

Chapter 8

The adequacy of cross-jurisdictional databases

Introduction

8.1 Law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in Australia and throughout the world are highly dependent upon their ability to store, access, share and manage information and intelligence, and much of the evidence received by the inquiry concerned the operability and effectiveness of the databases used by Australian LEAs.

8.2 Many agencies identified limitations in the operation of existing databases and called for improvements to arrangements for the sharing and management of information and intelligence by Australian LEAs. Improving the performance of cross-jurisdictional databases is widely regarded as critical in combating organised crime, and Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon, Victoria Police, provided a succinct expression of this view:

...serious organised crime is growing and moving far beyond our borders and even internationally. As we face this challenge, having better access to databases and information is important.¹

Databases in Australia

The difference between information, intelligence and case management

8.3 In order to understand the committee's consideration of the adequacy of Australian databases, it is critical to clearly distinguish between information databases, intelligence databases and case management systems. Each of these is an essential policing tool, and together they provide an operational capability that LEAs need to successfully fight organised crime in Australia.

8.4 Information databases are collections of a class or classes of information, which are sometimes referred to as 'involvements'. For example, DNA databases, fingerprint databases and child sex offender databases are all information databases. Information databases therefore provide police access to basic facts or data that relate to an aspect of operational policing.

8.5 Intelligence databases are more complex collections of data that may have had some value added by some type of analysis or treatment. Alternatively, they are systems that allow links to be drawn between pieces of information. For example, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Database (ACID), which allows linkages and associations to be drawn between disparate pieces of information, is an intelligence

1 *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2007, p. 16.

database. Intelligence databases therefore allow LEAs to manage and analyse information that relates to investigations and operational policing.

8.6 Case management systems are for bringing together offence related information and intelligence to assist with the investigation of a particular offence. For example, PROMIS, which is the AFP's case management system, allows a file to be created for the investigation of, say, a murder. This file allows investigating police to store and manage on PROMIS any information and intelligence from other systems related to that murder. Case management systems are therefore a key operational and investigative tool used by police to investigate a specific offence.

Adequacy of information and intelligence databases and case management systems

8.7 Currently, Australia has many separate information and intelligence databases and case management systems, largely as a result of each Australian jurisdiction establishing and maintaining its own systems and technologies. This has led to a common deficiency in the ability of police to access and exchange data between different jurisdictions and/or technologies. Deputy Commissioner John Lawler, National Security, Australian Federal Police, noted that the vulnerability of present databases lies wherever two jurisdictions cannot easily retrieve relevant information from each other, and this is the central and most important issue identified concerning the question of the adequacy of Australia's law enforcement databases.²

8.8 The different legislative and technological frameworks of jurisdictions impact negatively upon what and how data can be shared by police. Assistant Commissioner Wayne Gregson, Portfolio Head, Specialist Crime Portfolio, Western Australia Police, highlighted the implications of this:

...different states have different databases designed around their different legislation, which means that law enforcement tends to be a secondary consideration of the information holdings...[consequently there] is a large number of disparate databases holding different tranches of information.³

8.9 In light of the national and transnational character of organised crime groups and their activities, it is self-evident that limitations in access to and exchange of data between databases will be exploited by organised crime, and will disadvantage multi-jurisdictional investigations. The Police Federation of Australia submission cites recent criticisms of Australia's 'jurisdictional differences', which continue to frustrate the goal of fully operational national databases.⁴

2 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 68.

3 *Committee Hansard*, 30 April 2007, p. 16.

4 *Submission 5*, p. 8.

Information databases

8.10 Table 8.1 shows the major information databases in Australia, their type, accessibility, funding and operational status.

Table 8.1: Information databases in Australia

Database	Type of database	Agency	Accessible by	Funded by	Status
National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS)	Information. NAFIS also has a data-matching capability	CrimTrac	AFP, state and territory police forces. Host system for AFMA illegal fishers fingerprints	CrimTrac is largely self-funded through the National Criminal History Record Checking (NCHRC) Service	Operational
National Criminal Investigation DNA Database (NCIDD)	Information. The NCIDD contains DNA profile information and has a data-matching capability	CrimTrac	All jurisdictions' forensic laboratories	CrimTrac is largely self-funded through the NCHRC Service	Operational
CrimTrac Police Reference System (CPRS): Person Index (known as the Minimum Nation-wide Person Profile (MNPP) Project)	Information. General identity information and specific involvement details relating to persons	CrimTrac	Accessible by AFP, state and territory police; currently rolled out to all Victoria Police	The MNPP Project is funded from a mix of monies from the federal, CrimTrac and police jurisdictions Funding for ongoing support and enhancements to CPRS is yet to be determined	Currently being rolled out to all jurisdictions (to be completed by July 2008)

Australian National Child Offender Register (ANCOR)	Information; case management. Supports registration, case-management and sharing of information about registrable child offenders	CrimTrac	AFP and state and territory police forces	CrimTrac is largely self-funded through the NCHRC Service	Operational
National Names Index (NNI)	Information. Provides a national view of persons of interest	CrimTrac	AFP, state and territory police forces, ACC, ICAC, ACS, ASIC, NSWCC, and QCMC. Access to NNI is also provided from individual police jurisdictions to state-based justice and law enforcement authorities	CrimTrac is largely self-funded through the NCHRC Service	Operational. To be replaced by the CPRS
National Firearms Licensing and Registration System (NFLRS)	Information. Enables police to retrieve firearms related information about a person	CrimTrac	AFP, state and territory police forces, ACC, NSWCC, ICAC, ACS, and QCMC	CrimTrac is largely self-funded through the NCHRC Service	Operational. To be replaced by the CPRS
National Vehicles of Interest (NVOI)	Information. Records and tracks	CrimTrac	AFP, state and territory police forces	CrimTrac is largely self-funded through the	Operational. To be replaced by

System	vehicles and driver licence information			NCHRC Service	the CPRS
Telephone Directory Service (TDS)	Information. Provides searching function by names, telephone numbers and addresses	CrimTrac	AFP, state and territory police forces, ACC, NSWCC, ICAC, ACS, QCMC, and ASIC	CrimTrac is largely self-funded through the NCHRC Service	Operational

Improving the adequacy of information databases

CrimTrac

8.11 Australia has recognised the inadequate interoperability of police databases for some time. The central strategy to improve these databases is to seek improvements to the sharing of and access to data across the different systems, rather than to attempt to create a single, monolithic database covering all types of data across the whole of Australia.⁵

8.12 Accordingly, in 2000, CrimTrac was explicitly established 'to allow police forces across Australia to share information to solve crimes and catch criminals.'⁶ CrimTrac is not a repository of information or a database per se, but works by facilitating the exchange of information across different jurisdictions and technologies. Mr Ben McDevitt, CEO of CrimTrac, told the committee:

CrimTrac is merely the conduit. We do not put any information onto the system. All we do is provide the connectivity so...[agencies] can share the information.⁷

8.13 CrimTrac's central aim is:

...to enhance Australian law enforcement with an emphasis on information based policing facilitated through rapid access to detailed current and accurate police information.⁸

8.14 CrimTrac's mandate has been recently expanded to encompass a national role in promoting and facilitating information sharing:

5 Mr Keith Holland, First Assistant Secretary, Attorney-General's Department, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 5.

6 CrimTrac, *Submission 12*, p. 2.

7 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 77.

8 Mr Ben McDevitt, Chief Executive Officer, CrimTrac, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 70.

...under the CrimTrac strategic plan 2007-10, CrimTrac has been given a mandate by police ministers to take a leadership role in generating national approaches to information-sharing solutions for law enforcement agencies for a safer Australia. It is a fairly fundamental shift. The new vision takes CrimTrac from being purely an IT shop...to a broker for information-sharing solutions essentially for police jurisdictions but also increasingly for broader law enforcement.⁹

8.15 Given its genesis, expertise and charter, the committee considers CrimTrac to be the logical focus of any effort to improve the inadequacy of current information databases. Mr Mark Burgess, Chief Executive Officer, Police Federation of Australia, supported this view, saying:

...a real opportunity now exists for CrimTrac to play a more significant and meaningful role...providing information sharing solutions for law enforcement right across the country...CrimTrac should be fully developed to become the key hub for exchanges of law enforcement information between Australia's police jurisdictions and broader law enforcement.¹⁰

8.16 Chief Commissioner Nixon noted that CrimTrac has already contributed to the inter-jurisdictional capacity for information sharing:

What we have started to see...is the growth of a system to...help us share information...[CrimTrac] has gone some distance towards helping develop these national systems in...local police offices...¹¹

Minimum Nation-wide Person Profile

8.17 One of the most important CrimTrac systems from an operational policing perspective is the Minimum Nation-wide Person Profile (MNPP). The MNPP is intended to allow the sharing of information about persons of interest between all Australian police jurisdictions. It is currently being rolled out nationally to replace the National Names Index.¹² Law enforcement personnel will access the MNPP via in-car or station based computers to:

- access information about a person of interest from another jurisdiction; and
- perform nation-wide searches using name and/or other identifying information.

8.18 As a collection of information related to persons of interest, the MNPP currently consists of 11 agreed datasets or 'involvements'. These are:

- persons on warrant;

9 Mr Ben McDevitt, Chief Executive Officer, CrimTrac, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 71.

10 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 40.

11 *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2007, p. 20.

12 Mr Ben McDevitt, Chief Executive Officer, CrimTrac, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 79.

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- wanted persons;
 - persons subject of a warning;
 - persons on bail;
 - persons subject of an order;
 - escapees;
 - persons with an offence history;
 - persons linked to firearms;
 - unidentified persons/bodies;
 - missing persons; and
 - persons on the Australian National Child Offender Register.

8.19 The MNPP is to be accessible across all Australian jurisdictions by the end of July 2008, and will be the main information source around persons of interest for operational police.¹³ Mr McDevitt stressed that the MNPP is a valuable tool and a significant improvement on current capabilities.¹⁴

Expanding the Minimum Nation-wide Person Profile

8.20 A number of witnesses suggested that, where gaps in access, sharing or interconnectivity between databases exist, these should be addressed by the addition of new datasets to the MNPP. In particular, the committee considered the possible addition of Aviation Security Identification Cards (ASICs), Maritime Security Identification Cards (MSICs), explosives licences and ammonium nitrate licences.

8.21 Mr McDevitt explained that there are no technical impediments to expanding the number of datasets in the MNPP:

...there would be no reason why technically the MNPP could not include someone as a person of interest because they were the owner of a pilot's licence or because they held an explosives licence or because they had an ASIC or so on.¹⁵

8.22 However, it was noted by several witnesses that privacy issues would need to be resolved before the MNPP is expanded by the addition of new datasets.¹⁶ Chief Commissioner Nixon argued that, as with any new initiative, a business case would also need to be developed.¹⁷ The Department of Transport and Regional Services also referred to this requirement:

13 Mr Ben McDevitt, Chief Executive Officer, CrimTrac, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 71.

14 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 77.

15 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 77.

16 Department of Transport and Regional Services, *Submission 24*, p. 4.

17 *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2007, p. 28.

...for the information to be included in the MNPP a policy justification would be required for the...new elements of information...to be added. This would need to be approved by policing jurisdictions.¹⁸

8.23 The Victoria Police observed that cost would also be a factor in considering what new datasets to add to the MNPP:

...[it is possible to] think of regulated activity across Australia over all sorts of industries that could add value to a national information dataset...we could make a list of 100 things that would be of value to add to CrimTrac—but, at the end of the day, it is all about cost...¹⁹

8.24 The committee sees much value in continuing to improve the information available to LEAs to assist their operations in an increasingly complex crime environment, and considers the MNPP to be the most appropriate database on which new datasets could be held. The committee acknowledges that a number of policy, legislative, privacy and administrative issues will need to be addressed as part of any proposed expansion of the MNPP.

Recommendation 17

8.25 The committee recommends that CrimTrac be funded to examine the legislative, administrative and technical aspects to allow the inclusion of additional datasets to the Minimum Nation-wide Person Profile; particular consideration should be given to Aviation Security Identification Cards, Maritime Security Identification Cards, explosives licences and ammonium nitrate licences.

Funding of CrimTrac

8.26 CrimTrac was originally established by a \$50 million capital injection from the Commonwealth Government. This money has been fully expended and CrimTrac now relies on revenue from its National Criminal Record Checking (NCHRC) service and subscriptions from jurisdictions for funding.

8.27 A number of witnesses to the inquiry raised concerns over the sustainability of the current CrimTrac funding model:

...while there was initial funding from the federal government to establish CrimTrac...by and large, CrimTrac survives on income from criminal history checks. There is no further major influx of funds, which...we think...is required...²⁰

18 *Submission 24*, p. 4.

19 Detective Superintendent Mark Porter, State Intelligence Division, Victoria Police, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2007, p. 17.

20 Mr Mark Burgess, Chief Executive Officer, Police Federation of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 42.

8.28 Commissioner Keelty noted that some of CrimTrac's work is, and should continue to be, supported from the proceeds of crime.²¹ The rollout of the MNPP, for example, is one such case of funding.²²

8.29 The CrimTrac submission notes that the organisation aims to be financially secure and not reliant on the vagaries of police service budgets. The CrimTrac board is currently considering a new model for delivery of its NCHRC service, which could have implications for CrimTrac's funding.²³

8.30 The committee notes CrimTrac's critical role in improving Australia's police databases through 'generating national approaches to information-sharing solutions for law enforcement agencies'.²⁴ Given this, the committee is concerned at the potential for the agency's reliance on self-funding to significantly undermine its ability to deliver on its services and stated aims, and to undertake forward planning. Because the current self-funding model could create a range of vulnerabilities, the stable long-term financial sustainability of CrimTrac is an issue that should be considered and addressed.

Recommendation 18

8.31 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government review CrimTrac's current funding model in order to provide it with a greater level of funding certainty.

National automatic number plate recognition system

8.32 The committee heard calls for the establishment of a national automatic number plate recognition system. This would be a form of information database, with a data-matching facility to enable the system to 'recognise' plates of interest.²⁵ Mr Burgess advised the committee that such a system:

...has the potential to revolutionise policing across Australia, with huge benefits for crime prevention, reduction and investigation as well as for national security and border protection activities.²⁶

8.33 The automatic number plate recognition system would be comprised of cameras monitoring movements on roads. Mr McDevitt explained:

[The system would use]...technology that is utilised at the moment by...safety cam where trucks move between point A and point B too quickly and then get identified through their number plates...[E]ach

21 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 63.

22 CrimTrac, *Submission 12A*, p. 1.

23 CrimTrac, *Submission 12*, p. 5.

24 CrimTrac, *Strategic Plan 2007-2010*, p. 5.

25 Police Federation of Australia, *Submission 5*, p. 9.

26 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 41.

organisation would put up a list of vehicles of interest to them and...when a vehicle of interest to them crossed one of these sites it would raise a flag.²⁷

8.34 Mr Milroy said the system would be a 'valuable' tool for police and that it would complement and enhance the operation of the ACC's current intelligence systems:

...intelligence can be drawn from the [automatic number plate recognition system]...into our database...on vehicle movements which would then link up with information that we hold on individuals or on vehicles being used in organised crime. So that connection and the transfer of the data is something that we will be working on together in relation to the development of their project.²⁸

8.35 The committee notes the allocation of proceeds of crime funding for a scoping study into a national automatic number plate recognition system, and supports the development of such a capability. Such a system could provide significant benefits to all Australian police services and law enforcement related agencies for crime prevention, detection and reduction.

Recommendation 19

8.36 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth, state and territory governments implement a national number plate recognition system.

Intelligence databases

8.37 Table 8.2 shows the major intelligence databases in Australia, their type, accessibility, funding and operational status.

Table 8.2: Intelligence databases in Australia

Database	Type of database	Agency	Accessible by	Funded by	Status
Australian Criminal Intelligence (ACID) database	Intelligence. ACID allows information reports to be searched and analysed for links and associations	ACC	ACC, AFP, state and territory police forces and agencies	Commonwealth	Operational
Australian Identity Fraud	Intelligence. The AIFPR collects	ACC	ACC, AFP, state and territory	Commonwealth	Operational

27 *Committee Hansard*, 12 July 2007, p. 13.

28 *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2007, p. 31.

Protection Register (AIFPR)	information on fraudulent identities and victims of identity theft		police forces and agencies		
Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System (ViCLAS)	Intelligence. ViCLAS allows the collection and analysis of information on violent crimes	ACC	ACC, AFP, state and territory police forces and agencies	Commonwealth	Operational

Improving the adequacy of information databases

8.38 Table 8.2 shows that the ACC administers the Australian Criminal Intelligence Database, the Australian Identity Fraud Protection Register and the Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System.

8.39 The ACC stands as Australia's premier effort in recent times to improve the creation of, access to and exchange of intelligence data across all Australian jurisdictions. The ACC annual report for 2005-06 notes that the commission 'aims to bring together all facets of intelligence gathering' through its role in collecting, analysing and disseminating criminal intelligence.²⁹

Contribution by state and territory jurisdictions to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Database

8.40 The Australian Criminal Intelligence Database (ACID) is a 'secure, centralised, national repository for criminal intelligence',³⁰ and is the 'major system for sharing intelligence between Commonwealth, state and territory law enforcement agencies'.³¹ The committee heard that, because contribution to ACID is inconsistent, it is not functioning at its optimum potential. The Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC) submission notes:

The intelligence value of ACID is limited in that only a small number of law enforcement agencies within Australia place intelligence onto the system.³²

29 Australian Crime Commission, *Annual Report 2005-06*, p. 10.

30 Australian Crime Commission, *Annual Report 2005-06*, p. 28.

31 Attorney-General's Department, *Submission 21A*, p. 5.

32 *Submission 10*, p. 5.

8.41 The input of some jurisdictions to ACID is high, and these jurisdictions have recognised the operational value of fully utilising and continuing to expand ACID's capacity. The NSW Police Commissioner, Mr Ken Moroney, told the committee:

...the NSW Police Force seeks to enhance its own capacity and the capacity of the ACC to improve the range and volume of data capable of being uploaded into...ACID.³³

8.42 Similarly, Mr John Visser, General Manager, Intelligence, AUSTRAC, told the committee that AUSTRAC found ACID highly useful, and that it would be improved by increasing contributions to it:

...we find...[ACID] very useful in our analysis of our own data...[T]he more criminal intelligence that finds its way to [ACID]...would benefit us to discern the financial players we observe as leaning more towards the criminal...[W]e would find great value in more criminal intelligence being available to us.³⁴

8.43 The Attorney-General's Department agreed that the 'utility of existing databases depends upon the extent to which participating agencies upload information', but advised the committee that the issue is currently being addressed:

...work is underway to improve the use of existing databases across the law enforcement community, most notably [ACID]...While the use of ACID is substantial and growing each year, it could be better utilised by some agencies, and work is underway to address this. Better utilisation of ACID will improve the sharing of intelligence with immediate effect...³⁵

Cultural issues

8.44 A number of witnesses identified 'cultural issues' as the reason for the under-utilisation of ACID. The committee was informed that the Wheeler review into aviation security recommended that a comprehensive examination of Commonwealth, state and territory law and practices be undertaken to ensure that there were no inhibitors to the exchange of information and intelligence between agencies. Mr Keith Holland, First Assistant Secretary, Security and Critical Infrastructure Division, Attorney-General's Department, told the committee:

[The review concluded]...that primarily the inhibitor to the exchange of information was a cultural one rather than a legislative one...[and] that there were cultural inhibitors...such as the reluctance of agencies to share information either because of a silo mentality or because of their concern about how the information that they exchanged would be dealt with...³⁶

33 *Committee Hansard*, 8 June 2007, p. 4.

34 *Committee Hansard*, 8 June 2007, pp 20-21.

35 *Submission 21A*, p. 5.

36 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 2.

8.45 Mr McDevitt agreed that cultural inhibitors around information sharing reflected unresolved key issues, such as security and privacy concerns around how information is stored and shared:

The most onerous challenges are...cultural ones associated with individual and organisational stances on the sharing of information and on finding the balance between need-to-know and need-to-share principles...There is...a general recognition that the question is no longer whether to share or not to share; rather, it is what to share and how to share.³⁷

8.46 Mr Milroy suggested that perceived cultural barriers might also be attributed to a lack of appropriate training and knowledge among the individuals who collect and input data into a given database:

[Cultural issues]...probably have more to do with that fact that...there are processes that have to be put in place, because the greatest failure is the human failure. It is the inability of individual intelligence collectors to understand what they are collecting, how it should be collected and how it should be then inputted into a database.³⁸

8.47 Assistant Commissioner Tony Harrison, Crime Service, South Australia Police, acknowledged that 'territorialism' and a silo mentality within LEAs had contributed to under-utilisation of intelligence databases, but noted that such cultural barriers have diminished in recent years:

...I have also detected in the last two or three years far more cooperation, which is probably induced by the approach to terrorism. Agencies are working better together and more closely to exchange information.³⁹

8.48 The committee notes the recent substantial changes to the law enforcement environment. The establishment of the ACC and CrimTrac has contributed not only to greater cooperation and sharing around intelligence but also to keener appreciation of the value and importance of intelligence to responding effectively to serious and organised crime. Legitimate operational and privacy concerns aside, the committee feels that the present inter-agency arrangements around intelligence sharing are adequate and improving. While the committee will continue to take a close interest in the cooperative aspects of police culture, present arrangements appear to be assisting with the removal of the adverse cultural factors identified.

Privacy issues

8.49 The committee received a submission from the Privacy Commissioner, Ms Karen Curtis, advising that the ACC's intelligence holdings are exempt from the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). The submission notes:

37 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 72.

38 *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2007, p. 32.

39 *Committee Hansard*, 6 July 2007, p. 20.

...the Privacy Act includes exceptions that allow for intelligence collection that recognises the appropriate balance between privacy and...the safety and security of the community.⁴⁰

8.50 Ms Curtis suggested that the ACC should consider using the principles of the *Privacy Act 1988* to govern its handling of data. The Privacy Commissioner submitted that such an approach would strike an appropriate balance between the competing interests of law enforcement and privacy:

...consideration should be given to ensuring that an appropriate balance is struck between the need to collect personal information to facilitate security and safety and an individual's general right to control the collection and handling of their personal information.⁴¹

8.51 The committee observes that the adoption of the protocol suggested by the Privacy Commissioner is an appropriate means of ensuring that the ACC, although exempted from the *Privacy Act 1988*, ensures appropriate protection of intelligence data wherever possible.

Recommendation 20

8.52 The committee recommends that the Australian Crime Commission give consideration to the extent to which its information handling protocols incorporate, and could be enhanced by, the principles of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

Case management systems

8.53 Table 8.3 shows the major case management systems in Australia, their type, accessibility, funding and operational status.

Table 8.3: Police case management systems in Australia

System	Type of system	Agency	Accessible by	Funded by	Status
PROMIS	Case management	AFP	AFP, ACT Police and Northern Territory Police	State	Operational
LEAP	Case management	Victoria Police	Victoria Police	State	Operational
QPRIME	Case	Queensland Police	Queensland	State	Operational

40 *Submission 23*, p. 1.

41 *Submission 23*, p. 1.

	management	Service	Police Service		
COPS	Case management	New South Wales Police Service	New South Wales Police Service	State	Operational
IMS	Case management	Western Australia Police	Western Australia Police	State	Operational
ORS	Case management	Tasmania Police	Tasmania Police	State	Operational
PIMS	Case management	South Australia	South Australia Police	State	Operational

Improving the adequacy of case management systems

8.54 Case management systems are a critical investigative and operational tool for police. These systems allow the bringing together in a single file of separate pieces of information or intelligence related to an offence. Mr McDevitt stressed the critical role of these systems in day-to-day policing:

...case management systems...[are] the backbone [of policing]...It is about: 'I'm going to a burglary. This is so-and-so's house. There is a car outside. I want to know about the car. I want to know about the people and all sorts of things. I want to know about fingerprints and DNA.' So ultimately everything links into the case management system...⁴²

8.55 Mr McDevitt told the committee that each Australian jurisdiction currently has its own case management system, and that these systems 'do not talk to each other in any sort of concerted way'.⁴³ Deputy Commissioner Lawler outlined the consequences of having separate case management systems:

Where we have...an active ongoing investigation...between two jurisdictions...[and] the jurisdictions put their information into...separate investigational databases, that is a potential vulnerability...⁴⁴

8.56 A number of witnesses highlighted the need for a single or centralised national case management system to give police officers on the street access to nationally comprehensive information. Mr Burgess stressed the importance of national consistency:

...the constable on the street...in Canberra...[should be able to] access...information that is vital to them, in the same way as the constable

42 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, pp 82-83.

43 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 73.

44 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 68.

on the street in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne or anywhere else around Australia.⁴⁵

8.57 Mr Burgess offered an example of the consequences of national case management data not being readily available to law enforcement officers:

[One example is]...the shooting of offender William Watkins at Karratha in Western Australia in early 2005...Watkins had three days earlier murdered sisters Colleen and Laura Irwin in Melbourne. He had then driven 5½ thousand kilometres...to Western Australia, where he came under the notice of Senior Constable Shane Gray at Karratha for failing to pay for petrol. When Gray did a check on Watkins via the Western Australian police computer system he was not shown as wanted or a suspect on the system. Unfortunately, of course, he was on the Victorian police system, but that was not accessible through the Western Australian system. Watkins attacked Gray and tried to get hold of his firearm. Gray, the senior constable, was seriously injured in the incident, and Watkins was eventually shot and killed.⁴⁶

8.58 The committee heard that the failings of having multiple case management systems are most pronounced at jurisdictional borders. Mr McDevitt provided the following example:

...if you have a single burglar who lives on a border—it could be Albury-Wodonga or somewhere up north, Tweed Heads-Coolangatta—they could be moving back and forth across the state border committing crimes. Despite the best efforts of police...there is not a single case management system nationally which automatically would ensure that that information was shared.⁴⁷

8.59 The committee believes that the development of a single national case management system should be given the highest priority, and is particularly concerned by the suggestion that, even if a commitment by all jurisdictions to a national case management system were secured, its development and implementation could take as long as a decade.⁴⁸ The committee considers that the Commonwealth Government should provide funding to enable a comprehensive feasibility study to be conducted into the priority development of a single national case management system.

Recommendation 21

8.60 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government provide funding for a feasibility study into the development of a single national case management system.

45 *Committee Hansard* 5 July 2007, p. 44.

46 *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 42.

47 *Committee Hansard*, 13 August 2007, p. 6.

48 Mr Ben McDevitt, Chief Executive Officer, CrimTrac, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, pp 82-83.

Recommendation 22

8.61 The committee recommends that the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management—Police give consideration and support to the development of a single national case management system.

Conclusion

8.62 Information and intelligence databases and case management systems provide distinct capacities that are crucial for the ability of law enforcement to combat organised crime. Information systems allow police to store and search systematically particular classes of data to determine, for example, whether a suspect has prior offences. Intelligence systems allow data to be managed and analysed in order to increase its investigative or operational value, such as by identifying links between crime groups. Case management systems are the critical system for operational police, allowing information and intelligence relevant to individual offences to be brought together and managed on a single system. The committee concurs with Chief Commissioner Nixon as to the value and importance of national policing data information systems:

National policing data information systems...provide a wall of protection for the citizens, so if we have ways and means to share that data that are efficient then...that adds to our protection and to prevention of crime.⁴⁹

8.63 Australia's federal system has given rise to jurisdictions employing different and/or incompatible databases and technologies. These incompatibilities between jurisdictions benefit organised crime and undermine the ability of police to store, share and manage data that is critical to investigating and prosecuting serious and organised crime in Australia.

8.64 The committee notes that LEAs are increasing efforts to share information and that this has been facilitated by the opportunities for collaboration and the culture of cooperation offered by the ACC and CrimTrac. Also notable are a number of technical and development initiatives to facilitate exchange of data across systems. Table 8.4 shows current information and intelligence related initiatives and/or projects that can be expected to promote national access to databases.

49 *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2007, p. 32.

Table 8.4: Information and intelligence related initiatives and projects

Project or initiative	project or initiative type	Agency	Purpose	Funding	Status
CrimTrac Police Reference System (CPRS) Development Programme	A broad project to improve national access to policing data. The CPRS at present encompasses the MNPP Project and ANCOR	CrimTrac	To enhance law enforcement by provision of rapid access to national operational policing data	CrimTrac is largely self-funded through the NCHRC	Ongoing
Automated Number Plate Recognition Project (ANPR)	ANPR project is a scoping study which aims to identify possible options for the technology to be given to law enforcement agencies	CrimTrac	National capability for detection of vehicles of interest to law enforcement agencies	ANPR has received proceeds of crime funding of \$2.2m to deliver scoping study	New initiative: scoping study to be delivered by end 2008
Standard Intelligence Exchange Format	Project to improve inter-connectivity of information, intelligence and case management systems	ACC	To establish a standard form for information and intelligence to facilitate their exchange between different jurisdictions and technologies	Commonwealth	Ongoing
Australian Law Enforcement Referencing and Targeting	Project for the enhancement of ACID	ACC	To improve ACID's intelligence handling	Commonwealth	Ongoing

project (ALERT)			capacities such as by adding geocoding of information and charting of criminal associations capabilities		
Australian Law Enforcement Intelligence Network (ALEIN)	ALEIN is a national intranet used by all police services, the New Zealand Police, state crime commissions and a number of government agencies	ACC	To provide intelligence dissemination and real-time exchange and cooperation capabilities	Commonwealth	Active

8.65 The committee recognises that these efforts are committed to improving databases in Australia, particularly the ability to locate and retrieve information, intelligence and case management data across multiple jurisdictions and systems. In coming to the recommendations contained in this chapter, the committee seeks improvements that will complement current initiatives, and provide practical benefits for police on the street—especially those with the difficult task of fighting organised crime.

8.66 The priority task in improving Australia's databases is the harmonisation of the many complex legal, technical and policy factors across different jurisdictions, because it is in this multiplicity of arrangements that vulnerabilities for police and opportunities for organised crime to escape detection exist. Following many years of slow progress, the establishment of the ACC and CrimTrac has seen a growing convergence of policy and some promising improvements to database performance and interoperability. However, the committee wishes to stress the importance of a committed national and cross-jurisdictional policy effort to hasten the continuing work on national databases. A shared and concerted policy approach by governments will enable remaining legal and technical impediments to be removed more swiftly than has been possible in the past. For example, coordinated purchasing decisions could negate the need for developing time-consuming and expensive technical solutions for harmonising disparate technologies:

...the technical challenges in integrating information from disparate systems developed at different times using different technologies can be quite complex...[T]he procurement of IT systems by the police should be

reviewed to ensure that, wherever possible, national solutions are delivered to national problems.⁵⁰

8.67 Finally, the committee wishes to acknowledge the professionalism and dedication of Australia's police and LEAs, and the many people who work to combat serious and organised crime. The ongoing effort to coordinate and enhance Australia's information and intelligence databases and case management systems is fundamental to ensuring they provide comprehensive and, above all, effective assistance to police in their day-to-day as well as long-term policing responsibilities. The growing spirit and practical measures of cooperation in this area bode well for future efforts to combat organised crime in Australia.

Senator the Hon. Ian Macdonald
Chair

50 Mr Ben McDevitt, Chief Executive Officer, CrimTrac, *Committee Hansard*, 5 July 2007, p. 71.