**Subject:** RE: Sovereign Citizens

***What dangers do movements like this pose?***

* *Generally speaking, Sovereign Citizens hold the belief that they are not subject to Local, State and Federal laws, and/or are free to choose which laws apply to them. Individuals may be attracted to the Sovereign Citizen Movement (SCM) if they are facing financial hardship, have mental health issues, are fixated on a particular grievance, person or institution, or are dissatisfied or feel aggrieved in some way with the government or law enforcement.*
* *From a law enforcement perspective, Sovereign Citizens often hold some form of perceived grievance against government. Members of the SCM are therefore likely to be obstructive, argumentative and non-compliant in their dealings with police during interactions. In some circumstances, the fixation towards police officers has involved the use of social media to intimidate and create fear, resulting in additional resources to protect the officer and their families from potential harm.  The nature of recent interactions between members of the SCM and law enforcement has resulted in the need for increased vigilance and further education around the risks, ideology and tactics when engaging with these individuals.*
* *From a public health perspective, the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 including the associated lockdown restrictions and concerns around the Government vaccination regime has resulted in an increased risk to public safety, witnessed though disruptive and violent protests held during movement restrictions (particularly NSW/VIC). Police have seen paraphernalia associated with the SCM being displayed during these confrontations, highlighting the attraction of Sovereign Citizens to various anti-government campaigns within Australia.*

***Is this something the QPS has noted an increase in in recent times?***

* *Police have seen a recent increase both within both capital cities and regional centres around the reporting of sovereign citizens and their participation in disruptive and violent protests. Police have also seen an increase in behaviour’s commonly referred to as ‘paper terrorism’, involving acts which increase the administrative burden at all levels of government.*

***Is the QPS actively monitoring this?***

* *The Queensland Police Service is well positioned to monitor and assess both individuals and groups who may pose a threat to the safety and security of all Queenslanders.*

***Where do groups like this generally meet, are online forums used most frequently?***

* *Individuals who proscribe to sovereign citizens ideologies are often not affiliated with a specific group or organisation. Whilst members of the SCM may in fact meet, either in groups or via online forums, there is often no clear coordination structure which links their ideology to a specific group cause.*

***Types of behaviour displayed by sovereign citizens***

* *The use of social media to intimidate police, public officials and court officials*
* *Video recording interactions with law enforcement and public officers*
* *‘Paper terrorism’ – filing fraudulent legal documents to harass public officials and financial organisations; sending lengthy correspondence to law enforcement and public officers*
* *The use of markings and seals on documents, e.g. signing documents with a fingerprint dipped in red ink*
* *The use of argumentative tactics to obstruct police during interactions e.g. traffic stops and protests; refusing to provide their name or confirm their identity when required*
* *Sovereign citizens often fly the Australian Red Ensign flag which highlights Australia’s federation and sovereignty – the Red Ensign signals to authorities that they are outside the jurisdiction of Australian law.*

***Why are we seeing an increase in this movement?***

* *The ongoing impacts of the COVID -19 pandemic has provided the SCM with an ideal platform to communicate with other like-minded individuals and become an active participant in promoting anti-government sentiments. With the increase in video recordings involving the public’s interaction with law enforcement, the tactics and behaviour of sovereign citizens are now easily accessible for individuals who wish to learn about the movement. The recent increased publicity around the movement may provide further guidance and another avenue for those seeking to exercise their freedom of speech and share their anti-government beliefs.*

***CONSIDERATIONS***

* *Public officers should contact Police if confronted by a sovereign citizen.*