

Media Release

Stop copper theft on building sites

August 31, 2020

Copper theft has long been a problem on building sites and builders welcome WA Government moves to regulate sales of the metal.

Master Builders WA executive director John Gelavis said today's announcement by Police Minister Michelle Roberts on plans for copper regulations to match gold and silver, followed by wider legislative reforms, came as a relief for builders.

"Master Builders has been advocating for tougher regulations to reduce construction site theft for the past five years," he said.

"Copper is a valuable metal and should be regulated like silver and gold so it can't be easily stolen and sold.

"This is a major step forward and we welcome the promise of further reforms because worksite crime causes delays and financial costs that hurt builders, their clients and the whole community.

"Construction projects are constantly under attack from thieves targeting fuel, machinery and electrical cable. On home building sites, water meters, electrical items, hot water units and even landscaping plants are regularly stolen.

"Often, the destruction is worse than the theft itself. When thieves rip out newly installed copper pipes, the value of replacing the pipe is small compared to the time and cost involved in fixing the damage and re-doing the work.

"Builders have been proactive in dealing with the problem. In May, Master Builders joined forces with other industry groups and the WA Police to launch the Partnership Against Crime Taskforce

"In the past, a lot of construction site crime has gone unreported but records are important for identifying crime trends and hotspots.

"Central to the PACT program is a quick and easy online system for contractors to report crime plus a 24/7 phone number for the wider community. Recording all incidents and sharing information means better investigation and more offenders caught.

"In recent months we have seen a drop in construction site crime, which has been attributed to COVID-19 and the corresponding restrictions on movement. We're predicting an upward swing, however, because these are difficult times and the lure of a quick profit is strong."

For more information please contact: John Gelavis, Director – w: 9476 9800 m: 0428 884 392