

## NEWS

# New alert system for missing kids

BY JUDITH KERR

A NEW system to warn the public about missing children who are in danger has been set up in Queensland.

Under the Amber Alert system, police issue a public warning about the child, via print and social media.

It will only be used in extreme cases when police need urgent public assistance to find missing children in imminent danger.

Amber Alerts were started in the US after the murder of nine-year-old Amber Hagerman in Arlington, Texas in 1996.

Since that time, the alert has become internationally recognised and was introduced statewide in September to replace the Child Abduction Alert system.

The amber alert system was introduced after lobbying from child protection advocate Bravehearts' Hetty Johnston, who last week launched a mayoral campaign for Logan City.

Ms Johnston, who started pushing for the system in 2012, said it would help improve child safety, increase community awareness and deter sex offenders.

Bravehearts founder and CEO Hetty Johnston started pushing for the system in 2012 and said it would help with community safety in Redlands, Logan and Scenic Rim.

"The majority of the com-



**ALERT:** Child Protection and Investigation Unit detectives Sergeant Scott Clarkson and Senior Sergeant Duncan Campbell investigate online crimes involving children.

"Queensland has become the leader across the country with not only introducing an abduction alert system, but now strengthening the system to ensure that when a child goes missing in suspicious circumstances an alert can be initiated.

"The community can play a crucial role in assisting police when a child has gone missing to locate the child as soon as possible.

"With the community's eyes and ears, police are likely to be able to track down missing children sooner."

Detectives from the Wynnum District Child Protection and Investigation Unit said the Amber Alert system had a role despite abductions being "extremely rare".

tious but not fanatical about the chances of their child being abducted. He said the Amber Alert was not just for kidnappings.

"The alerts are often more to do with the safety of a child because the person they are with - who is often an estranged parent - is intoxicated or the child is in danger," Sen Sgt Campbell said.

Det Sgt Scott Clarkson, one of the 16-member Child Protection Unit, spends a great deal of his time investigating internet crimes.

He said children who were online were at risk of predators who groomed them by sending messages and asking for meetings.

"Despite all the education in schools, we still regularly