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Legal and Constitutional Affairs
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BY:

The following is a brief submission by M T (Rene) Hidding, MHA, Shadow Minister for Police and Public Safety in Tasmania.

The Government in Tasmania has called a State Election and the State PLP is currently in final policy mode and is not in a position, of itself, to present a substantial submission to this inquiry.

The Committee will appreciate that no research resources are available to me at this time. I have undertaken to make the following points to advance discussion on these important matters, on the basis that this is a personal submission.

Yours faithfully .

M T (Rene) HIDDING MHA

Apprehension Rates – Term of Reference (f)

I want to make a case for consideration of the establishment of Centres of Excellence of various specialties of Crime Detection and Prevention, one for each State and Territory.

This would require the laying aside of parochial interests by the various State Police services and acceptance of the broad principle that, with eight discrete services in Australia the danger exists that the more that crime management begins to rely on high technology and science, the harder all States will find it to be able to afford “best practise” in all disciplines.

A case in point is the fact that the Northern Territory, Tasmania, Queensland and even Norfolk Island have, in recent years, seen brutal and “high profile” murders remain unsolved.

It could be argued that the local police services did the best they could with the personnel, equipment and resources available, but I believe that a NSW major crime unit may well have made fewer mistakes, taken more opportunities and simply have been for more experienced than their colleagues who thankfully, don't have as many of these crimes to manage.

The downside of such unsolved murders cannot be underplayed. The local areas face economic deprivation from lessened tourism, house values plummet and general community fear remains high.

International tourism suffers as a result of bad publicity from these crimes simply because they are not solved.

A Centre of Excellence for each State

I am not an expert in Crime Management matters so the following is simply an example of what could be achieved by having each State host a Centre of Excellence which could be highly mobile in terms of manpower and also highly equipped with the latest IT communications systems, including Tele conferencing.

Some Examples

NSW Could establish a CE for murder investigations
Vic Special Operations, Tactical response

- SA White collar crime, computer and internet crime
- Tas Forensic Science – including DNA fingerprint face and eye recognition etc.
- WA Vehicle theft, road safety policing communications
- NT Community Policing, indigenous issues.
- ACT (Federal Police) Internal affairs

The forgoing list does not include other opportunities such as burglary or juvenile crime, I am sure others exist.

Naturally, the NCA would retain responsibility for organised crime and gang based crime.

This broad proposal raises the following issues:

- a) Each State would still have the full range of policing units, but would also receive Federal funding to take one of their units, as agreed by all States, into the realms of world's best practice.
- b) Each State could rotate specialist officers through each of the other State's Centres of Excellence, raising the general standard of policing around the nation.
- c) Each Centre of Excellence would be able to be accessed for advice and assistance electronically through latest teleconferencing methods.
- d) The issue of Victorian police officers, for instance, not been sworn in to operate in other States could be overcome by any visiting officer having civilian observers or expert status or, in the case of operational necessity, be able to be sworn in by way of administrative instrument.
- e) Regardless of the merits of this proposal, consideration should be given to Federal legislation which would override most problems which sees evidence gathered in some states not being able to be tendered in the Courts of another State. Notwithstanding the sensitivities of States rights and sovereignty issues, the time has come to greatly improve the probability of policing and justice across State's borders.

Summary

This brief, largely unresearched submission seeks to address the problem of institutionalised mediocrity in all State's police services.

Mediocrity arises because of the high cost of the latest technology and training.

Claiming that the State's various services are already highly competent, with good records is to ignore the low clean up rates in many crimes and also to rest on the laurels of whatever successes States will claim.

It should be recognised that two centuries of parochial competition between States will ensure that the various police services will claim that their jurisdictions have special features that will not exist elsewhere. This should be treated with some suspicion, given the highly mobile nature of much of the population, I believe a major crime investigation could be handled with the same best practice procedures, regardless of the jurisdiction.

Launceston
26/6/02