



**THE
POLICE
ASSOCIATION**

FOUNDED 1917

Clarendon St
East Melbourne
Victoria 3002

P.O. Box 76
Carlton South
Victoria 3053

Phone: 210680
Melbourne

Facsimile: (03) 9495 6899
Telefax: (03) 9495 6933

Email: general@tpass.com.au
Website: www.tpass.com.au

Telephone: 1800 78 004 251 325

Our Ref: 66347S.001

Your Ref:

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BY: *G. L. Gould*

Submission 38

30 July 2002

Ms Catherine Cornish
Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Cornish

Re: Inquiry into crime in the community: victims, offenders and fear of crime

The Police Association ("the Association") (Victoria) is pleased to be provided with an opportunity to make a submission and comment on "Crime in the community: victims, offenders and fear of crime". The Association's membership of 10,200 in Victoria has a vested interest in crime patterns, the demographics that relate to the perpetrators of crime, particularly in terms of the reasons that people commit crime. We also have an active interest in the impact that crime has on victims and the measures taken to reduce that impact. The Association is committed to the various crime prevention methods that are being adopted in Victoria, particularly through the initiatives of the Victoria Police Crime Prevention Office and the statutory authority known as Crime Prevention Victoria.

The Association is primarily concerned about:

- (i) The numbers of young people who are both the perpetrators and the victims of crime.
- (ii) Educative programs for parenting.
- (iii) The prevalence of bladed weapons within our community.
- (iv) The usefulness of restorative justice methods to deal with crime in relation to preventing individuals repeating criminal acts.

The Association has a view that proper education should be developed within school communities throughout Australia in terms of the consequences of criminal behaviour and education programs for parents. These strategies should be adopted with a long-term view of appropriate parenting techniques being an important factor in long-term crime prevention. Over a long period of time our members have had experience with the perpetrators of crime who invariably have a dysfunctional family background which includes addiction to gambling, alcohol and drugs and parents providing poor role models for their offspring in terms of living a life free of crime themselves. Our members invariably find that a dysfunctional family background is the primary reason for the commission of crime. It is invariably the case that unfortunate family backgrounds lead to generational crime being committed by parents, their offspring creating a cycle which is difficult to intercept. The Association is of the view that education programs for parents should be made more widely available to attempt to break this nexus of crime being committed within successive generations of family members.

The Association also has a view that imprisonment without proper education programs within the prison system leads to a situation where the perpetrators of crime who are incarcerated simply learn to commit more serious crimes. There is also exposure to techniques to avoid detection and a 'learning' environment is unwittingly created between young people and experienced criminals. Imprisonment without proper and appropriate education programs to break the cycle of crime within perpetrators, particularly young people, are worthless. The Association is generally supportive of the restorative justice ethos, particularly in bringing about situations where the victims and the perpetrators have an opportunity to meet with the perpetrator being exposed to the harm that has been caused to the victim. We are of the strong view that perpetrators of crime should be subjected to working within community programs under close supervision and to develop techniques to create a worthwhile environment for them in terms of their rehabilitation and to take part as members of the community without the overwhelming temptation to commit crimes against a person or property.

The Association is particularly concerned at the prevalence that has recently developed within our community of young people who carry bladed weapons. These weapons are often used in gang situations and can and have been used against our members. We are particularly supportive of programs and education campaigns that have an objective to reduce the numbers of bladed weapons within our community that can and have been used to inflict injury or death.

We are well aware that whilst the elderly are least likely to be victims of crime, it appears that the perception among the elderly is that they have a significant fear of crime. Whilst this might be the perception of the elderly within our community, that perception needs to be managed and in Victoria that is done through the agency of Local Priority Policing in which District Inspectors are required, as part of their duties, to not just manage real crime but also the perception of crime. Education programs that target the elderly within our communities need to be adopted to reassure our senior citizens that they are the least likely to become the victims of a crime.

Finally, the Association supports the appointment of additional Police officers in Victoria to deal with calls for service from members of the community who are the victims of crime but more importantly to increase pro-active patrols to prevent crime. Whilst we understand that the community are important partners of our members in terms of preventing crime, a significant factor in allaying fear of crime in the community, in our view, is to have sufficient sworn Police officers to deal not just with the perpetrators of crime following its commission but to actively engage in partnership with the community in initiatives, including patrolling known trouble spots in order to prevent crimes occurring. In Victoria, following the commitment of a net additional 800 Police officers in April this year by the Bracks Labor Government, these numbers amount to what should have been appointed in 1998. Victoria is still requiring additional Police resources to deal with perpetrators of crime and the victims of crime but more importantly to deal with the issue of crime prevention.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Mullett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PAUL MULLETT

Secretary