

## Melbourne teens charged after armed spree

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Five teenagers have been charged after an alleged armed crime spree across Melbourne, sparking renewed calls for tougher action against youth violence in Victoria.

Police allege the group, armed with machetes, targeted supermarkets in Preston, Officer, and Epping before being caught following a dramatic chase in Bulleen.

Victoria Police confirmed the teens were arrested late on Monday night. Senior Constable Adam West said the group now faces a string of serious charges.

“All five have been charged with an array of offences, including theft of a motor car, armed robbery and robbery,” he said.

The alleged crime spree saw supermarkets across the city become the focus of violent attacks. Witnesses described terrifying scenes as masked youths stormed stores, wielding weapons and intimidating staff and customers.

Police believe the teenagers used a stolen car to move between locations, striking quickly before fleeing the scenes. Officers later pursued the suspects in Bulleen, where the chase

came to an end.

The arrests come amid heightened community concern about rising youth crime and brazen public violence in Melbourne. Shoppers and retailers say they feel increasingly vulnerable, with some stores stepping up security to protect staff.

Crime statistics in Victoria show repeated spikes in offences involving young offenders, particularly robbery and vehicle theft. Critics argue that lenient bail conditions and soft sentencing have emboldened violent gangs and repeat offenders.

The case has reignited debate over whether Victoria's justice system is doing enough to deter violent youth crime. Law-and-order advocates argue that tougher penalties and more visible policing are needed to restore community confidence.

"People need to feel safe walking into a supermarket or getting into their car without fearing they'll be targeted," one community advocate said. "Right now, the perception is that offenders think they can get away with it."

Some politicians have urged the Andrews-era justice reforms to be reviewed, claiming they weakened deterrence and left police to repeatedly deal with the same offenders. Calls are mounting for the state government to back stronger sentencing and invest in additional frontline police resources.

The five teenagers, whose ages have not been publicly released, remain in custody and are expected to face court later this week.

Victoria Police have confirmed investigations are ongoing, with detectives working to determine whether the group is linked to other recent armed robberies across the city.

For many residents, the incident is yet another reminder of Melbourne's ongoing struggle with youth crime. With supermarket staff left shaken and local communities demanding action, pressure is once again on state authorities to deliver stronger measures against repeat offenders.