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**ISSUE:**

**Strike Force Parrabell – NSW Police Force investigative review of 88 alleged gay-hate motivated murders between 1976 and 2000.**

**BACKGROUND:**

During 2013 a number of articles were published in the Sydney Morning Herald, together with a scholarly article published by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) relating to 88 suspicious deaths with potential gay-hate motivations across NSW. Allegations have been made of police inaction; police taking part in gay bashings; and historical police brutality against members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) community.

Unrest in the LGBTIQ community has continued without answers to difficult questions of bias motivation related specifically to 88 deaths of men between 1976 and 2000. Each death was reported as involving victims with some LGBTIQ connection whether because of sexuality, sexual preference or place of death.

Strike Force Parrabell was created to establish a thorough investigative review of all 88 deaths with re-investigation of cases wherever determined necessary within a context of increasing speculation and growing 'urban mythology' unsupported by facts available to police. Examples are the recent SBS documentary and mini-series 'Deepwater' aired in September 2016; and a recent book authored by Duncan McNab entitled 'Getting away with Murder – Up to 80 men murdered, 30 unsolved deaths' published on 30 January 2017.

On 30 August 2015 Strike Force Parrabell commenced to determine whether the 88 deaths originally listed in the AIC submission by Thomson and Thomsen could be classified as motivated by bias or gay-hate. Where appropriate, investigators were to make recommendations about conducting further enquiries if fresh evidence might be uncovered, however action upon such recommendations would only occur after the review phase was complete.

Up to ten criminal investigators were seconded to Strike Force Parrabell over 18 months. Strike Force Parrabell has now completed all case reviews.

Strike Force Parrabell Terms of Reference are:

- Assess each of the 88 deaths identified as involving potential gay-hate bias between 1976 and 2000

- The timeframe for review is 18 months from 30 August 2015
- If during the assessment suspects are identified, that information will be forwarded to the Unsolved Homicide Team for information and further inquiries/investigation
- After 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 LGBTIQ community
- Each incident will be filtered through the NSW Police Force 10 bias crime indicators as a general guide to identify direct or circumstantial evidence of bias motivation
- Examine and report upon evidence capable of identifying suspected bias of the original police investigator

### **COMMENT:**

A part of Strike Force Parrabell was to explain investigative strategies and deliver findings on an incremental basis to prominent representatives of the LGBTIQ community, including Members of Parliament. Two updates have been provided to Parliamentarians who provided guidance on outcomes.

Funding was approved by the NSW Police Force for an academic review of Strike Force Parrabell findings with Flinders University, South Australia.

Strike Force Parrabell is now complete and includes:

- Executive Summary authored by Assistant Commissioner Crandell containing 12 Recommendations (Annexure A)
- Strike Force Parrabell Case Summaries List (Annexure B)
- Academic Review titled 'Anti-Gay Bias Homicide, 1976-2000: An Analysis of the Record of Investigation by the New South Wales Police Force, Strike Force Parrabell' containing 6 Recommendations (Annexure C)
- [REDACTED] (Annexure D)
- Proposed media strategy should the release of information be authorised (Annexure E)

Preliminary findings from Strike Force Parrabell indicate evidence of bias motivation in 8 cases; evidence of suspected bias motivation was found in 19 cases; no evidence of bias motivation in 34 cases; insufficient information was available in 25 cases; with 2 cases not reviewed. Findings from the Academic Review Team indicate anti-gay bias motivation in 17 cases; with a further 12 classified as anti-paedophile animus; no evidence of bias motivation in 23 cases; insufficient information was available in 33 cases; with 3 cases not reviewed.


These findings impact significantly upon the original 88 cases reported as potential gay hate bias crimes in mainstream media and via the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Significant angst has been felt for some time within the LGBTIQ community surrounding questions of investigative propriety 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 has been mentioned on several occasions in NSW Parliament.

Publicising the outcomes and findings of Strike Force Parrabell is likely to address many LGBTIQ community concerns to reinforce relationships of trust with the NSW Police Force given the vast difference between allegations made, subsequent findings of Strike Force Parrabell and supportive findings of the Academic Review Team.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. The Commissioners Executive Team endorse the release of Strike Force Parrabell reports via the proposed media strategy**
- 2. The Minister for Police is briefed upon information contained in this report**



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**Assistant Commissioner**  
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**3 April 2018**

**1. Office of the Commissioner**

cc: DCoP Corporate Services  
DCoP Investigations & Counter Terrorism

**2. Office for Police**