

**ISSUE:**

**Operational Parrabell - Bias crime investigation of suspicious deaths in the Northern Beaches and Central Metropolitan Region between 1976 and 2000.**

**BACKGROUND:**

Operation Parrabell originally commenced in 2013, driven by the Bias Crimes Unit of Operational Programs with a charter of reinvestigating the deaths of several people connected with the Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, Bisexual, Intersex, and/or Queer (GLBTIQ) community.

During 2013 the Sydney Morning Herald published a number of articles related to suspicious deaths with a potential gay-hate motivation alleging lack of police action; claims of police taking part in gay bashings; and police heavy handedness at the 2013 Mardi Gras Parade. These articles had and continue to have significant potential to damage the reputation of Government and confidence between the GLBTIQ community and police.

Unrest in the GLBTIQ community continues presently without answers to difficult questions of bias motivation related to 88 deaths that occurred between 1976 and 2000. Each death has been reported as involving victims with some GLBTIQ community connection whether because of sexuality, sexual preference or place of death.

A review of Operation Parrabell under its original charter was conducted with local amendments made to establish a system of thorough review, leading to reinvestigations where determined necessary.

On 30 August 2015 a revised Operation Parrabell commenced with the assignment of responsibility for reviewing investigations by examining holdings to assess and analyse whether any of 88 deaths could or could not be classified as bias motivated. Where appropriate, investigators are to make recommendations about conducting further enquiries if fresh evidence might be uncovered, however action upon such recommendations will only occur after the review phase is complete.

Three criminal investigators have been seconded to Operation Parrabell which is oversighted by Surry Hills LAC Detective Inspector Craig Middleton and led by Detective Sergeant Paul Grace and Detective Senior Constable Cameron Bignell, who is also a Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer. Operation Parrabell is being conducted with assistance from the Unsolved Homicide Squad, members of which have already contributed to processes of review.

In short Operation Parrabell is seeking to determine the existence of gay-hate or other bias linked to 88 deaths assessed as suspicious.

- Assessments are limited to deaths that have been recorded as suicide or suspicious within the Central Metropolitan Region and the Northern Beaches areas
- The time period for deaths being assessed is between 1976 and 2000
- The timeframe for review is expected to be 6 months from 30 August 2015
- If during the course of the assessment suspects are identified, that information will be forwarded to the Unsolved Homicide Team for information and further inquiries/investigation
- At the conclusion of each assessment a detailed report outlining the bias classification of each incident and justifying material will be prepared and presented to prominent representatives of the GLBTIQ community
- Each incident will be filtered through the current 10 bias crime indicators to identify any potential death that may have bias motivation. The indicators do not mean that an incident was in fact bias motivated, but suggest a possibility of a bias motivation.

#### **COMMENT:**

A significant part of the review process is explaining investigative strategies and delivering findings on a regular basis to prominent representatives of the GLBTIQ community. For that purpose the first of further meetings has been set for **11am on Tuesday 1 December 2015 at Surry Hills Police Station**. The meeting is expected to go no longer than one hour with at least 8 cases being reported upon to the community, and would be enhanced by the Deputy Premier's presence. The following community representatives have been invited:

- **Alex Greenwich, Member for Sydney**
- **Jenny Leung, Member for Newtown**
- **Clover Moore, Lord Mayor, Sydney**
- **Nicholas Parkhill, CEO, Aids Council of NSW**
- **Vicky Harding, CEO, Inner City Legal Centre**
- **Nicole Asquith, University of Western Sydney**
- **Michele Bauer, CEO, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras**

Significant angst has been felt for some period of time within the GLBTIQ community surrounding questions of investigative impropriety and bias as well as the prospect of offenders not being brought to justice because of solvable crimes remaining otherwise outstanding. The extent of community feeling was mentioned during a speech by Alex Greenwich MP in a Private Members Statement to the NSW Parliament on 4 August 2015. (Refer Annexure A)

Publicising the outcomes and findings of Operation Parrabell is likely to address many GLBTIQ community concerns and re-establish relationships of trust.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. The Commissioner's Office notes the content of this report**
- 2. The Deputy Premier is briefed upon information contained in this report**

**A.P. Crandell  
Superintendent  
Corporate Sponsor, Sexuality, Sex and Gender Diversity  
17 November 2015**

- 1. Commander, Central Metropolitan Region**

- 2. Deputy Commissioner, Field Operations**

**3. Office of the Commissioner of Police**

**4. Office for Police**