%), closely followed by Mondays (16%). Otherwise the pattern is generally steady across the days of the week.

Figure 1. Number of malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA: 5 years trend, April 2009 to March 2014

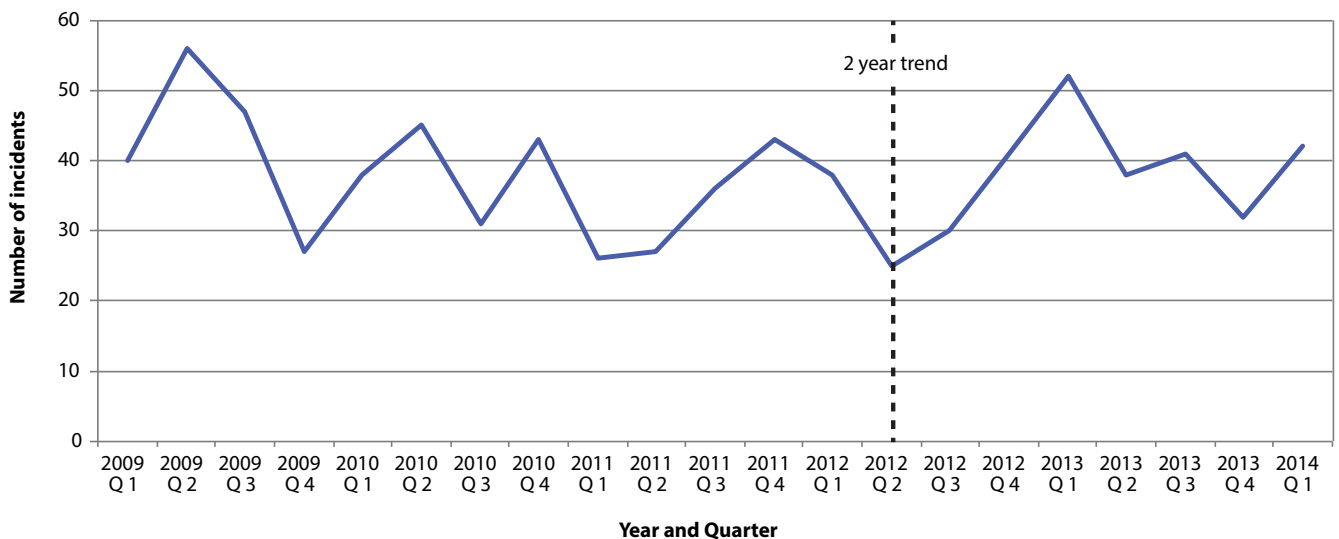
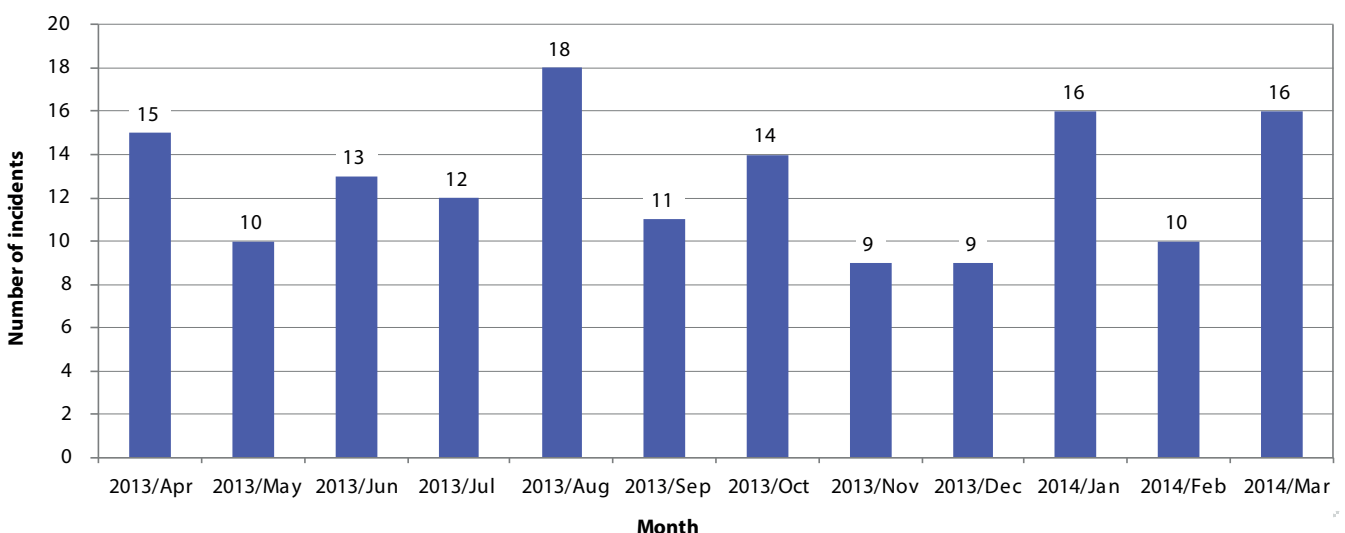


Figure 2. Number of malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA by month of the year



Across NSW malicious damage to property offences tend to be more commonly recorded by police on weekends - Fridays (21%) and Saturdays (21%), closely followed by Sundays (17%) than on other days of the week.

Time of day

Figure 4 shows the time of day that malicious damage to property incidents were reported in Bourke LGA. The peak period during which malicious damage to property offences were detected was between 3pm and 6pm (21%), closely followed by 9pm to midnight (20%). The smallest proportion of offences were detected in Bourke LGA between 3am and 12pm.

In NSW, malicious damage to property offences followed a similar temporal pattern to Bourke LGA, increasing in the early evening between 3pm and 6pm, before peaking between 6pm to 9pm (21%).

Location of incidents

Map 1 shows hotspots of malicious damage to property incidents in Bourke LGA. The hotspots indicate areas with a high level of clustering of recorded criminal incidents. The crime hotspots are coloured from yellow to red to indicate the intensity of the hotspot. While all the area of the map covered by a hotspot has a relatively higher concentration of crime (compared to the NSW average) the red area indicates the highest density hotspots, the orange areas indicate medium density hotspots and the yellow areas indicate low density hotspots.²

The map shows that there is a high level of clustering of malicious damage to property incidents in Bourke LGA around the centre of town, particularly along the Mitchell Highway. There were no crime hotspots outside the town centre.

Figure 3. Per cent of malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA by day of the week

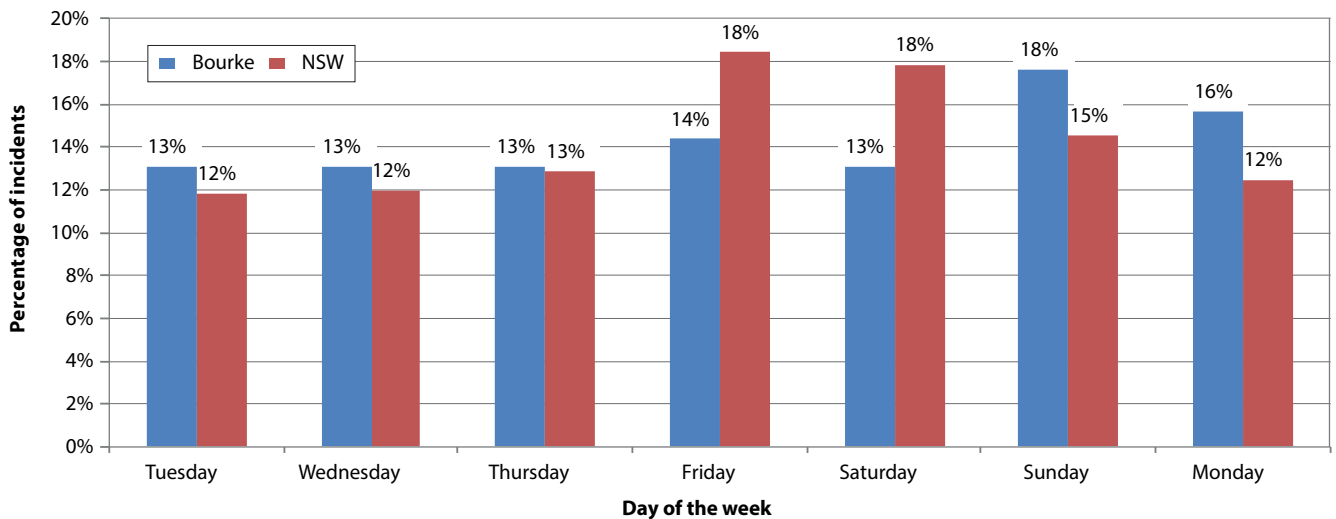
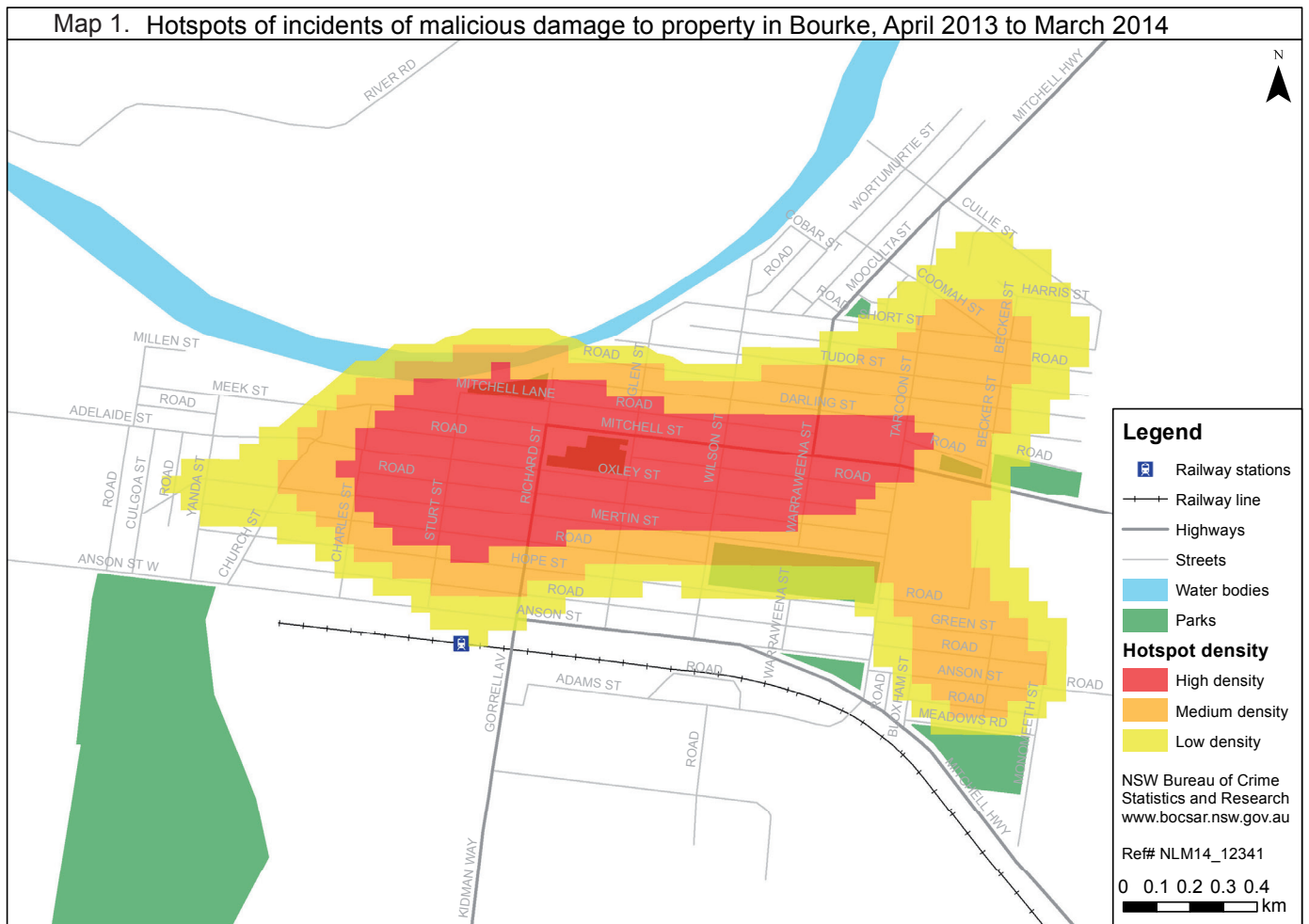


Figure 4. Number of malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA by time of day



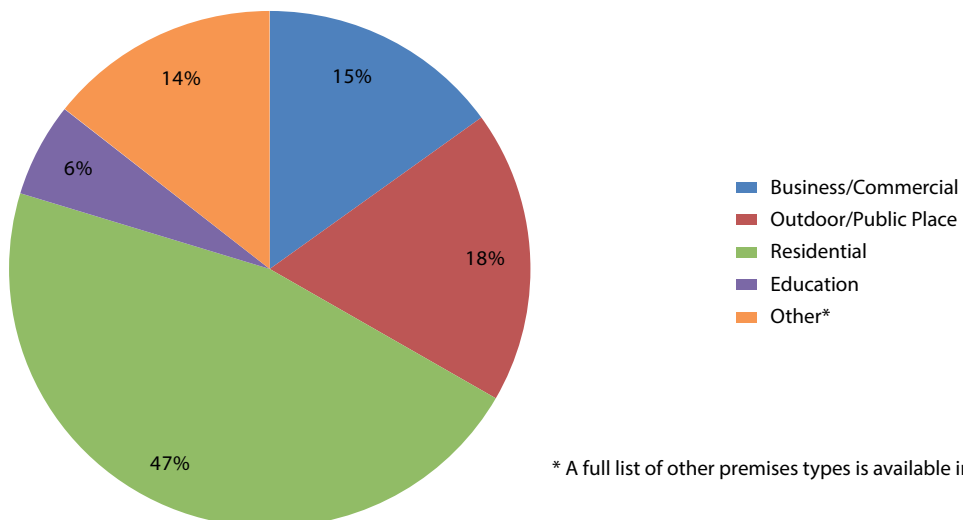


Type of premise

Figure 5 shows the percentage of malicious damage to property offences that occurred in Bourke LGA by premise type. During the 12 months to March 2014, the majority of offences occurred on residential premises (47%), followed by outdoor or public places (18%), outdoor public place (19%) and commercial premises (15%). Relatively few malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA occurred at sports grounds, hospitals or churches.

Across NSW, a similar proportion of malicious damage to property incidents occurred on each premise type, with the largest proportion of incidents occurring on residential premises (49%), outdoor public place (19%) and commercial premises (15%).

Figure 5. Percentage of malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA by premise type



Average cost of damage

The average cost of a malicious damage to property offence in Bourke LGA was \$769. Incidents occurring on recreational premises (\$6,000), business or commercial premises (\$1,642) and carparks (\$1,300) had the highest average damage cost, with a maximum cost of up to \$30,000. The lowest average damage costs occurred on law enforcement premises (\$236), outdoors or in public places (\$327) and vehicles (\$300).

On average, the cost of graffiti incidents in Bourke was \$263. The lowest damage cost for graffiti incidents was \$20 (occurring at a school) ranging to \$600 (occurring outdoors or in public places).

Persons of interest profile

No person of interest (POI) information is recorded for criminal incidents in which there is no known suspect. This is very common among incidents of property crime which have a low clear up rate. The clear up rate for malicious damage to property offences in NSW in 2013 was 13.3% (where proceeding commenced within 90 days).

In Bourke LGA, there were 64 POIs identified by the police for malicious damage to property offences. Of the 64 POIs identified 25 were formally proceeded against by the police.³

Method of proceeding

The most common method of proceeding against malicious damage to property offenders in Bourke LGA was a court attendance notice (84%). Four POIs were proceeded against under the Young Offenders Act, with two POIs receiving a warning and two receiving a caution.

In NSW, the largest proportion of POIs proceeded against for malicious damage to property offences received a court attendance notice (89%). Approximately, 11 per cent of POIs in NSW were issued with either a warning, a caution or referred to a youth justice conference for a malicious damage to property offence.

Age and gender

More than 90 per cent of POIs proceeded against for malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA were male (92%). The proportion of male POIs proceeded against in Bourke was slightly higher than the NSW average (84%).

Overall, POIs aged between 10 to 24 years accounted for almost all malicious damage to property offences recorded in Bourke LGA (80%). The highest proportion of POIs were aged 18 to 24 years (48%), followed by those aged 10 to 17 years (27%).

Table 1. Persons of interest identified by police for malicious damage to property in Bourke LGA, by whether proceeded against or not, by age group, gender and Indigenous status

Age group of POI	Indigenous status	Gender	Proceeded against	Not proceeded against	Total
10 to 17	Indigenous	Female	0	2	2
		Male	8	20	28
		Total	8	22	30
	Non-indigenous	Female	0	1	1
		Male	0	0	0
		Total	0	1	1
18 to 24	Indigenous	Female	1	0	1
		Male	8	6	14
		Total	9	6	15
	Non-indigenous	Female	0	0	0
		Male	1	0	1
		Total	1	0	1
25+	Indigenous	Female	1	2	3
		Male	6	5	11
		Total	7	7	14
	Non-indigenous	Female	0	0	0
		Male	0	0	0
		Total	0	0	0
Total	Indigenous	Female	2	4	6
		Male	22	31	53
		Total	24	37	61
	Non-indigenous	Female	0	1	1
		Male	1	0	1
		Total*	1	1	2

Totals exclude 2 POIs where age was recorded as "unknown" and 1 POI where the Indigenous status was "unknown".

In NSW in the 12 months to March 2014, roughly thirty per cent of POIs proceeded against for malicious damage to property offences were aged 18 to 24 years (29.5%), followed by those aged 10 to 17 years (24.5%).

Interestingly in Bourke, a lower proportion of POIs aged 10 to 17 years identified by police were formally proceeded against (25.8%) compared to POIs aged 18 to 24 (62.5%).

Indigenous status

Almost of the POIs identified by police for malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA were Indigenous (61 of 64). Similarly, of those POIs formally proceeded against by the police 96 per cent were Indigenous. In NSW in the 12 months to March 2014, approximately 18 per cent of POIs proceeded against for malicious damage to property offences were Indigenous (17.7%).

Summary

In the 12 months to March 2014, the rate of malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA was the highest in NSW (5.003 incidents per 100,000). While the state-wide trend for malicious damage to property offences showed a significant downward trend, incidents in Bourke have remained stable. The highest number of malicious damage to property incidents occurred between 3pm-6pm on Sundays and Mondays in the vicinity of the town centre. The average cost of the malicious damage to property offences was \$769. Interestingly, almost all of the POIs proceeded against by the police in Bourke LGA for these offences were young (10 to 24 years), Indigenous males.

Notes

- 1 Compared with Local Government Areas that have a population greater than 3,000 people. Note the most recent ABS population statistics show that Bourke's 2013 population was 2,996 residents. While Bourke's population is under 3,000 residents it will no longer be included in future BOCSAR's LGA rankings.
- 2 Crime hotspots are areas with a higher than usual number of offences per square metre. Hotspots are not adjusted for the number of people residing in or visiting an area.
- 3 Of the 39 POIs not proceeded against COPS records show that 22 were recorded as *not proceeded against, deceased, reported, and no formal action*, 12 were recorded as *legal process (not further classified)* and 5 POIs recorded as *unknown or missing*.

Appendix 1. Number and per cent of malicious damage to property offences in Bourke LGA by premise type

Premise Type	No.	%
Residential	71	46.4%
Outdoor/Public Place	28	18.3%
Business/Commercial	23	15.0%
Education	9	5.9%
Law Enforcement	5	3.3%
Carpark	4	2.6%
Rural Industry	4	2.6%
Industrial	3	2.0%
Licensed Premises	3	2.0%
Recreation	1	0.7%
Health	1	0.7%
Vehicle	1	0.7%
Total	153	100.0%