

VICTORIA
Road Safety - Research, Policing and
Education Conference

Regain the Momentum

18th - 20th November 2001

**..... The changing paradigm of traffic enforcement from the
perspective of someone who has been part of both the past
and the present.....**

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Introduction

This paper and presentation discusses the ever-changing environment of traffic enforcement within a modern police organisation. As a 'vehicle' to demonstrate this change process, the Victoria Police will be examined to see what if any change has taken place over the last 20 plus years. During this presentation, I would like to reinforce the underlying message, (*that traffic enforcement is seen by agencies such as the Victoria Police as a core function of a modern and progressive police organisation*).

As I progress through this presentation, it is my intention to look at some of the organisational and operational changes that have occurred, with discussion focusing on some of the reasons why this change has occurred. This discussion will not only focus on the changing face of traffic enforcement, but will also look at how traffic enforcement fits within a police organisation that in essence has changed the fundamental way it goes about its business.

Particular attention will also be paid to the partnerships between police and other road safety stakeholders. Arising from this association, there will be discussion on the planning process to ensure an appropriate delivery of traffic services to the community of Victoria. This presentation will culminate in discussion on the current traffic enforcement model of Victoria Police. Police delegates, in attendance here today will be challenged to consider the issues arising from this presentation, as to how they can manage and further reduce "their" respective crash rates and at the same time deliver an appropriate level of traffic services to their respective communities.

Traffic Department

In order to set the scene, it is necessary to step back to prior 1989 when the State Traffic Department was in existence. It was like all other Departments at that time, it was headed by an Assistant Commissioner, who was part of Police Command. The Assistant Commissioner was the force spokesperson on traffic related matters and was the person who had the arduous task of responding to queries from the press as to the alarming road toll. Around that era, the annual road toll for Victoria was:-

≈≈ 1985 – 683
≈≈ 1986 – 669
≈≈ 1987 – 705
≈≈ 1988 – 701
≈≈ 1989 – 776
≈≈ 2000 - 408¹

¹ TAC – Road Safety Monthly report, December 1999, page 4. TAC Communications and Road Safety.

Whilst this Department reflected the organisational needs at that time, nevertheless there were a number of structural issues which inhibited an optimum delivery of traffic services to the Community of Victoria. Issues such as:-

- ⌘⌘ Centralised administration - contrary to the current thinking of Regionalisation and devolution of accountability under Local Priority Policing (LPP) (which will be discussed further in this presentation).
- ⌘⌘ Centralised coordination - contrary to current thinking of Regionalisation under LPP.
- ⌘⌘ Potential for conflict between traffic management (State Traffic Department Headquarters - Melbourne) and local management within Districts
- ⌘⌘ Potential for organisational disharmony, given that the local District management had limited control over the deployment of traffic resources – other than in an emergency.

Project Arbiter

In 1989, Project Arbiter (2) was one of the most significant organisational restructures that has occurred in Victoria Police. This process of change ostensibly commenced in the early 1970's when Colonel Eric St Johnston (3 & 4), from England was engaged by the then Victorian Government to review the administration and organisation of the Victoria Police. This realignment was about how Victoria Police delivered traffic services (amongst other things) to the community of Victoria. The most recent dramatic organisational realignment occurred (for traffic, among other things) occurred in March last year with the introduction of Local Priority Policing (L.P.P.).

At the time of Project Arbiter, it was widely reported that the State Traffic Department would not be abolished.

History, records the result, the State Traffic Department was dissolved, and all the traffic personnel, were, at the stroke of a pen assigned to the General Policing Department, under the control of local managers. If you ever doubted it, be assured that change does occur and is constant. Advisable that individuals learn to understand, embrace and give effect to necessary change. A healthy organisation must keep reinventing itself in order to grow, and deliver optimum service to its customers.

One of the most significant changes that occurred by the dissolving of the State Traffic Department was the requirement for MTS members' to become multi-skilled. Traffic members were required by local command to respond and assist to all types of incidents, not just traffic. They were no longer confined exclusively to traffic duties.

This certainly occurred under the old Traffic Department, but it was organisationally more difficult to task traffic members to non traffic duties (other than emergencies) under the old structure. The outcome was traffic member's general operational skill level lifted. In turn it heightened the awareness of some general duties members with respect traffic issues. I acknowledge that many members in general duties always took traffic policing seriously and enthusiastically took place in all statewide operations.

Traffic & Operations Support Department

The Traffic & Operations Department (TOPs) replaced the Traffic Department. (5) TOPs provides operational traffic support to the General Policing Department by providing services such as:-

- ⌘⌘ Traffic Alcohol Section – Booze Buses
- ⌘⌘ Traffic Alcohol Technical Support
- ⌘⌘ Traffic Camera Office
- ⌘⌘ Road Safety Task Force – motorcycles, general enforcement vehicles and roadworthy personnel
- ⌘⌘ Major Collision Investigation Group
- ⌘⌘ Strategic Policy and Road Safety Information Group.

TOPs play an integral part in the overall delivery of traffic services by Victoria Police to the Victorian community.

Also arising from the creation of TOPs, two Chief Inspector positions were created to act as liaison officers on behalf of the Assistant Commissioner General Policing Department to ensure that an appropriate level of traffic services were being delivered. This was achieved by:-

- ⚡ Closely tracking the traffic activity of each District and Divisional TMUs.
- ⚡ Comparison of individual Traffic Units activity against their respective crash rates.
- ⚡ Trend analysis, over a wide range of traffic activities.
- ⚡ Regular liaison visits with District management and traffic personnel alike.

Victorian Government Road Safety Strategy

In recent years successive Victorian Government's have provided a very effective framework within which traffic services are delivered to the community of Victoria. The key players in this partnership are Victoria Police (enforcement and other traffic duties as required), VicRoads (educational services, licences and registration and more importantly providing the coordination of the "Road Safe" Community Road Safety Councils throughout the State) and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC – provide the ongoing media campaign ensuring that the road safety message is clearly in the communities mind.

The Road Safety Strategy is produced to the end user as a formatted calender, indicating particular emphasis on various categories of road user behaviour at given period of the year. This document forms the basis of the traffic planning guide for all operational police work centres both general duties and traffic members alike. Through the State Traffic Officers forum a Statewide Operational Traffic Plan is devised to ensure an operational response is developed for such issues as:-

- ⚡ All major holiday periods.
- ⚡ Formula 1 Grand Prix.
- ⚡ Motor Cycle Grand Prix - Phillip Island
- ⚡ Operation "R.A.I.D." - (Remove Alcohol Impaired Drivers)
- ⚡ Operation "Metro" - High profile drink drive operation
- ⚡ Operation "Visibility" - High profile speed enforcement operation

The Role of the State Traffic Adviser

The role of the former Traffic Liaison Officer(s) (now developed into that of the State Traffic Adviser), was not simply to ensure an appropriate delivery of Traffic Services to the community of Victoria by members, but also to represent Victoria Police at various internal and external working parties.

When required assistance has been provided to other police agencies, in need of traffic policing expertise., eg. .

- ⚡ Fiji – between 1994 and late 1995 the author was attached to the Fiji Police as a Traffic Adviser. One may well ask, what if anything a modern police organisation could learn from a third world country with respect traffic enforcement. I can assure quite a deal, issues such as
 - ?? The importance of *systems*
 - ?? The importance of *audit trails*
 - ?? The importance of *clearly identified outcomes being identified*
 - ?? The importance of *communicating those outcomes to all concerned*
 - ?? The importance of *the need for ownership, commitment and accountability at the local level*

I acknowledge that the issues raised above are nothing but fundamental practices for a modern police organisation. Yet to experience first hand, the problems that arise when these systems are not in place, clearly reinforces the need for vigilance in these areas.

≠≠ New Zealand - between 1996 and 2001 the author was initially involved in a Peer Review of Traffic enforcement in that country, since that date, on numerous occasions has revisited that country for the purposes of conducting further reviews, training and other duties associated with developing a more efficient model of traffic enforcement. Once again there are a number of lessons to be learnt from such experience:-

? ? Traffic enforcement is more than simply chasing outputs.

? ? Traffic enforcement requires an integrated, carefully thought out strategic approach in constant pursuit of outcome.

The most important role that the State Traffic Advisers fulfilled was to ensure that at all times, all TMU personnel across the State were clearly focused on ensuring the delivery of the outcomes sought by the Government Road Safety Strategy.

Local Priority Policing

The introduction of the first phase of Local Priority Policing (LPP) in November 1999 was the largest operational policing restructure and reform in the Forces 150 year history. The objectives of this organisational reform was to tailor policing to local community needs and allow more effective partnerships with other relevant government, non government and community agencies. (6)

Organisationally, Victoria Police went from a central command structure in the city with District(s) spread throughout the State, to that of Regionalisation. There are now 5 Regions, broken into Divisions and Districts. To ensure consistency in policy and other administrative matters, the 5 Regional Commanders meet regularly with the Assistant Commissioner of the General Policing Department. Importantly this meeting is held at General Policing Department Headquarters thus ensuring constant exposure to corporate thinking.

Over the years, traffic personnel have been given various names Ranging from the Mobile Traffic Section, through to their current name of Traffic Management Units (TMU's) Under LPP traffic enforcement has remained a core activity of Victoria Police, with TMU work centres being broken down from larger Divisional offices to local District Offices to reflect local community accountability. Whilst the thrust of LPP is to deliver service to the local community, traffic personnel are also committed to Statewide objectives as set out in the Victoria Road Safety Strategy.

Significantly what has come out of LPP is the devolution of accountability to the lowest level. It places on the individual, the responsibility to reduce "their" respective crash rate. To this end, both traffic managers and personnel alike are challenged to embrace "their" crash rate and in conjunction with "their" community partners are empowered to achieve a predetermined outcome. This focus provides members with:-

≠≠ Individual ownership; and

≠≠ A sense of worth while contribution to the overall objectives of Victoria Police and the Community. Intelligence based tasking is the key to success in this respect.

Community Road Safety Councils

A significant component of the overall Government Road Safety Strategy is the local Community Road Safety Councils (Roadsafe Victoria). TMU Managers are the conduits into these groups, allowing agencies such as Victoria Police to reach down and harness the energy of these groups throughout the State.

The message is clear. Police alone will not solve the issue of road trauma. It is the communities problem, accordingly all the community must become part of the process. The message is very clear to traffic managers, linkages to the community must be cultivated. For to do otherwise will consign the road toll of this State to continue to climb.

Conclusion

Traffic enforcement is core business for a modern progressive Police organisation. What I have endeavoured to do (albeit briefly) in this paper is to demonstrate the constantly changing evolution in a modern police organisation such as Victoria Police. Traffic enforcement is not simply about counting output, it is about identifying and pursuing outcomes.

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