

2009 SEPTEMBER QUARTER CRIME STATISTICS

GOOD NEWS (AND BAD)

It being Christmas many of you would, in the normal course of things, have been murdered, assaulted or robbed with a weapon by now. But the frequency of these crimes is down this year, so congratulations, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all the survivors.

The bad news, as told to us by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, is shop stealing is up by 5.8%, which seems to suggest those twisted souls who would rather thief than earn an honest living have identified shop stealing as the easiest game in town. Even worse for owners of clothing shops; stealing in their sector is up by a whopping 30.3% (Wow. Either these crooks are breeding like guinea pigs, or they're taking armfuls of apparel into changing rooms and emerging multi-layered as an onion and waddling out the door like the Michelin Man.) Stealing from Licensed Premises is up 18%. So presumably thieves like to get a little tipsy while posing in their newly stolen outfits. Stealing from supermarkets is up 7%. Well, you know, you can only admire yourself drunkenly in the mirror in your new threads for so long before hunger pangs kick in and you've got to go out and steal the groceries.

So the GFC might be over but its repercussions are still being felt. The rise in shop stealing would seem to be directly linked to the continuing rise in unemployment. And unemployment levels are expected to rise for some time yet.

Charter Security's CCTV systems will deter a large percentage of thieves. But with shop stealing trending upward there will come a moment. And most shop owners, when they witness someone stealing, are so shocked they freeze. They suffer a total inability to do anything about it. Understandable. Confronting a thief is an act of bravery. Don't expect your staff to do it. Accusing someone of dishonesty takes a major moment of courage. What comes next? Will the thief turn violent? There will surely be an ugly scene. A shop owner's heart is pounding and their throat is dry at a time like this.

Perhaps the right thing to do is to turn away and pretend I didn't see. No. I've got to protect my business, my livelihood, this thing I built from the ground up, this thing I slave away at and devote so much time to. But what if the dude has a knife? Even if he doesn't, he'll swear and make threats and claim loud innocence. What do I do then? Other customers will be frightened away. But if I don't confront the thief he will surely return. My shop will have become part of his beat.

People train to meet this moment. It is a damned hard thing to deal with. Your profits are already being affected; but this might damage your physical well-being and your peace-of-mind. At Charter Security our in-store operatives deal with this moment of confrontation as a matter of course. Quietly, gently, they bring it on. The moment has come. They tap a thief on the shoulder. You do not steal here.

From all of us at Charter Security, we hope you have a safe and prosperous (It's important) New Year.