

MASTER BUILDERS



**ROMINA DE SANTIS**, technical adviser at Master Builders WA, answers your questions about home building



THE QUESTION

*We love sitting at the front of our home and enjoying a good book or morning coffee, but the last two outdoor couches of ours have been stolen by careless thieves. What do you recommend to ensure this doesn't happen and to safely secure our comfortable couches to the ground or exterior of the home without damaging them?*

THE ANSWER

It is terrible that you can no longer leave things unattended in the front yard. Bikes and scooters are understood to be an easy grab and run, but verandah or outdoor furniture is not considered a risky item to leave unattended, though theft is quite common.

Firstly, take pictures of your outdoor areas so you have records for insurance claims just in case; but there are some preventative measures you can take to reduce the risk of theft.

Talk to your neighbours.

The more people watching and reporting suspicious behaviour, the lesser the incidence of theft.

There are a number of neighbourhood social media sites that report on things – good and bad – happening in the area.

People think that a tall fence or wall at the front of their home is the answer to securing their home, making it seem inaccessible.

It is definitely more difficult to access, but once the person is behind the wall they are able to take their time to explore unlocked areas and plan theft or damage.

Opt for visually permeable fencing that provides privacy, but also maintains surveillance for

yourself and surrounding homes.

Security lighting is a good investment, as it shines a spotlight on anything moving in your yard. This is a great deterrent, along with a growling or barking dog.

If your preference is locking up the furniture, I would suggest using steel cable and locks – not as visually obtrusive as using chains, and should not damage the furniture.

Connecting a few pieces together will make it more difficult to steal.

If you have single pieces of furniture, you would need to secure the cable to the wall or ground. Include a lockable box to store cushions if you use the furniture seasonally.

Alternatively, you can secure the furniture to metal plates bolted to the floor or wall.

I would not suggest bolting directly to the furniture, as it is not made of structural components, is often hollow and would not provide additional security, only easier to damage when someone tries to move it or take it.

*For more information about building, visit the Master Builders A-Z Building Information Directory at [www.mbawa.com](http://www.mbawa.com). If you have any questions about home building or purchase issues, email [romina@mbawa.com](mailto:romina@mbawa.com)*

# CRIME AFFECTS THE COST OF HOUSING

*Master Builders director Michael McLean reports on how the general public can help keep the cost of housing down by being vigilant.*

REGRETTABLY, rarely a week goes by without a builder or new homebuyer reporting an incident of theft or damage, or both, to a new home they are building.

As you can imagine, this causes considerable frustration to builders, delays to the project being completed and additional costs to all parties, including future insurance premiums.

Over the course of a year, Master Builders has assessed the cost of theft and vandalism to new housing projects to be tens of millions of dollars.

Most of the items being stolen or damaged appear to be white goods and appliances which are installed near the end of a project, copper wiring, building materials, tools and equipment of trades stored onsite.

Most of these thefts result in forced entry to the new home, storage shed or fenced property.

The increased incidence of theft and vandalism has contributed to many builders and homeowners taking additional security measures, such as:

- Surveillance cameras
- Locked gates and fencing
- Security patrols
- Guard dogs
- Security alarms and monitoring
- Tagging and coding appliances and equipment
- GPS tracking devices
- Rewards for information from neighbours and others
- Not installing some appliances until the very last week before handing over the property to the owner or occupant.

Each of these measures and others have been relatively successful in reducing

theft and vandalism, but ultimately at an additional cost to the homeowner.

Master Builders recently formed an alliance with Crime Stoppers WA to help catch the perpetrators of theft and damage to building sites across the Perth metropolitan area.

Crime Stoppers is an independent community-based organisation which was established over 23 years ago to make Western Australia a safer place for everyone.

It does this by working in partnership with the community, State Government, WA police and other organisations like Master Builders.

By working with Crime Stoppers WA, Master Builders encourages any member of the public who observes or suspects any criminal activity, such as theft on a building site, to contact Crime Stoppers WA.

You can report online at [www.crimestopperswa.com.au](http://www.crimestopperswa.com.au) or by phone on 1800 333 000.

You can do this anonymously, without any obligation to provide your name and hence, without fear of any recrimination.

Crime Stoppers WA will refer your information to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Although this may sound like a very simple and easy strategy, it has proven to work.

So, the next time you observe something suspicious, not quite right or obviously wrong in terms of an activity on a building site, please contact Crime Stoppers WA, either online or by phone.

By doing so, you are playing an important role in keeping the cost of housing more affordable for everyone.

On behalf of builders and new homebuyers and renovators, thank you for helping us.

