Submission 69

QUEENSLAND

Your Reference: Submission
Our Reference: 103/66/00/001 / DBB
Contact Officer: Paul Mazerolle

15 August 2002

RECEIVED
1 ³ AUG 2002
BY: _____

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

Dear Ms Gould

RE: INQUIRY INTO CRIME IN THE COMMUNITY: VICTIMS, OFFENDERS AND FEAR OF CRIME

Thank you for your letter of 11 June 2002 inviting the Commission to make submission to your committee. I would also like to express my appreciation for extending the deadline.

As you may know, on 1 January 2002 the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) and the Queensland Crime Commission (QCC) merged to form the Crime and Misconduct Commission (hereinafter CMC). The purpose of the CMC is to improve the integrity of the state public sector and to fight major and organised crime. The legislation governing the CMC — *the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001* — also authorises the 'Commission' to conduct research into any matter relating to its functions. In particular, the research function of the Commission includes undertaking research into:

- the incidence and prevention of criminal activity
- the administration of criminal justice
- police methods of operation and law enforcement
- police powers and their use; and
- the continuous improvement of the police service.

Prior to the establishment of the CMC, much of the research into policing and crime in Queensland was conducted by the then, CJC Research and Coordination Division. This research was largely undertaken in response to a number of recommendations by the Fitzgerald Commission of Inquiry[1] aimed at improving the integrity, accountability, effectiveness and performance of the Queensland Police Service (QPS).

This submission focuses on the policing of crime and disorder and outlines some key strategies put in place by the CJC/CMC following the Fitzgerald Inquiry in an effort to improve the effectiveness of the Queensland Police Service (QPS).

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[1] Commission of Inquiry into Possible Illegal Activities and Associated Police Misconduct 1989, *Report of a Commission of Inquiry Pursuant to Orders in Council* (G. E. Fitzgerald QC, Chair), Brisbane, Goprint.

THE POLICING OF CRIME AND DISORDER

TRADITIONAL 'REACTIVE' APPROACH

Police have traditionally been the first — and often the only — line of response to crime in the community. Until recently, this response has largely been incident-driven and reactive. Typically, a police car is dispatched to the scene of a crime and a report taken. If the crime is deemed to be sufficiently serious, a more extensive investigation is initiated.

Some of the key characteristics of this 'reactive' approach include:

- reliance on a 'generic' method of service delivery, rather than tailoring the response to the needs of the individual or community
- orientation towards motorised patrols and providing a rapid response to the incident, rather than addressing the underlying cause of it
- focus of the police response is geared towards dealing with a 'crime' problem, as opposed to the wide variety of incidents (i.e. neighbourhood disputes, disorder, traffic, etc.) that never result in a criminal offence report
- emphasis on the efficiency of the response (i.e. timeliness) as opposed to an emphasis on the effectiveness of the response (i.e. quality).

The continued reliance on the reactive model of policing might be justified if it could be shown to be effective in reducing the level of crime and disorder in the community. However, a substantial body of research indicates that rapid response and follow-up investigations do not significantly reduce crime[2,3].

COMMUNITY POLICING

The Fitzgerald Inquiry was critical of the traditional reactive style of policing employed by the QPS and proposed that the primary policing strategy should be based around the notion of community policing[1].

Seven years after the Fitzgerald report, the CJC published a report on the *Implementation of Reform within the QPS: the Response of the QPS to the Fitzgerald Inquiry Recommendations* (the 'Status Report)[4]. The CJC concluded that the QPS had made some gains in the area of community policing, however, there had been relatively little change to the basic operational policing strategies employed by the Service. This was mainly because the shift had potential resource implications for the Service and that there was confusion about what community policing entailed.

EXPLORING NEW APPROACHES TO POLICING

Rather than generating further debate about the merits of community policing, the CJC suggested that a more beneficial approach would be to describe the characteristics of an effective and responsive police organisation and use this as a model to guide future developments within the Service. These characteristics included:

- information-driven strategies and management
- flexible service delivery
- use of local solutions to deal with local problems
- encouragement of problem-solving, innovation and initiative

[2] Kelling, GL, Pate, AM, Dieckman, D and Brown, CE 1974, *The Kansas City Preventative Patrol Experiment: A Summary Report,* Police Foundation, Washington DC.

[3] Homel, R 1994, 'Can Police Prevent Crime? In Bryett, K and Lewis, C (eds) *Unpeeling Tradition: Contemporary Policing,* Centre for Australian Public Sector Management, Macmillan Education, Melbourne.

[4] Criminal Justice Commission 1994, *Implementation of Reform within the QPS: the Response of the QPS to the Fitzgerald Inquiry Recommendations,* GOPRINT, Brisbane.

- a focus on evaluation
- use of performance measures that reflect the full range of police work, not just crime
- effective mechanisms for obtaining community input
- preparedness to work with other agencies to resolve problems.

Starting in 1994, the CJC and QPS joined in partnership to review a number of existing policing programs and to establish several major pilot projects. These projects were largely aimed at developing a capacity within the QPS to identify local policing programs, demonstrating the effectiveness of alternate service delivery strategies and identifying ways that police could work in partnership with the community to solve local problems.

The following are examples of some of the major pilot project undertaken by the CJC in collaboration with the QPS between 1995 and 2001[5]. Each of these projects incorporated some of the previously described key 'characteristics' of an effective and responsive police organisation.

TOOWOOMBA BEAT POLICING PILOT PROJECT (1995)

The Toowoomba project aimed to give individual officers responsibility and ownership for policing a designated geographic area and asked them to take a problem solving approach to crime and community problems. The project established that residential-style police beats were an effective and viable policing strategy in Queensland.

THE NATURE OF GENERAL DUTIES POLICE WORK (1996)

This research involved an analysis of crime reports and calls for service data in an effort examine the amount of time spend by police on patrol, types of calls handled and the pattern of demand for police services. The report concludes that the majority of calls for service (70%) do not result in a crime report.

GOLD COAST DISTRICT NEGOTIATED RESPONSE (1997)

This project was an evaluation of a new service delivery strategy involving the effectiveness of telephone reporting for minor criminal offences. One of the key findings of the research was that most victims were happy to have their complaint handled by telephone.

THE COST OF FIRST RESPONSE POLICING (1997)

This project focused on the cost of sending a police car to deal with calls for service. Results from the project were used to develop a model for costing the provision of various types of policing services (e.g. the cost of two police officers attending a break and enter, etc.).

BEENLEIGH CALLS FOR SERVICE PROJECT (1998)

The Beenleigh Calls for Service Project was a six-month project designed to determine whether the application of problem-solving techniques would reduce the number of repeat calls for service. An evaluation of the project concluded that policing efforts directed at repeat call locations successfully reduced police workload.

POLICING AND THE COMMUNITY IN BRISBANE (1998)

This project focused on assessing the development of improved policing methods by documenting the progress that the QPS had made in implementing Problem-Oriented and Partnership Policing. The research found substantial obstacles to the effective

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[5] A comprehensive list of publications is attached as an appendix to this submission.

implementation of problem-oriented and partnership policing and made suggestions to ensure that POPP is applied successfully.

BEENLEIGH BREAK AND ENTER REDUCTION PROJECT (1999)

The project was designed to enhance the police response to the problem of residential break and enters with a particular focus on reducing the risk of repeat victimisation and the number of offences in identified hot spots. This was accomplished by changing the standard police response to break and enter.

E-POLICING: THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ON POLICE PRACTICES (2001)

This research analysed the impact of information technology (IT) on policing, using the QPS as a case study. While the study indicated that IT has enabled police to do some existing tasks better, and that police have generally responded well to using the new technology, IT has not yet lead to major changes in policing practices (i.e. how the QPS deal with crime and disorder issues).

As a result of this collaborative approach with the CMC, the QPS has:

- established nearly 30 Neighbourhood Police Beats and approximately 40 Police beat Shopfronts throughout the State
- adopted Problem-Oriented and Partnership Policing (POPP) in 1997 as the Service's primary policing philosophy
- made substantial changes to the Information Management System (IMS) and Crime Reporting Information System for Police (CRISP) to facilitate problem solving
- introduced The At Risk Premises (TARP) project which aims to reduce repeat break and enter victimisation by changing the way that police respond to break and enters.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN THE POLICING OF CRIME AND DISORDER

There is no simple answer to the question of how to reduce the level of crime and disorder in the community. Different problems have different causes; some of these causes (such as economic disadvantage and cultural factors) are not easily controlled by police; and strategies which work in one place at one time will not necessarily be effective when tried somewhere else. For these reasons, the focus of the following discussion is not on proposing specific solutions that should be implemented by police, but rather, on suggesting changes to organisational structures and processes which would enhance the capacity of police to formulate, implement and evaluate strategies at the local level.

PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING

One of the most crucial developments in recent years has been the emergence of Problem-Oriented Policing (POP). The POP approach involves a process where police, in conjunction with other agencies, analyse the underlying features of crime and community problems in a systematic way, and then develop, implement and evaluate responses to address those underlying problems, rather than simply reacting to crimes after they have occurred.

As well as providing an effective approach to crime reduction, the potential benefits of a POP approach include savings in police time because repeat calls are reduced, more efficient and effective service provision to the public whose concerns are attended to at the source, enhanced job satisfaction for officers, and overall cost savings to the criminal justice system.

HOT SPOT POLICING

Hot Spots refer to spatial concentrations of crime, or specific areas or locations experiencing a higher than normal level of crime over a sustained period of time.

Hot Spots, because of their disproportionately high levels of crime, in particular repeat victimisation, are appropriate target locations for crime prevention initiatives. A number of international crime prevention experts have stressed the importance of addressing Hot Spots[6,7]. For example, it has been suggested that concentrating resources on Hot Spots is one of five critical points for action in crime prevention[8].

The potential of Hot Spot policing may be limited by a lack of appropriate computer systems, low quality data and a general lack of knowledge about the benefits of this approach to policing. However, research in Australia and overseas has clearly demonstrated the value of law enforcement organisations developing a focus on Hot Spots.

CRIME PREVENTION

Integrating crime prevention into day-to-day policing is vital to efforts aimed at reducing crime. However, for this to occur, some changes in the way that police deliver crime prevention programs may be required to meet the community's expectations of service delivery in this area. Some specific suggestions include:
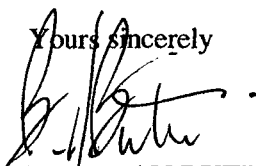
- crime prevention strategies should be tailored to the characteristics of *local* communities and particular types of crime, as opposed to police delivering a range of *generic* crime prevention strategies or programs (i.e. different problems require different solutions)
- to meet community expectations, crime prevention units may need to broaden their base of responsibility to include public disorder and other community problems
- crime prevention strategies by the police need to be routinely evaluated to assess their effectiveness and to adapt, when necessary, to ensure that responses are consistent with "best practice".

The CJC has been instrumental in working with the QPS to improve the way that police respond to crime. The CMC will continue this collaborative approach to ensure that the QPS provides effective and efficient policing services and is committed to achieving and maintaining the highest standards of integrity.

If the Committee requires further information or has any questions regarding this submission, please contact the Director of Research and Prevention, Dr Paul Mazerolle at (07) 3360 6288.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

BRENDAN BUTLER SC
Chairperson

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[6] Townsley, M. (2000) *Spatial and Temporal Patterns of Burglary: Hot Spots and Repeat Victimisation in an Australian Police Division*, PhD Thesis, Griffith University.

[7] Sherman, L., Gottfredson, D., MacKenzie, D., Eck, J., Reuter, P., Bushway, S. (1998) *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising.* National Institute of Justice, Washington.

[8] Felson, W., Clarke, R 1998 *Opportunity Makes the Thief,* Home Office, London.