



MEDIA STATEMENT

Report questions police internal investigations

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A Corruption and Crime Commission report has found that some police internal investigations into allegations of serious misconduct were inadequate and could threaten community confidence in policing.

However, the report, tabled in Parliament today, also concluded that police adequately dealt with more than 96% of allegations of misconduct.

The Commission's Director of Corruption Prevention, Roger Watson, said the report found that inadequate police internal investigations into a small number of serious cases were due to a lack of preparedness to deal with matters thoroughly and rigorously.

Much of the report's criticism centres on investigations conducted by the Internal Affairs Unit - the only central, dedicated internal investigations unit within the Western Australia Police.

However, Mr Watson said these conclusions were based on cases up to four years old and that there are indications the Internal Affairs Unit had improved the quality of its work. This will be examined further in a subsequent report.

The report also found that a significant proportion of misconduct allegations were incorrectly recorded by police as non-misconduct allegations.

Examples of inadequate practices examined in the report include:

- An inadequate Internal Affairs Unit investigation into an incident involving two men at the end of a high-speed pursuit in which the police helicopter videoed one of them being attacked by a police dog and tasered after he had surrendered.
- An inadequate internal investigation into an alleged sexual assault by a detective. A subsequent Commission investigation into the case resulted in the detective being convicted of various offences including unlawfully using the police computer to contact vulnerable females.
- The Internal Affairs Unit investigation into a case in which a police officer fired three shots into a car after a high speed pursuit while his partner was struggling with the driver inside the car.

- An inadequate internal investigation by a police officer into a complaint that his colleague, who was also a friend, was using his position as a police officer to harass his estranged wife. The investigating officer failed to declare a conflict of interest and did not pursue important lines of inquiry.

The report identified positive misconduct management practices in the Police Complaints Administration Centre, the Kimberley, Pilbara, Great Southern, Central Metropolitan, West Metropolitan, Wheatbelt, Eastern Metropolitan and South East Metropolitan Districts, and the Specialist Crime Unit.

It also noted that as a result of its findings there had been significant changes to the police management team in the Peel District. Quality control practices at the Internal Affairs Unit had also been reviewed.

The report makes seven recommendations which include that police review the approach to apologising to complainants who are genuinely aggrieved, a review of the approach to dealing with conflicts of interest and unauthorised computer access allegations, and that the Internal Affairs Unit improves its quality control processes.

The report is available at <http://www.ccc.wa.gov.au/Publications/Reports>

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