



Rotary Breakfast – 23 August 2023

Does the full moon affect policing?

Geoff Sheldon
Acting Chief Superintendent
Gold Coast District



Background / Context

Personal:

Sworn in 1982

Served predominantly as a Detective throughout Qld

Arrived from Cairns to Gold Coast May 2020

Organisational;

QPS has 15,579 staff

Police Stations – 339

Gold Coast – approx. 1,100 staff

Police Stations 11

Geographical size 80 kms x 40 kms



The Lunar Hypothesis

The Biggest Believers

Police Officers

Psychiatric Nurses

Emergency Medicine

University Students





Two Common Theories



Luminosity

'Human Tides'

The Policing Perspective?



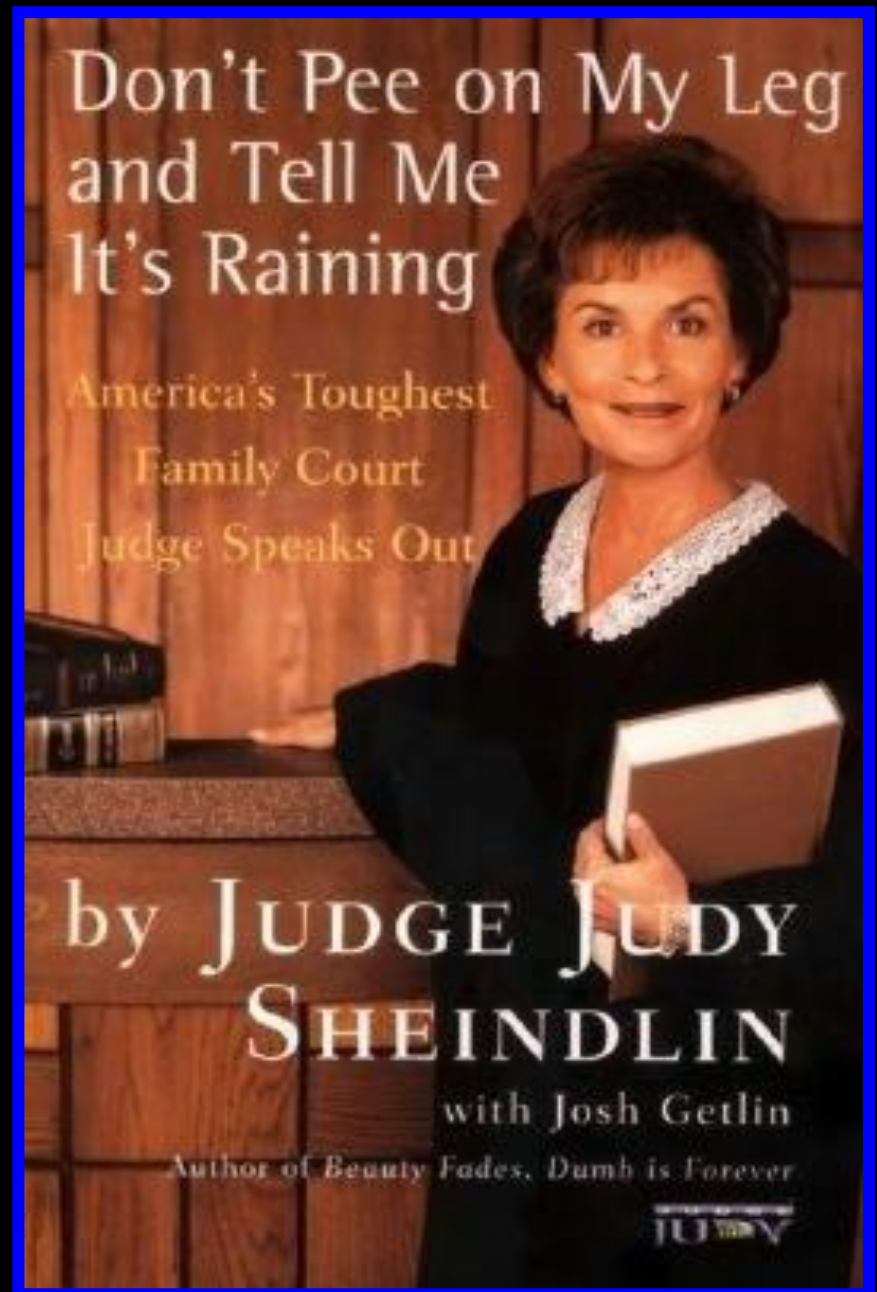
Normal people:
"Awww, what a beautiful moon."



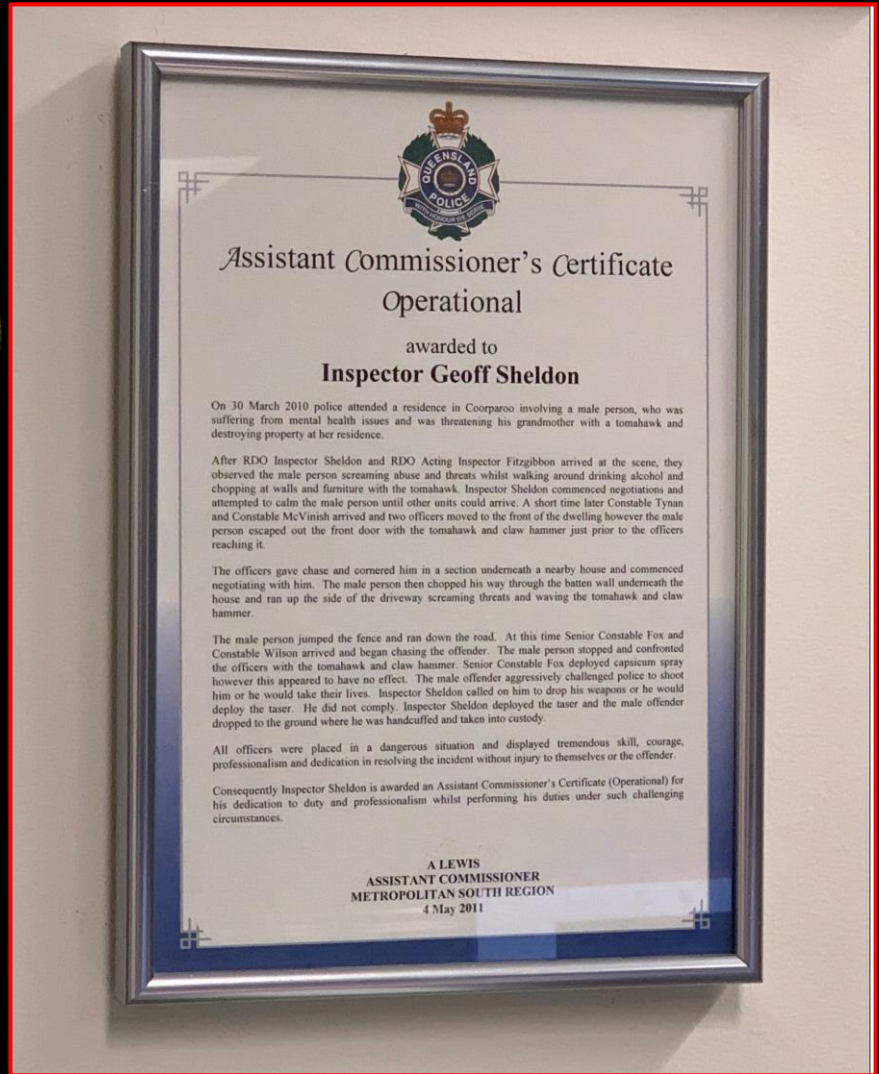
Law enforcement:
"Awww, crap!"



The General Academic Perspective?



My Perspective?



Assistant Commissioner's Certificate
Operational
awarded to
Inspector Geoff Sheldon

On 30 March 2010 police attended a residence in Coorparoo involving a male person, who was suffering from mental health issues and was threatening his grandmother with a tomahawk and destroying property at her residence.

After RDO Inspector Sheldon and RDO Acting Inspector Fitzgibbon arrived at the scene, they observed the male person screaming abuse and threats whilst walking around drinking alcohol and chopping at walls and furniture with the tomahawk. Inspector Sheldon commenced negotiations and attempted to calm the male person until other units could arrive. A short time later Constable Tynan and Constable McVinish arrived and two officers moved to the front of the dwelling however the male person escaped out the front door with the tomahawk and claw hammer just prior to the officers reaching it.

The officers gave chase and cornered him in a section underneath a nearby house and commenced negotiating with him. The male person then chopped his way through the batten wall underneath the house and ran up the side of the driveway screaming threats and waving the tomahawk and claw hammer.

The male person jumped the fence and ran down the road. At this time Senior Constable Fox and Constable Wilson arrived and began chasing the offender. The male person stopped and confronted the officers with the tomahawk and claw hammer. Senior Constable Fox deployed capsaicum spray however this appeared to have no effect. The male offender aggressively challenged police to shoot him or he would take their lives. Inspector Sheldon called on him to drop his weapons or he would deploy the taser. He did not comply. Inspector Sheldon deployed the taser and the male offender dropped to the ground where he was handcuffed and taken into custody.

All officers were placed in a dangerous situation and displayed tremendous skill, courage, professionalism and dedication in resolving the incident without injury to themselves or the offender.

Consequently Inspector Sheldon is awarded an Assistant Commissioner's Certificate (Operational) for his dedication to duty and professionalism whilst performing his duties under such challenging circumstances.

A LEWIS
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER
METROPOLITAN SOUTH REGION
4 May 2011

Research into The Lunar Hypothesis



Lieber & Sherin 1972
15 years of Murders



Lieber & Sherin, 1972

Studied Homicides;

- In Dade County Florida (15 years – 1,949 cases)
- In Ohio (13 years – 2,033 cases).

Reached statistical significance in Florida
but not Ohio

Research into The Lunar Hypothesis



Ambulance
Runs

Ice Hockey
Violence

Psychiatric
Admissions

Mental patient
Behaviour

911 Calls

Suicide

Crime

Fire alarms

Prison
Violence

Sex of
Newborns

Overdoses

Domestic
Violence

Murder

Dow Jones
Average

Male Sperm
Output

Fish
Catches

Traffic
Accidents

Dog Bites

Unruly Children

GP Consultations

Frequency of
Sheep Births

My Own Research - Methodology



Calls For Service

Full Moon Periodicity

Night time 6pm – 6am

Length of Study

Geographical Area

Methodology (Cont)

Calls for Service Data

1/1/2004 to 31/12/2011

908,725 jobs

30 items each job

=

27,261,780 individual
pieces of data.

Implications for Policing Practice?



Demand Management

Rostering Practices

Results

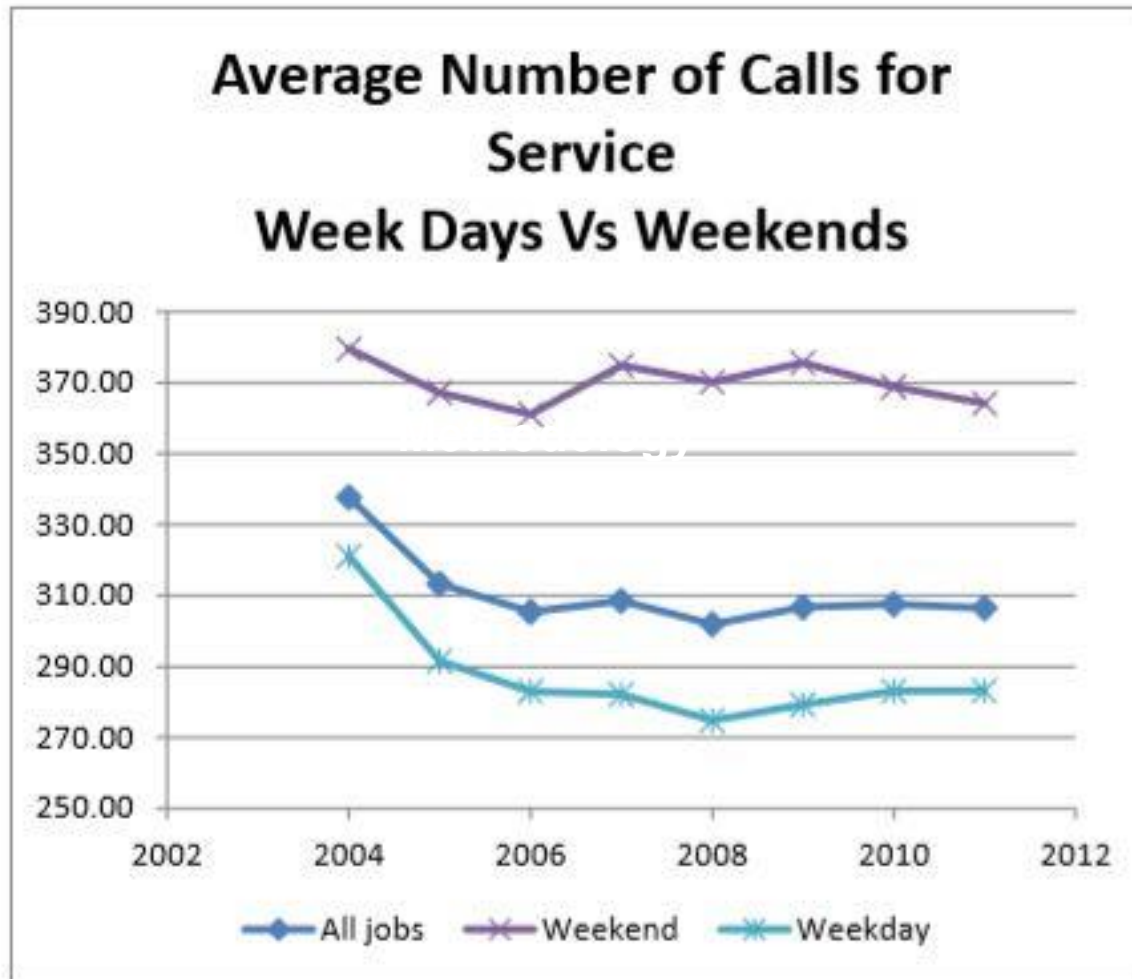


Figure 8 — Average number of calls for service per day — week days and weekends

Results

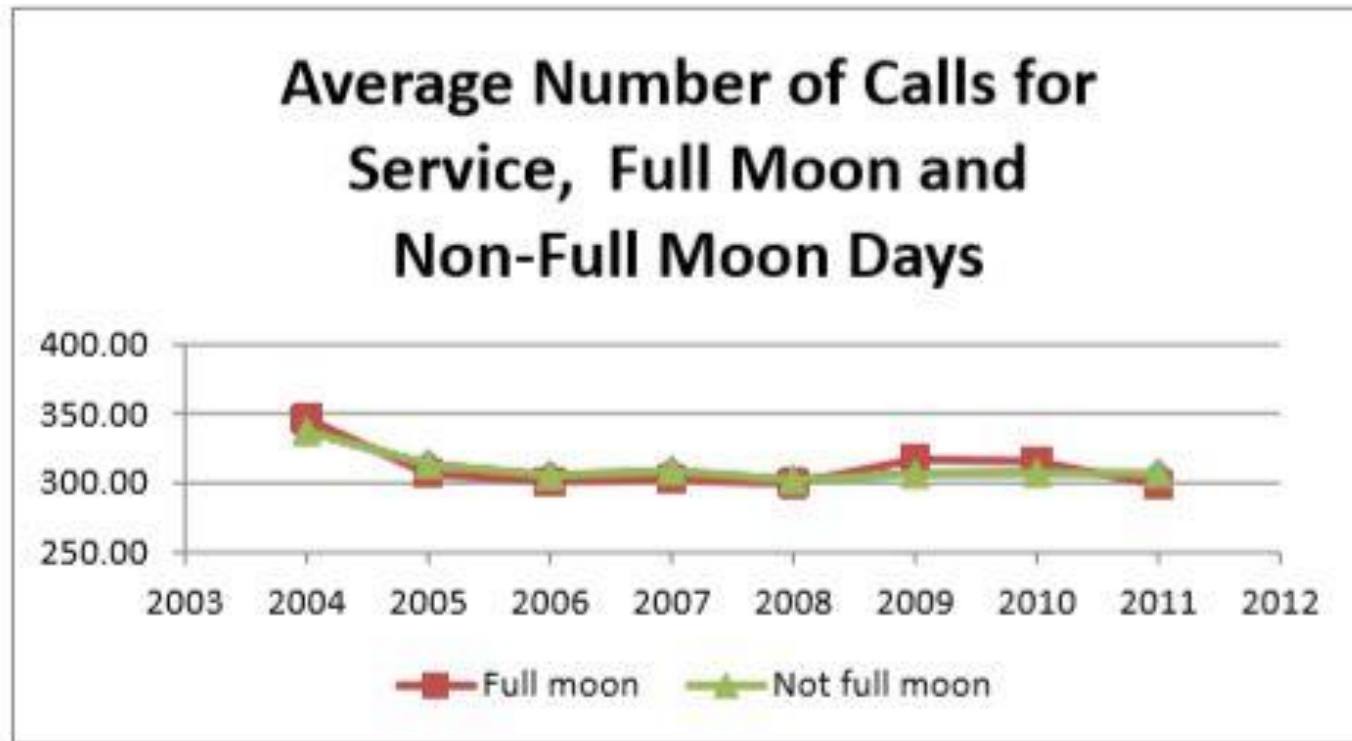


Figure 9 — Average number of calls for service — full moon and non-full moon days

Results



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When the Full Moon rises over the Sunshine State: A Quantitative Evaluation of Queensland Police Calls

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Abstract
Police officers are amongst the strongest believers in the lunar hypothesis—the belief that the full moon affects human behaviour, yet most research fails to support this proposition. This paper examined eight years of calls for service data from a large metropolitan policing district in Brisbane, Australia. Between 2004 and 2011 data from more than 908,000 service calls were examined to determine if police received more requests for service during the full moon. The study found no support for the lunar hypothesis. It concluded that there was