

## Veteran public servant contests traffic charge

ONE of Queensland's most respected and longest serving public servants is challenging an Atherton Tableland traffic ticket in court.

Sir Leo Hielscher earlier this month announced his retirement after 68 years in the public service, with Premier Anna Bligh praising his career and announcing the Gateway bridges would be named after him.

Police accuse the 83-year-old Queensland Treasury Corporation chairman of failing to give way at an intersection while facing a give-way sign or line.

The incident allegedly occurred in Malanda on July 4 last year.

Mr Hielscher did not appear in Brisbane Magistrates Court yesterday, but his solicitor Liam Prescott told the court the charge would be contested.

Mr Hielscher will be represented by barrister Chris Wilson at a hearing in the same court on May 10.

## Top cop gets three more years in job

QUEENSLAND Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson will be reappointed for another three years when his current contract expires later this year.

Mr Atkinson was appointed the state's top cop on November 1, 2000, having started his career with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) in 1968.

Premier Anna Bligh told parliament yesterday that throughout the past 40 years Mr Atkinson had served in a number of locations within a wide range of roles in the QPS.

"Importantly, during his time in the position, Commissioner Atkinson has overseen a 26 per cent drop in the overall rate of crime in Queensland, and that I think is an outstanding achievement," Ms Bligh said.

## Drivers blame kids as road distractions

NEARLY half of all adult drivers blame their children's backseat behaviour for distracting them while on the road, a new survey has found.

The AAMI nationwide poll found that 44 per cent of the 2523 respondents said their children were distracting them from concentrating while they were driving. Almost one in three admitted on occasions their behaviour, while driving, was a bad influence on their children.

However, almost all driver-parents recognise their child's safety as paramount, with just 4 per cent admitting their children don't always wear seat belts or child restraints.



REMEMBER . . . Ren Pedersen gives presents to Isabella Thurlow, 10 months, at The Townsville Hospital. Photo: EVAN MORGAN

## Giving in memory of a special little girl

AMY Pedersen would have celebrated her 10th birthday yesterday if not for a rare and aggressive illness which claimed her young life.

The vibrant little girl was only nine years old when she lost her fight with brainstem glioma in March last year after being diagnosed 16 months earlier.

Her father Ren visited the children's ward at The Townsville Hospital yesterday to hand out toys to the patients and commemorate his beautiful daughter's life.

"I thought we can't give to our daughter anymore so we will give to other kids what she can't have," he said.

But he admitted it was hard to

step foot back into the place where his little girl "copped a hiding" from the devastating brain cancer.

Mr Pedersen is now director of The Cure Starts Now, a foundation aimed at raising awareness and funding into research for the paediatric cancer, which affects one in 15,000 children and has a 99.5 per cent mortality rate.

"We are gaining momentum and being approached by research institutions so we are making ripples in the ocean," he said.

"We're not an organisation with marketing strategies and so forth so we need every little bit of help we can get.

"We're just parents - we haven't applied for this."

He said they desperately needed to raise funds for the life-saving research to go ahead.

Any money raised will be put straight into finding a cure for the tragic cancer.

Mr Pedersen said they believed targeting what was the toughest form of cancer first would mean the more common cancers could also be treated.

"If there's a treatment for this disease we see it as a home-run cure for other cancers," he said.

Mr Pedersen said they had started a special "hundred club", hoping 100 generous businesses could donate \$100

each for the cause, for a total of \$10,000 for Australia's first ever paediatric brainstem glioma trial.

"It's a simple concept and we send them certificates which shows their generosity," he said.

He said the foundation had a list of a number of other ways businesses could help without costing them a cent, including placing the foundation's logo on their invoices or documents to raise awareness about the organisation.

To donate or for more information email [ren@thecurestartsnow.org](mailto:ren@thecurestartsnow.org) or visit the website [www.thecurestartsnow.org](http://www.thecurestartsnow.org).

— RACHEL TOUNE

## Fire in a bin and disturbances spark big response

# Prison on riot alert

By EMILY MACDONALD  
police reporter

MORE than a dozen police cars, plus ambulances and fire engines raced to Stuart Prison yesterday after reports a riot had broken out and the jail was on fire.

But they left less than 20 minutes later. Corrective Services said the incident amounted to a rubbish bin fire and two separate disturbances involving inmates.

The drama coincided with the end of the school day, although students from Stuart State School seemed unconcerned by the emergency services vehicles and waved at media cameras from their bus.

Corrective Services spokesman Ross McSwain said there was 'not in the slightest' suggestion of a riot.

"At 3.10pm a small fire began in a waste-paper basket. It was extinguished by 3.20pm by staff," he said.

"Firefighters came and tested the air quality and left soon after.

"At the moment we don't know how the fire began, but we suspect a prisoner lit it.

"The prisoners will be briefed and there will be an investigation into the fire.

"At the same time a prisoner had an upsetting phone call and became abusive towards people and he was escorted to the detention unit.

"In a separate part of the prison, another prisoner was also upset and began banging the floor and he was also escorted to the detention unit."

Mr McSwain said the second inmate-related incident occurred in close proximity to the fire.

A police media spokeswoman was tight-lipped about the incident, but confirmed officers had been called to the prison.

A Queensland Fire and Rescue Service spokeswoman said any incident involving the prison, especially where a fire was concerned, was treated extremely seriously.



LEFT: Emergency service vehicles at the prison

"We received a call from the control room advising there was a fire," she said.

"They didn't know what was on fire to begin with, there was just a report of the fire in one of the rooms in Stuart Prison.

"We notified police and ambulance and they all had their crews dispatched as per protocol. On arrival we met up with staff

and security and they were prepped before they entered the building.

"They investigated inside the building and it turned out to be a fire in a rubbish bin in a kitchen which was a communal area. Staff had the situation under control. We cleared the area, made sure it was safe and left it in the hands of Corrective Services."