School holiday security ramped up

Tough security measures will be in place these October school holidays to stop vandals damaging our State’s public schools, Minister for Education and Training Verity Firth said today.

“The NSW Government is getting tough on vandalism and break and enter offences and is taking the strong action needed to protect public school property,” Ms Firth said.

“With students on October school holidays from this week, we are deploying a range of additional security services to address the higher risk that exists during school vacation periods.

“And we know these measures work with new figures from a four year comparison showing a dramatic drop in security incidents this year.

“During the recent July holidays, acts of vandalism and illegal entry were at a four year low compared to the previous three July vacation periods.

“In fact, when compared to the same holiday period last year, the incidence of break-and-enter during the July vacation decreased by 20%, vandalism decreased by an impressive 46%, and trespass decreased by 21%.

“With beefed up security during the holidays, the message to anyone thinking about committing a crime at a NSW public school is simple - you will get caught.”

2008 October holiday school security measures include:

- Dedicated and random security patrols in high risk areas – including more than 2000 random patrols in high risk country areas;
- Video monitoring using surveillance cameras (CCTV) at up to 70 schools;
- Monitoring of phone lines at high risk schools with guards on standby if a phone line is cut;
- Alarm systems at approximately 1700 schools; and
- Security fences at more than 570 public schools.

Ms Firth said the Department’s Safety and Security Directorate was set up in 2002 to better protect schools from vandals, intruders and arsonists.

“The use of dedicated patrols, computer lockdown devices, electronic alarms, video surveillance and closer relationships with Police Local Area Commands are having a major impact on reducing security incidents,” she said.

“These measures are combined with the Rees Government’s four year Building Better Schools program, which will see 200 security fences installed at our schools to prevent crime and protect community assets.

“In 2008-09, $11.5 million has been allocated in the Budget for 60 security fences at public schools across the State.
“But we also need the community to continue to be vigilant and report suspicious activities in or around schools to the Education Department on 1300 880 021 or to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000, or 000 in an emergency.

“Our school security experts know that if trespassers are caught quickly they are less likely to vandalise or break into school buildings.

“With community help we will keep our schools secure,” Ms Firth said.