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Hate crimes against gays and lesbians: The New South Wales Police response

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Background

The New South Wales Police Service formalised its commitment to improving relations and acknowledging violence and hate crime directed against lesbians and gay men in the mid-1980s. The Minister for Police gave his written support for liaison in 1984, and the Premier announced soon after that the service would establish a Gay Liaison Unit within the newly created Community Relations Bureau. A year later, the first Gay Community Relations Coordinator was appointed and a new era in gay/lesbian relations with police commenced.

The clear shift in public policy at that time was brought about by a range of influences. These were, first, the reorientation of the New South Wales Police 'Force' into the Police 'Service', and improved community relations, or what is now called community-based policing. Secondly, pressure came from what was becoming a politically well-organised gay and lesbian community willing to articulate its needs and to demand protection from discrimination and violence. Thirdly, a legislative base for protecting those needs was set up via the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW), including its 1982 amendment to cover homosexuality), the qualified decriminalisation of private male homosexual relations in 1984, and the establishment of a process of 'gay' consultation by the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board in late 1983.

In the preceding two hundred years relations between police and gays and lesbians in New South Wales were far from cooperative and harmonious. Male homosexual activity was a serious criminal offence, punished by the death penalty until 1839 and then by other criminal sanctions. Police arrested men who engaged in consensual homosexual behaviour and laid charges which often resulted in lengthy

imprisonment and a range of devastating consequences including loss of employment and reputation, and rejection by family and friends. One local historian details incidents or events which exemplify the prevalent level of mistrust and hostility (French, 1995).

Another important influence in this era was the official view that homosexuality was a serious psychiatric disorder or sickness, with many gay men and lesbians being incarcerated in psychiatric institutions and administered severe treatments such as electric shock and aversion therapy. While homosexuality was removed from the official list of psychiatric disorders in 1975 and decriminalised in New South Wales as recently as 1984, the effects of this history are still felt today in terms of widespread prejudice, discrimination, violence and harassment against gay men and lesbians. Prior to 1984 it could be said that at best New South Wales police were complacent about this violence, and at worst participated in incidents of violence and harassment themselves (Wotherspoon, 1991). Gay newspaper articles from the early 1980s regularly documented allegations of police assaults on gay men.

With community relations and community-based policing identified as key organisational issues from 1984, full-time positions were established in the Community Relations Branch, targeting groups much in need of improved police relations. Full-time liaison officers were appointed for Aboriginal, Ethnic and Youth Liaison, and in 1985 for Gay Community Relations (as it was then called). This change in public policy and new allocation of police resources created an environment in which the Service could recognise and respond to hate crimes against gays and lesbians and any systemic targeting of the gay and lesbian communities. The types of incidents dealt with include verbal abuse and harassment, gay bashing, lesbian bashing, neighbourhood violence, threats and harassment, gay-hate related murders, demanding money with menaces at beats and public toilets, blackmail, robbery, drugging, domestic violence (often involving previous heterosexual partners or family reprisals upon discovering a family member's homosexuality) and sexual assaults perpetrated on lesbians and gay men. This violence and harassment affects the individuals it is perpetrated upon, their families and friends, and the gay and lesbian communities who experience the trauma of being a targeted and victimised group in society.

Hate violence against gay men and lesbians is not just confined to city locations. While it may be more concentrated and visible in the inner city it is also a suburban and rural problem. Of the 26 gay-hate related killings documented by police in New South Wales since 1990, 9 men have been killed in Sydney city, 12 in suburban Sydney and 5 in non-metropolitan or rural locations.

Out of the Blue, A Police Survey of Violence and Harassment Against Gay Men and Lesbians was launched in February 1995, and was the first Australian police study to examine the level of victimisation of lesbians and gay men and its effects on their lives (Sandroussi and Thompson, 1995). This survey confirmed what the police service had begun to acknowledge: that gays and lesbians appear to experience significantly disproportionate levels of violence and harassment, with many being targeted in hate-crime attacks. Lesbians in the sample group were at least six times more likely than other Sydney women to experience a physical assault in a 12-month period. Similarly, gay men in the sample group were at least four times more likely than other Sydney men to experience a physical assault in a 12-month period (Sandroussi and Thompson, 1995: 5). The great majority of these incidents were hate-related and a very small percentage involved robbery. Half of those surveyed experienced verbal abuse or harassment in the past 12 months and a third had experienced multiple victimisation with three or more incidents occurring in that time (Sandroussi and Thompson, 1995: 7-9).

The survey contains other key findings for informing public policy, such as the equal level of victimisation of lesbians and gay men, the extremely high level of fear of violence amongst gays and lesbians as compared to the general community and the high level of behaviour modification in an attempt to avoid violence and harassment (Sandroussi and Thompson, 1995: 7-9).

The current police response to this hate crime is based on a recognition of the need to overcome the previous complacency towards this violence and the historical legacy arising out of years of characterisation of homosexuality as a crime and a psychiatric illness. The police service itself, having formerly intervened in the private lives of gay men and lesbians, must now foster and promote a partnership of cooperation and understanding with the gay and lesbian communities.

Since 1990 the New South Wales Police Service has demonstrated an extensive change in its willingness to respond seriously to the victimisation of lesbians and gay men. It has implemented a strategic response to this violence and harassment, which relies on both a corporate, strategic approach and a local, operational response, and has been implemented in three planned phases.

Phase One: 1990-1992

Phase One of the program commenced in January 1990 with the mission to mobilise the service, gays, lesbians and the wider community. The objectives of this phase were to increase awareness, understanding and action on homophobic violence at key levels of the police service,

community and government; to reduce violence and harassment against gays and lesbians by encouraging a joint problem-solving approach at a local and corporate level; to increase the gay, lesbian and heterosexual communities' intolerance of violence and harassment; to increase access to sensitive and professional policing services responsive to dealing with hate violence; and lastly, to increase accountability at senior and operational levels for preventing, reducing and responding to this violence.

Phase One strategies included the establishment of a full-time civilian position of Police Gay/Lesbian Client Group Consultant, in January 1990. This followed on from the initial Gay Liaison Officer position established in 1985. Both of these positions have been endorsed by various police ministers, who have recognised them as important government initiatives. The client group consultant role is to initiate, develop, implement and monitor police programs, policies, procedures and operations towards improved police relations, service and safety for gay men and lesbians.

A further strategy has been the widespread establishment of Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (PGLLOs). These nominated police officers at stations and patrols are central to the local response to anti-gay/lesbian violence. They include general duties police, beat police, intelligence officers or others who take on the PGLLO role as one of their duties. They are available as contact officers and are responsible for pro-active consultation with local gays and lesbians and assist in the development of patrol initiatives which reduce, prevent and respond to violence. The New South Wales experience has been that without these officers working pro-actively in the gay and lesbian communities and being promoted as skilled and committed individuals who can be asked for by name at a patrol, the violence, harassment and other hate crimes directed against gays and lesbians would remain largely invisible and not be brought to police attention.

From the initial four PGLLOs in inner city locations in 1990, to nineteen in 1992, forty-eight in 1993 and one hundred in 1995, there is now a State-wide coverage in more than half of the State's police stations. The expansion has not been as a result of any senior direction but because of either the initiative of the local patrol commander, an officer with a commitment to improved service to this section of the community, or a significant or visible gay and lesbian population in the area requesting help with ongoing problems of violence or harassment.

- The activities and successes of the PGLLOs include:
- a *PGLLO Referral Manual* to assist police in referring gays and lesbians to organisations and groups sensitive to their needs;

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- police patrols of gay and lesbian dance parties in country locations after hostile media attention or negative community attitudes;
- attending crime victims' homes and providing care and support;
- intervening in neighbour harassment and threats to halt their escalation;
- addressing local schools on homophobia and anti-gay/lesbian violence;
- targeting police operations to apprehend particular offenders;
- liaising with the Volunteer Gay and Lesbian Street Patrol Group to ensure immediate back-up when violence is witnessed on the streets;
- conducting more effective investigations into violent crimes against lesbians and gay men;
- attending and supporting key gay and lesbian community events.

Since 1985, Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Consultative Groups have been set up in critical locations after ongoing reports of violence and harassment were received by the Community Relations Adviser or client consultant. These currently operate in Newtown, Newcastle, Lismore and Surry Hills. Informal consultation also takes place in a wide range of other patrols and is designed to respond to local needs. These committees are a crucial way of fostering a close, cooperative and proactive relationship in local areas. The assumption that gays and lesbians would be represented on general community consultative committees has been shown to result in their issues remaining invisible at a local level. These specific committees have created an avenue through which gays and lesbians feel comfortable raising their own issues and concerns.

In April 1990 the Minister for Police gave credibility to anti gay/lesbian violence and harassment as a serious issue when he agreed to a request by the police service to launch a community-prepared survey on violence. This survey, *The Streetwatch Report*, was prepared by the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (Cox, 1990). The launch by a Liberal Government minister, focused media attention on homophobic violence and helped create further coverage in New South Wales, Australia and overseas. The media had often not dealt with these hate crimes with any seriousness, concern or professionalism, and seemed to prefer to ignore the violence, sensationalise it, or blame its victims.

A close rapport was developed with the media during 1990-92 in an attempt to change their often blatant homophobia and apathy. An extensive amount of assistance was provided to facilitate sympathetic

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coverage of issues by television current affairs and serial programs such as 'GP' and 'Country Practice', radio, newspapers and popular magazines (such as *Penthouse*, *Rolling Stone* and *HQ*). Since 1990 over 170 interviews have been conducted with the mainstream press by the client group consultant. Regular articles also appear in the gay and lesbian media. The police service has recognised the importance of this in educating the public about the victimisation of gays and lesbians and has used the media as a central strategy in the fight against hate crimes.

The police service also initiated the focusing of government attention on homophobic violence by requesting the Police Minister to form a government and community committee to look at anti-gay/lesbian violence. This committee, known as the Streetwatch Implementation Advisory Committee, met from 1990 to 1994. It presented the Police Minister with its first report in 1992, and its final report was launched in 1994 at Parliament House. The work of this committee, under the auspices of the minister and chaired by the Anti-Discrimination Board, ensured a wider government response to homophobic violence with initiatives being developed by the Departments of Health, School Education and Housing.

A marketing and education campaign about violence and harassment was implemented in 1990 and is redesigned annually. It targets both the gay and lesbian and wider communities and aims to educate the community by using police as a role model speaking out against hate crimes. It also encourages the further reporting of violence and harassment. This campaign was launched by the minister in April 1990 when he launched *The Streetwatch Report*. Its message was conveyed in 1990-92 by the 'Stop the Bashings: Report the Violence' Campaign, which used a startling poster portraying an assault. This was commissioned by the Police Service and designed by a gay artist from the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Association. Another poster, titled 'Threats and Violence, Don't Put Up with It' and designed by a lesbian artist from the Mardi Gras association, was also used. A State-wide mail-out campaign of these posters reached community groups, government agencies and neighbourhood centres, and included a letter from the Police Commissioner which addressed anti-gay/lesbian violence.

The campaign was redesigned and refocused in February 1995 and was launched at Parliament House by the Police Minister as the 'You Can Help Stop the Violence' Campaign with publicity through more posters, brochures and fridge magnets. This campaign is a joint strategy of the Police Service, Sydney Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project and the Department of Health, and it has revamped the earlier broad-based education campaign. These new pink and black posters featuring a fist with a bold 'STOP' across the knuckles have been seen in banks, shops,

pubs, doctors' surgeries, hospitals, police stations, schools, McDonalds and many other locations.

An ongoing advertising campaign in key gay and lesbian publications also encourages reporting to police and identified the client group consultant and police liaison officers. These advertisements have appeared in gay newspapers, lesbian magazines, the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras guide, gay and lesbian travel guides and business directories.

Great emphasis was placed on working with the Department of School Education during these years because of the involvement of numerous school-aged boys in the murders of gay men. Following two murders connected to the one school in 1990, a program was initiated by the Client Group Consultant with support from the Police District Commander of the local area. Its content was developed by the Client Group Consultant, two police youth officers, local youth workers, the school counsellor and the Family Planning Association.

It was run under the auspices of Police Crime Prevention Workshops as a three-day program focused on homophobia and violence against lesbians and gay men. The program was coordinated with a high level of support from the school principal. Police and youth workers jointly facilitated small group work with students, and assistance was provided by a panel of 15 gay men and lesbians who attended question-and-answer sessions. The attendance of a diverse range of gays and lesbians was crucial to the program's effectiveness and according to the school principal, teachers and students it was a startling success with a lasting impact on the school.

Liaison was also undertaken with the Catholic Education Office in 1992, which led to the inclusion of a segment on homophobia and violence in the AIDS education package under the topic 'Rights and Feelings of Others'. This work has been ongoing and the client group consultant is now working with a Catholic diocese on a pilot program in Western Sydney Catholic schools, addressing homophobia, AIDS and hate violence in western Sydney Catholic schools.

The Police Service has also assisted in putting the issue of homophobic violence and the need for gay and lesbian liaison on the agenda both nationally and internationally. In 1991 the Police Commissioner presented a paper titled 'Prejudice, A Barrier to Professionalism' to the Conference of Australasian and South Pacific Police Commissioners.

Ongoing assistance has been provided to police, community groups and members of parliament in Western Australia, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, New Zealand, and even New Scotland Yard in Britain, regarding the establishing of formal liaison in those locations. However, at this time

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New South Wales is the only Australian State to have a full-time police service position dedicated to this liaison work. All States and Territories (except for the Northern Territory) have a nominated senior police officer who is available to be contacted on gay and lesbian issues. Community groups in several States have argued that this arrangement has not encouraged or facilitated dialogue between police and the gay and lesbian communities and it has not led to a change in the level of cooperation or an increase of confidence in the willingness of police to do anything proactive to target hate crimes against lesbians and gay men.

1990-1992 were the years of very visible symbols of police commitment to this issue. A mobile police van was placed at Taylor Square, Oxford Street, Darlinghurst in late 1990, every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night. In 1994 local consultation led to its removal so that increased police foot patrols could be instigated. Oxford Street is Australia's best-known gay and lesbian focused street-scape, with pubs, clubs, restaurants, clothes shops and other businesses which are gay and lesbian owned or marketed. A high level of hate crimes have occurred in this area.

Other significant events in this period were a police award presented to the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Association for crowd control and safety in 1991; police contributing \$5000 to the 'Truth or Dare' video developed in the same year by youth and youth workers to stop the homophobia and violence in the inner city; police formally objecting to the development application of an amusement parlour on Oxford Street which they believed would increase homophobic violence; and police also beginning to run a stall dealing with anti-gay/lesbian violence at World AIDS Day and at the Mardi Gras Fair Day, which is attended by over 20,000 people.

The Fair Day stall is an important police service public display of its improved relations with the gay and lesbian communities. It includes information on the latest hate crimes and their solution, any further police initiatives in gay and lesbian relations, and a police motorbike with the sign 'Your photo on a police bike \$3.00' with proceeds to an AIDS charity. This bike is symbolic of a changed era in police gay/lesbian relations in New South Wales and it has attracted politicians, public figures, children, gay and lesbian couples, drag queens and a range of people who laugh along with the police liaison officers.

Liaison and consultation continues to be the essential strategy in building cooperation and trust and a joint approach to reducing violence. This encompasses gay and lesbian community leaders, community groups and the many individuals who require assistance in coming forward to report crimes. It also involves the Police Service enlisting the

support of other government, local and non-government agencies in working to reduce this serious social problem of hate violence and harassment. The Police Service has welcomed the ongoing assistance of the Anti-Discrimination Board, and the ongoing close cooperation with the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project which is a community-based organisation funded by the Department of Health. Having other salaried full-time personnel working to reduce and target hate crimes at a community level has provided an opportunity for joint problem-solving in the context of community-based policing.

Phase Two: 1992-1994

This phase commenced in 1992, with its declared aim being: 'Police working with the gay and lesbian communities to reduce violence, crime and fear through formalised organisational change'. This has involved both structural reforms and widespread local community and police strategies to reduce and prevent hate violence. While it took shape in 1992-1994, this aim continues on an ongoing basis.

The objectives of this phase were to improve training for service personnel on strategies for reducing this violence and responding to the needs of the client group; to improve the customer service through identifying and implementing relevant organisational reforms; to identify and counter practices detrimental to police gay/lesbian relations; and to improve the whole community response to reducing homophobic violence through working further with both government and non-government organisations.

Phase Two included a coordinated training strategy implemented to provide heightened awareness of homophobia and homophobic violence and increased sensitivity to the needs of gays and lesbians. This strategy had six strands:

- A patrol commanders' workshop was held in December 1992 for commanders in areas where there was homophobic violence or a need for improved service. Thirty-eight patrols were identified through the monitoring of community feedback over a three-year period.
- An in-depth, on-the-job police training package was completed in February 1993 on 'Police relations with the homosexual community'. It is available for use in patrols and is the first such police package in Australia. Fifty patrol training officers have been trained in the use of the package at a local patrol level.
- An article was written for the *Policing Issues and Practice Journal*, titled 'Dealing with Difference' (O'Callaghan, 1993). This

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addressed homophobic violence and the needs of gay men and lesbians. Each of the State's 13,000 police received a copy of this journal.

- All PGLLOs were required to attend a five-day training course at the Goulburn Police Academy, co-facilitated by the client consultant and an academy lecturer. This is the first formal Australian Police Academy course to address gay and lesbian issues.
- PGLLOs receive ongoing training in current crimes affecting gays and lesbians and on effective local strategies through three-monthly meetings with the client group consultant. While these meetings only assist metropolitan PGLLOs, plans are currently being examined for running an annual seminar program for all PGLLOs through the Goulburn academy.

The police service established a State Commander's Working Party on Improving Police Gay/Lesbian Relations in 1992 to oversee initiatives seeking to increase the safety of gays and lesbians, feelings of safety, and satisfaction with policing services. This working party was the first of its kind in Australia and has been chaired by an Assistant Commissioner on behalf of the State Commander. It includes relevant Assistant Commissioners (Professional Responsibility, Education and Training), regional commanders, PGLLOs and the Client Group Consultant, and it also has regular input from key gay and lesbian organisations as issues arise which affect them.

The working party has identified 30 issues for consideration by the Police Service and has developed formal organisation positions on a wide range of strategies to reduce violence and to improve service delivery and police relations. Some of its successes include a formal statement of duties and mission statement for PGLLOs; a Commissioners' Notice on 'Police Operations Targeting Offensive Behaviour in Beats' (e.g. public toilets, parks and like places); and a brochure on police gay/lesbian liaison. The number of liaison officers was dramatically expanded in this period to 95 officers at 79 patrols, to ensure local attention to hate crimes and improved police relations across the State.

In response to interest in the 1990 Police Crime Prevention (Homophobia) Workshop, the Department of School Education set up a working group of their training personnel, a teacher and the Police Client Group Consultant to turn the school homophobia project into a comprehensive training package available for school use as a six-hour module. This package has been used in several schools across the State.

A survey of violence against lesbians was conducted by the Service in 1992 via a University of New South Wales social work student on

placement. Three hundred women were surveyed at a National Lesbian Conference at the University of Technology and a draft report has been compiled which shows some disturbing and interesting findings. This is the first such survey of its size on anti-lesbian violence and the first indicator to the Service that there appears to be a significantly disproportionate level of physical violence against lesbians and a level very similar to that experienced by gay men. Further, it showed that most incidents were hate-related and involved anti-lesbian abuse.

In April 1993 a forum was organised by the police service to provide wider access to the successes of the Streetwatch Committee. It was attended by several senior and operational police, relevant government departments, local government and parliamentary representatives and gay and lesbian community organisations. The forum's aim was to bring all stakeholders up to date on the range of community and government strategies now targeting homophobic violence and to plan future directions together.

Currently refinements to the Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS) are being examined by the Police Service to ensure more accurate collection of hate crimes data and to assist police patrols in their response to anti-gay/lesbian violence and harassment. These changes will also enable access to non-identifying data collected by community organisations such as the Sydney Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project. Ongoing consultation with the gay and lesbian communities, the Anti-Discrimination Board, the Privacy Committee, PGLLOs and senior police is taking place on this issue.

External assistance has also been provided by the Client Group Consultant or PGLLOs to the many organisations who are attempting to respond to homophobic violence and the needs of gays and lesbians. These include the Alternative Dispute Resolution Association, Relationships Australia, church groups, universities and schools.

Phase Three: 1995-1997

The mission of this phase is 'the publishing of a formal Police policy and strategic plan to reduce violence, crime and fear in the gay and lesbian communities and to improve Police customer service and Police gay/lesbian relations'.

This phase commenced with police research on the level of victimisation of gays and lesbians and on their fear levels. It is now moving into a widespread consultation process which will take place with the gay and lesbian communities via focus groups in city and suburban locations and in key rural centres. This will enable assessment

of satisfaction with police services and community suggestions to further impact on hate violence.

The objectives of this phase are to more accurately understand the victimisation and levels of fear of gays and lesbians through appropriate research; to more accurately assess the needs of gay men and lesbians in relation to homophobic violence and police through widespread community consultation; to formalise the police service commitment to countering violence and improving relations and service through publishing a comprehensive Gay/Lesbian Policy Statement and Strategic Plan.

As mentioned above, the service funded an independently administered gay and lesbian population survey at the Mardi Gras Fair Day in February 1994 to ascertain levels of fear and victimisation, and satisfaction with police response. The survey report, *Out of the Blue*, was launched in February 1995.

The Police Customer Assistance Unit was established in 1994 and after a period of community education, gays and lesbians are now utilising this unit for inquiries or conciliation about police customer service issues. The unit is open to receive calls seven days a week and for ten to fourteen hours per day, providing service to the community at large and also to gays and lesbians. More serious complaints about police conduct and service are referred to the Internal Affairs Branch and the Ombudsman's Office. Recently the Corruption Prevention Unit of the Internal Affairs Branch has been liaising with gay and lesbian business owners to ensure that any police corruption is dealt with through official mechanisms.

Widespread community consultation via focus groups was conducted in 1995 to provide for input into the Police Gay/Lesbian Policy Statement and Strategic Plan. The personal safety of gays and lesbians was a major focus of this process, which targeted both urban and rural locations.

The State Commander's Working Party on Improving Police Gay/Lesbian Relations aimed to develop and review organisational strategies to reduce violence, crime and fear in the gay and lesbian communities during 1995. A key initiative of the working party in 1995 was the establishment of a formal Gay and Lesbian Police Employees Network (GALPEN - set up along similar lines to the Koori and Spokeswomen's Networks) to create a formal support structure for gay and lesbian Police Service employees. The service's demonstration of support for its own gay and lesbian personnel is an important indicator to gays and lesbians that its commitment to tackling hate crimes is genuine. GALPEN was officially launched by the Police Minister at the

First National Conference on Violence Against Gay Men and Lesbians in October 1995.

In response to allegations of unprofessional police conduct in targeting men who have sex with men in beats, the Police Commissioner has issued a notice to all officers regarding appropriate operational practices. This notice encourages the use of uniformed police patrols as the preferred method of operation, in all but a few circumstances. In the past many victims of violence in these locations have been too wary of police to report these crimes, and in some areas, hate violence has escalated into gay-hate murder.

In February 1995, the Police Service was announced joint winner, with the Sydney Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, of the Australian Violence Prevention Award, for a program titled 'Reducing Violence, Crime and Fear in the Gay and Lesbian Communities'. This award was established in 1991 by the Australian Heads of Government partly in response to the Strathfield shooting massacre in Sydney.

As another way of recognising the importance of responding to this hate violence, the Federal Government announced at the award ceremony the holding of the First National Conference on Violence Against Gay Men and Lesbians. When speaking at this conference the New South Wales Minister for Police committed himself to raising violence against gays and lesbians at the annual Australian Police Ministers Council (APMC). The APMC subsequently resolved that each minister should ask their jurisdictions to consider the New South Wales Police suggestion of a national approach to police gay/lesbian liaison and hate crimes data collection.

As part of the above national conference, the New South Wales Police Service hosted a one-day seminar for interstate police service personnel involved in police gay/lesbian liaison. Eleven police from other States and Territories visited New South Wales Police headquarters to participate in an information exchange day on gay and lesbian liaison and police strategies to reduce hate crimes.

In 1994-1995 the police service made contact with key police forces in the United States and England and examined recruitment strategies targeting gays and lesbians. As a result of this research the service now has a recruitment display at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day which is incorporated into the annual police stall at this event.

The New South Wales Police Gay/Lesbian Policy Statement and Strategic Plan will be published in 1996. It will formalise and describe the ongoing commitment to reducing violence, crime and fear, improving police gay/lesbian relations, and police customer service.

Conclusion

No other State or Territory police service in Australia has dedicated the same level of resources to targeting violence and harassment against gay men and lesbians as the New South Wales Police Service. This chapter summarises the New South Wales program that targets these hate crimes, and shows that this Service has now put itself forward as an advocate for change. The response of other States and Territories has been very different. All other States (except the Northern Territory) have a nominated senior police officer as a contact on gay and lesbian issues. In most cases the role of this officer is to respond to problems with the service given by police and to provide a mechanism for improving accountability. These officers however carry a range of portfolios, such as community relations and child abuse, or are in fact busy, senior operational police officers in charge of a police area.

As mentioned earlier, many gay and lesbian community leaders in Australia have expressed concerns that their issues will remain invisible and unreported until police services extend the hand of cooperation in a visible, pro-active way which encourages access to services. In a couple of States proposals are being prepared from within police ranks that suggest there is a need for more resources to facilitate initiatives on hate crimes and police gay/lesbian relations.

In Victoria, police and gay and lesbian community groups meet regularly in a centralised committee context, while in Queensland there are meetings in several regional areas. In Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia and South Australia meetings between police and community representatives would only be convened on a needs basis if a particular problem arose. It appears that most of the formal committees focus on concerns and complaints regarding service and develop avenues for gays and lesbians to provide some input into police recruiting and training days. Police Services in South Australia and Queensland can refer lesbians and gay men to other operational initiatives such as victim support officers, regional/divisional crime coordinators or regional/divisional community-based policing units.

Gay and lesbian groups in many States and Territories have sought to replicate the New South Wales model for pro-actively targeting hate crimes. In so doing, many have lobbied their police services for a full-time gay and lesbian liaison / community relations position and their governments for a funded, community-based anti-violence project. New South Wales has been more fortunate in terms of the decade of growing commitment of activists, government and police administrations. Through its program to reduce anti-gay/lesbian

violence, this State has taken the Australian lead in countering homophobic violence and harassment.

In 1985 the Minister for Police referred to the urgent need to end 'racial indiscretions' or 'overt antagonism to gays and lesbians' (Anderson, 1985). The momentum for social change, pushed along by the New South Wales Police Service and gay and lesbian lobby groups, has made hate crimes against gay men and lesbians an increasingly important social issue since 1985.

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