



NSW POLICE SERVICE

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Prejudice Related Crime Project Goes Statewide

22 October 1999

Following the successful trial of a prejudice related crimes data collection project at Newtown Local Area Command last year, police across NSW will be now be able to record crimes related to prejudice on COPS¹

NSW Police Commissioner Ryan said the initiative, believed to be the first in Australia, reinforced the NSW Police Service's commitment to targeting crime motivated by prejudice

"The Newtown project, which focussed on assault, showed that 649% of assaults were recorded as being prejudice related incidents. These incidents were a mix of sexually related and racially related offences

"It is an alarming statistic and shows that many people in the community experience harassment and abuse simply because of their skin colour, sexuality, gender, political or religious preferences," Commissioner Ryan said

"Police have an important role to play in preventing and deterring these types of crimes by firstly recognising prejudice related crimes and any patterns that emerge, and secondly, by documenting relevant information on COPS.

"This information will help police in investigating crimes, identifying trends or patterns in criminal offences, tracking repeat offenders, identifying proactive policing strategies and offering appropriate support and counselling to victims.

"Many people who commit these crimes are often repeat offenders, motivated by personal prejudice to commit offences against the person or property of an identifiable group in the community.

"This initiative sends a clear message to the community that police will not tolerate any crime motivated by prejudice."

Commissioner Ryan said the initiative had been developed following six years research and consultation with the NSW Privacy Commission, Anti Discrimination Board, Ethnic Affairs Commission and various victim support groups.

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¹ COPS: Computerised Operational Policing System

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He stressed that the initiative was designed to collect specific information about a particular crime rather than the person involved, with safe guards built in to protect individual's privacy.

"The collection of this information allows police to target the offenders motives and not the victims personal preferences or characteristics. The data obtained will not be linked to the victim or any other person outside the crime report."

Commissioner Ryan said police would be able to record several areas of specific interest, including race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality/gender, political affiliation or other types of prejudice.

He said the project was complemented by a training package *Dealing with Racist Violence*, which had been developed by the NSW Police Service and the Human Rights Commission, which provides additional training to police in providing victim support in areas where racial or ethnicity based prejudice is prevalent.

He said a comprehensive report on the statewide implementation of the project was scheduled for June 2000.

Editor's note: any requests for interviews or further comment should be directed to the NSW Police Media Unit on (02) 9265 4200.

Issued by Michelle Jeuken, NSW Police Media Unit (02) 9265 4200.

Authorised by NSW Police Commissioner Peter Ryan.

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Background

In October 1995 the Minister for Police announced the establishment of the Prejudice Related Crimes Data Collection Project. Since that time the NSW Police Service has examined different ways of collecting data in order to find the most appropriate model.

In December 1997 a trial of the project commenced in Newtown Local Area Command. The main focus was on assaults, with the data showing that between 1 February 1998 to 30 June 1998, 6.49% of assault incidents were recorded as being prejudice related incidents. These incidents were a mix of sexually related and racially related offences.

Of these prejudice related incidents, 70% of victims were male, mostly aged 29-30 years and 30% of victims were female, with ages ranging from 8 to 37 years.

Indicators of prejudice related crime

Indicators used by police to identify a prejudice related crime may include:

- ▶ appearance in terms of colour/ethnicity
- ▶ words used/ type of verbal abuse
- ▶ clothing items (eg. Women wearing veils, saris, Jewish skull caps)
- ▶ if victim was attending a place of worship at the time of the crime
- ▶ topical current affairs (eg. political coverage, world affairs)
- ▶ celebration of religious holiday/cultural festival
- ▶ crime patterns in an area (eg. Gay venue targeted)
- ▶ intra-community issues (eg. Religious based conflict in a community)
- ▶ graffiti which might be indicative of an ongoing campaign

This list is not exhaustive.

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MEDIA INFORMATION



PSW article (Ref: pswpref)

Prejudice Related Crime Project Goes Statewide

Following the successful trial of a prejudice related crimes data collection project at Newtown Local Area Command last year, police across NSW will now be able to record crimes related to prejudice on COPS.

Commissioner Ryan launched the implementation of the project statewide on 22 October, and said the initiative, believed to be the first in Australia, reinforced the NSW Police Service's commitment to targeting crime motivated by prejudice.

"The Newtown project, which focussed on assault, showed that 6.49% of assaults were recorded as being prejudice related incidents. These incidents were a mix of sexually related and racially related offences.

"It is an alarming statistic and shows that many people in the community experience harassment and abuse simply because of their skin colour, sexuality, gender, political or religious preferences," Commissioner Ryan said.

"Police have an important role to play in preventing and deterring these types of crimes by firstly recognising prejudice related crimes and any patterns that emerge, and secondly, by documenting relevant information on COPS.

"Many people who commit these crimes are often repeat offenders, motivated by personal prejudice to commit offences against the person or property of an identifiable group in the community.

"This initiative sends a clear message to the community that police will not tolerate any crime motivated by prejudice," Commissioner Ryan said.

The Prejudice Related Crime Data Collection project has been developed following six years research and consultation with the NSW Privacy Commission, Anti Discrimination Board, Ethnic Affairs Commission and various victim support groups.

The project is designed to collect specific information about a particular crime rather than the person involved, with safe guards built in to protect individual's privacy.

The collection of this information will allow police to target the offenders motives and not the victims personal preferences or characteristics.

A comprehensive report on the statewide implementation of the project is scheduled for June 2000.

The Prejudice Related Crime Data Collection project is complemented by a training package *Dealing with Racist Violence*, which had been developed by the NSW Police Service and the Human Rights Commission, to provide additional training to police in providing victim support in areas where racial or ethnicity based prejudice is prevalent.

Box story 1***What the Prejudice Related Crime Data Collection project means to you***

It is vital that police record information appropriately on COPS. Victim statements form a major component of evidence gathered during investigations.

This information will help in investigating crimes, identifying trends or patterns in criminal offences, tracking repeat offenders, identifying proactive policing strategies and offering appropriate support and counselling to victims.

To record this information on COPS, select 'Possible prejudice related' in the Associated Factor Screen and select the relevant option from

- ▶ sexual preference prejudice
- ▶ racial/ethnicity prejudice
- ▶ religious prejudice
- ▶ political prejudice
- ▶ other prejudice.

Comments and observations by both the victim and the attending officer may also be included.

Four types of prejudice can be recorded - race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality/gender and/or political affiliation.

Police should remember that a victim's perception of the crime is valid, even when from a police perspective there may not be clear indicators that the crime was motivated by prejudice. This is because the victim may have experienced repeated offences and is acutely aware of signs and signals.

Cases where prejudice is a secondary factor should also be recorded.

Box story 2***Indicators of prejudice related crime***

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*Box story 3**Background on the project*

In October 1995 the Minister for Police announced the establishment of the Prejudice Related Crimes Data Collection Project. Since that time the NSW Police Service has examined different ways of collecting data in order to find the most appropriate model.

In December 1997 a trial of the project commenced in Newtown Local Area Command. The main focus was on assaults, with the data showing that between 1 February 1998 to 30 June 1998, 6.49% of assault incidents were recorded as being prejudice related incidents. These incidents were a mix of sexually related and racially related offences.

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