'Bending Granite'? Recent Attempts at Changing Police Organisational Structures in Australia: the Case of Victoria Police

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Introduction[1]

In 1979 Dorothy Guyot published an article analysing the then contemporary programs designed to change American police departments. Guyot's account suggested that changing police organisations was akin to 'bending granite'. In particular, Guyot concluded that the failure to reform the rank structure of police was a key barrier to police reforms. Twenty years since Guyot analysed the situation in the United States, Australian police organisations have undergone numerous programs of organisational change including regionalisation, flattened hierarchies, civilianisation, strategic management, business process re-engineering, management by objectives and so on[2]. At times, the emphasis for police organisational change has originated exogenously, such as recommendations arising out of a major inquiry[3]. In other instances changes have been developed and designed internally to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of policing through new forms of management, changes in operational practices and more generally changes in the broad style of policing. Though of course such internally driven change can still to some extent be a response to external pressures, such as the demands of a Government. This article examines one recent and ongoing program of internally generated organisational change in Victoria – Local Priority Policing (LPP).

Due to the inchoate nature of LPP's implementation it is far too early to evaluate the impact it will have upon policing in Victoria, both organisationally and in terms of general policing practices. Rather, this article seeks is to provide a formal account of the reforms that have occurred under the ambit of LPP, situate the developments of LPP in a wider context, appraise whether the reforms represent major shifts in policing as claimed, and draw attention to the problematic nature of LPP's attempt to reconfigure police-community relations[4].

Specifically the discussion is divided into five parts: first, we outline the organisational restructuring that has been introduced under LPP; second, we assess the tension between the rhetoric and reality of police reform; third, we link the contents of the reforms embodied under LPP to broader shifts in the nature of policing and governance; fourth, we raise issues concerning the democratic content of LPP and the potential tensions and conflicts within the form and procedures for 'shared decision-making'; and finally, we conclude by addressing the initial question raised by Guyot - the extent to which it can or cannot be argued that today changing a police organisation in Australia is akin to 'bending granite'.

A case study of police organisational change: local priority policing

Understanding contemporary developments in Australian police agencies requires us to recognise the importance of early colonial experience. With the exception of Tasmania, by the 1860s the Australian colonies had reached a 'settlement' on the form of policing - police agencies covered entire jurisdictions, were highly centralised, organised on a system of 'command and control' under the direction of a Commissioner, were devoid of municipal control and largely recruited males from manual trades. In no small way, many of the attempts to reform Australian police agencies up to the present have had to struggle with these legacies of the colonial period. As Finnane (1994:30) puts it, centralisation under the control of a Commissioner and without local input 'was the most important long-term consequence of the particular formation of police in the colonies'.[5] Indeed, more recent attempts to reform Australian police display the ongoing tension emanating from this colonial settlement on police form, and in particular in the role of the public or community in the governance of police.

In the past two decades, this fundamental issue of relations between police and communities has been heavily influenced by the emergence of community-oriented policing and more recently problem-oriented policing[6]. Indicative of the level of interest in community policing in the 1980s, the Australian Institute of Criminology organised a national conference in the mid-1980s, which provided a national forum for discussion and dissemination of programs and policies occurring under the rubric of community policing and in turn led to further program and policy development (Morgan 1984).

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4   The Victorian Auditor General has just completed a review of LPP (*Implementing Local Priority Policing in Victoria*, Auditor General Victoria 2001). Though we are not able to include the contents of the review here, we can indicate that much of the review focuses on the first two stages of LPP and in general the conclusions and recommendations support the arguments presented in our analysis.

5   There is not the space here to engage in a more detailed discussion of histories of policing in Australia Those interested in this field of inquiry could do no better than refer to Finnane (1994).

6   One of the reviewers questioned whether problem-oriented policing was really a more recent influence, suggesting that both community and problem-oriented policing emerged at the same time. They rightly pointed to Herman Goldstein's published work on problem-oriented policing beginning in the late 1970s (Goldstein 1979). This is a point shared for instance by Moir and Moir (1992:212) where they claim that "The two concepts became fashionable at the same time...". While this is true in terms of the emergence of the concepts, the more substantial impact of Goldstein's work emerged later, following the publication of *Problem-oriented Policing* (Goldstein 1990), several years after police agencies in Australia had adopted the term community policing. For a discussion on some of the debates about the meaning of community policing in Australia see Moir and Moir (1992); Bayley (1989), and on Victoria specifically, Beyer (1992).

The Victorian Police Force is no exception to these broader influences on changes in organisational philosophy. While various initiatives such as the Police Community Involvement Program (introduced in 1981, see Beyer 1992) pre-date the identifiable shift towards community policing, substantial change occurred in 1989 when Victoria Police introduced a pilot Police Community Consultative Committee or PCCC. Whilst quite mundane in terms of its' impact on police practises, PCCCs were soon promoted as a cornerstone of the new community policing philosophy. In the early 1990's PCCCs were embraced by the then Labor Government as a vehicle for the local delivery of a State-wide community crime prevention strategy, known as *Vicsafe*. Unlike earlier initiatives, PCCCs became more overtly attached to a program of philosophical change through a crime prevention strategy (i.e. *Vicsafe*) which had community policing at its' centre.

Though a range of new programs were introduced in the following decade, and some programs discarded, community policing remained central to the 'Mission' of the Victorian Police Force (Victoria Police 1992; Palmer 1993). In 1998 the Chief Commissioner brought together several organisational reforms i.e. the Service Improvement Program and various reforms to management structure, within a newly formed Strategic Development Department to begin developing the principles of LPP. Indeed, the new LPP program has been described as a means through which internal resistance to community policing can be overcome by providing greater clarity to this principle, affording a means by which a community policing philosophy can be fully operationalised (Victoria Police Chief Commissioner 1998).

There are two inter-related key aspects of structural change introduced by Local Priority Policing – first the dual strategy of regionalisation/decentralisation and second the introduction of Local Safety Committees. Regionalisation and decentralisation embodies three key elements. First, police regional or district boundaries have been substantially re-drawn under the Statewide Management Model (Victoria Police Business Plan 1999-2000:7). There are now five Regions, each having a mixture of metropolitan and rural areas[7]. Second, these Regions are placed under the control of Regional Commanders, who in turn are physically located in their respective Region and oversee regional service delivery. Within each Region there are at least two Divisions, managed by Divisional Superintendents. Underneath the Divisions are Districts with operational boundaries matching local government boundaries.

The third key element of regionalisation and decentralisation involves reform to the rank structure of the Victoria Police. Two ranks have been dispensed with (i.e. Chief Inspector and Chief Superintendent), with far greater emphasis placed on the role of District Inspectors. District Inspectors are in charge of the delivery of policing services at the 'local' level (meaning District/Local Government level)[8]. They have formal control over the allocation of resources inside their Districts, including the use of specialist Units, such as homicide and drug squads that remain centralised and continue to operate across the State (Victoria Police Chief Commissioner 1998).

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7   This is somewhat like the New South Wales experiment of urban/rural mixture within each Region introduced by Commissioner Avery in 1987. Interestingly, nowhere has there been found any reference to some of the problems this mixture caused in New South Wales, such as current Commissioner Peter Ryan's introduction of 11 Regions in order to ensure greater responsiveness at the Regional level and less centralised administrative support However, unlike New South Wales, in Victoria the Regional Commanders have been given non-Metropolitan headquarters. For further details, see Wood 1997, vol II, pp 237-43.

8   In most instances it is expected that the District Inspector will be responsible for one Local Government area, though in some instances they will be responsible for two municipalities.

In order to avoid the potential fragmentation of Victoria Police into regional police forces, particularly so in the delivery of policing services, a Regional and State-wide overview is maintained through the formation of the Strategic Management Team, comprising each Regional Commander and the Assistant Commissioner. In addition, each Regional Commander is given responsibility for management of a state-wide activity (for instance Information Technology for the Force as a whole). Taken together, regionalisation and decentralisation embody the broader shift within policing towards the adoption of new management structures referred to in the literature as new managerialism (on the impact of new managerialism on Australian policing see Davids & Hancock 1998; Palmer 1997). Within policing, reforms embodying new managerialism flatten the chain of command; focus on the development of performance measurement; decentralise responsibility for management of service delivery to make it more responsive to 'local communities'; and seek to utilise private sector management techniques. LPP embodies these changes by placing officers in charge of Districts as the key point of contact and service delivery, devolving accountability for the performance of policing within their District.

Whereas regionalisation/decentralisation changes the administrative structure of the Victorian Police Force, the second key aspect of structural change under LPP links structural change to service delivery via the introduction of a new formal mechanism for police-community interaction - Local Safety Committees (LSC's). These committees are closely related to the introduction of District Inspectors mentioned above. District Inspectors have responsibility for forming a Local Safety Committee and ensuring that the work of the local police incorporates the outcomes of Local Safety Committee deliberations.

The Local Safety Committees (LSC) have been introduced across the State during a four-month period in mid-2000 (specifically from April 1 to July 31). The committees are initiated and chaired by District Inspectors and overseen by the relevant Divisional Superintendents (Victoria Police 2000a). The membership of these LSC comprises 'community groups' and 'local service providers', defined into two distinct categories of 'essential' and 'optional'[9]. The essential groupings consist of representatives from Local Government e.g. community safety officers, Department of Human Services, Department of Education, Employment and Training, Department of Infrastructure (which includes Planning, Public Transport and VicRoads), the business community and other Emergency Services.

The optional grouping is not so clearly defined, but refers to other local community representatives to be determined on the basis of local issues. In addition, the 'optional' representatives should 'be sought from local service providers and stakeholders who can clearly "add value" to the community consultation process, i.e. they manage services/ resources and can actually direct resources to respond to local problems' (Victoria Police, 2000b:7). However, the *Policy Guidelines* indicate that the LSC should normally have between eight and twelve members, which potentially leaves little room for 'optional' members[10].

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9   The terminology for the first category shifts between various documents from 'essential' to 'preferred'. The term 'optional' remains consistent.

10 Within the six headings under 'essential/preferred' there are several potential members. For instance, Emergency Services could include representation from Ambulance, Fire Authorities, Protective Services and Hospitals. Human Services could include juvenile justice, youth affairs and drug services.

The role of the LSC is to identify key crime and safety issues in the district, and develop a Community Safety Plan that will link and guide police and community responses to the identified crime and safety problems. LSC's are promoted as a means of ensuring there is co-ordinated action in efforts across government agencies and local representative bodies to address crime and safety, providing a forum for community consultation, and a mechanism by which the police can receive information and feedback on services they are delivering to the community (Victoria Police Chief Commissioner 1998; Victoria Police 2000a).

More formally, the task of the LSC is to discuss issues of local concern and develop a Community Safety Plan that identifies key local issues, the objectives of the LSC, strategies to be used to achieve these objectives, and performance indicators. Victoria Police Policy Guidelines stress that the Community Safety Plan objectives, strategies and performance measures should not simply reflect police activities but include the 'strategies that all members of the Local Safety Committee (and the agencies they represent) will employ to achieve the desired outcomes' (Victoria Police 2000b:11).

By establishing Local Safety Committees, Local Priority Policing creates identifiable 'communities of interest' along Municipal geographic boundaries, providing a new forum for police-community relations between municipality-based communities and policing services. Overall, LPP signifies a key shift in the means by which Victoria police practices are determined, providing an opportunity whereby 'the community influences which services are provided' (Victoria Police Business Plan 1999-2000:7).

Rhetoric or reality in organisational change

There is considerable uncertainty about the practical effects of the organisational changes described in the preceding section. The substantive impact of LPP cannot, as yet, be assessed adequately, particularly because it has had little time in which to operate. However, somewhat like the ongoing debates about the meaning of community policing and the efforts to distil the rhetoric from the reality (Greene & Mastrofski 1988), the contents of LPP can be examined in terms of whether the formal changes under this reform program represent innovative efforts to instigate fundamental organisational change.

The reforms that have occurred under the ambit of LPP do present the potential for a major shift in the functions and roles of Victoria police managers. Firstly, it flattens the management structure and decentralises many management responsibilities to Superintendents and Inspectors. LPP increases the geographical focus of first line managers i.e. District Inspectors, by locating them in specific municipalities (Victoria Chief Commissioner of Police 1998). Like many reforms that have occurred in policing, LPP aims to devolve greater decision-making responsibility to those personnel directly involved in the delivery of local police services. Also by locating District Inspectors within municipal boundaries and placing greater emphasis on their ability to plan and manage policing within municipal boundaries, they are potentially made far more accountable for their actions as police managers. However, the extent to which this goes beyond internal accountability to Superintendents and above will only be determined by the operation of the LSC's, in particular over the next twelve months.

The LSC structure also represents significant reform. Potentially they will increase local community accessibility to local police, affording the community the opportunity to influence the provision of police services through Community Safety Plans, and thereby ensuring police responses are tailored to local community needs. LSC's can provide a

forum for multi-agency responses to crime and safety issues based upon partnership approaches, a strategy that draws upon ideas of 'best practice' in contemporary crime prevention discourse (Crawford 1998; Goldblatt & Lewis 1998; Weatherburn & Grabosky 1999). Reflecting this similar theme is the problem orientated approach that underpins the LPP model, whereby the specific and local nature of crime problems will determine the nature of the police/community response. Again, this depends in large measure on the operation of the LSCs in the ensuing period and whether the LSCs are able to overcome the well-documented problems of previous forms of police-community committees in England (Morgan 1992; Crawford 1997) and Australia (Bull & Stratta 1995; James & Sutton 1993). In particular, there is the concern that the Local Safety Committees will become what Jones et al (1994) have referred to as 'architects of their own decline', failing, not simply due to lack of power, but due to members having a narrow view of their own roles[11].

LPP and new modes of governance

Crawford (1997) states that many accounts of community policing have not been linked to wider socio-political developments. Change under the guise of community policing is typically conceived as an evolutionary process of improving police efficiency and effectiveness. These 'two E's' of policing have been very much to the fore in documents relating to LPP.[12] However, Crawford (1997) argues that there is a need to assess transformations in policing styles in the context of their relationship to changing modes of governance.

An increasing amount of research literature has documented the fact that the governing of populations – of which state police is but one technique – has shifted away considerably from state centred arrangements towards a plethora of non-state entities that are privately constituted and market orientated (e.g. Garland 1996; Lianos & Douglas 2000; O'Malley 1991, 1992; Pratt 1997; Kempa et al 1999; Rose 1996). This shift represents a re-configuration of relations between the state, the market and civil society (Garland 1996; Rhodes 1997; Rose 1996). One aim of this shift has been to transfer the burden for controlling crime and improving safety onto communities, local government and individuals (Crawford 1998; Garland 1996; Goris & Walters 1999). Under such regimes emphasis is on ensuring individual and community responsibility for social control and risk management. 'Care of the self', rather than direct support from the State, has become the dominant theme (Sutton 2000).

The discourse of community safety being a shared responsibility pervades the documentation to LPP. However, it is not so much the individuals as managers of their own risks that lies at the heart of LPP, but rather a focus on aligning government agencies and to a lesser extent other 'representative' bodies to the task of responsibility for local crime issues. LPP does not quite represent the fundamental relocation of responsibility for crime

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11   Jones et al (1994) were discussing English Police Authorities. We are not suggesting here that Local Safety Committees are the same as Police Authorities. Rather we are drawing out the general point that in relation to the various forms of police-community committees how members interpret the role of the committee and their capacity to influence committee deliberations should not be dismissed. Of course, this is also related to the issue of who is invited, appointed or elected to such a committee.

12   For instance, LPP documentation discusses the 'budget process' and the 'National Performance Criteria' as influential factors. Perhaps even more interesting, the claim that Victoria has the 'highest expenditure per crime per capita' is seen as indicative of efficiency (Victoria Police Chief Commissioner 1998). Interestingly, the issue of 'equity' has not been addressed in the LPP documentation. We thank one of the reviewers for this comment.

control from the State to the private citizen and voluntary groups. Rather LPP rests upon an intermediate zone, wherein state agencies (from both the State level and Municipal level) are inculcated to contribute their 'resources' to consensually generated objectives and strategies. Too often the focus on responsibilisation strategies fails to recognise the existence of such an intermediate level, which constitutes an influential policy network (Leishman et al 1996).

In addition, LPP attempts to shift somewhat uneasily between being the foundation for community policing, and thereby invoking the terms and imagery of 'community', and the idea of being a 'multi-agency' partnership for the delivery of policing services. As Hughes (1998:76) has recently argued, the terms 'multi-agency' and 'community' mean different things. The former is 'chiefly a "top-down", neo-corporatist strategy from both central and local state regimes...[with] minimal "bottom-up" communal participation and minimal democratic "ownership"'. On the other hand, the term 'community' is a seductive, 'feelgood' word, applied broadly to capture a presumed progressive element to an initiative, 'without necessary recourse to clear definition and explanation' (Hughes 1998:105). Hughes' (1998) point is that these two terms cannot be used interchangeably as they seek to capture different ways of practising policy development and program delivery.

Taken together, the slippage in terminology and the attempts to work within an intermediate zone of representatives from government agencies and non-government bodies provide the space for a partial re-alignment of the governance of policing and the governing of populations. In the case of the former, the development of a policing plan presents members of the LSCs with an opportunity to direct local policing policy. In turn, this can shape how local populations are governed through police, including the extent to which agencies other than the state police take on policing activities. Of course, such shifts can be a matter of degrees. For instance, a Local Safety Committee might determine that shoplifting is a local problem and is caused by truancy from local schools. In response, the Education Department representative might consider a range of initiatives that does not necessarily involve greater use of state police resources, but could include policing responses such as the commitment of the business association representative to the greater use of private security within shopping centres. In this example, governance of police has changed in that non-police representatives have shaped local police policy. Similarly, governing populations has changed through a mix of state and non-state techniques. Again, the extent to which these changes in governance will occur rests heavily on the activities of non-police members of the LSC's.

Consultation, partnership and policing practices

The final issue to consider concerns the vexed issue of consultation and partnerships. In her analysis of crime prevention, Weatheritt (1996) has argued that two distinct histories can be written about the extent to which UK police have adopted the theory and practice of crime prevention. One relates to statements of intent i.e. policy, with this historical narrative being an encouraging one. However, the other historical narrative is less heartening, and relates to the extent to which 'proclaimed intents' have been incorporated and adopted into day-to-day policing. Hence, at the policy and rhetorical level the reforms occurring under the guise of LPP appear on the surface to be significant. However, the ways in which these changes play out in practice will determine whether the rhetoric surrounding LPP is true to its cause of ensuring organisational change.

One way in which this will be measured is the extent to which - through the consultation processes established by LPP - Victoria police will relinquish control to local communities and allow them to define crime and safety problems and policing issues, and hence influence police responses. Potentially LPP can provide the opportunity for local communities to participate in police reform, albeit this process will only be achieved if the police do not take centre stage in the LSC structures. While capturing the discourses of LSC deliberations might provide instrumental gains for 'local' police - so as to ensure that decisions made within LSC forums accord with police priorities - the cost is that a limited view of police reform is adopted (Shearing 1997). Evidence indicates that typically police priorities have dominated the agenda of committee forums (Bull & Stratta 1995; James & Sutton 1993), with this being particularly so if members are relatively ignorant of policing issues (Crawford 1997).

As indicated above, membership of the Local Safety Committees has little to do with knowledge of policing issues, being more concerned in having members who are able to contribute resources from their own agencies or organisations. Indeed, the lack of allocation of financial and personnel resources to the LSCs represents a major barrier to their capacities. The idea that each representative brings to the LSC the capacity to dedicate resources from their own agency focuses the LSCs more on the actions emanating from the Local Safety Plans, rather than on the development of the plans and monitoring performance against objectives. As Jones and Newburn (1997:100) argued in their analysis of the Police Authorities in England and Wales, a consistent finding from the literature on these and similar bodies is that not only do members often lack information and expertise, but that such authorities need 'to have a properly-resourced secretariat, independent of the police force, which would provide informational and technical support...'[13].

Nowhere in the relevant documentation detailing LPP is there any recognition that agencies attending the LSC forums will potentially possess different organisational cultures, ideologies and traditions that may not be compatible with the police, nor those of other agencies. The LPP documentation fails to recognise that within the context of a LSC discord may occur between participating agencies whose interests and ideologies diverge. Disagreement over the design and direction of a community safety play may occur, as well as conflicts over its control, ownership and management (Crawford 1998; Crawford & Jones 1995; Gilling 1993; Goris & Walters 1999; Mayo 1997; Sutton 1997). Further, in such struggles not all agencies, groups or individuals are equally powerful, with each bringing to a partnership forum differential access to resources, and competing claims to specialist knowledge and expertise (Crawford 1997, 1998; Crawford and Jones 1995; Gilling 1993, Mayo 1997). Rather than seeing any potential conflict or tension as negative, LSC participants should be able and willing to embrace the opportunity such discord presents as a vehicle for reshaping organisational practises. This is particularly so in the context of reforming the delivery of policing services to local communities. However, the potential threat to the effectiveness of any partnership structure is that powerful agencies like the police may dominate the agenda, which can lead to the prioritisation of particular crime and safety problems over others, and the avoidance of any debate that brings the police role under scrutiny (James & Sutton 1993).

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13   As indicated in footnote 12 above we do not argue that LSCs and Police Authorities in England and Wales are the same. Police Authorities have a statutory basis and a wider set of responsibilities. However, these duties are quite similar to those of the LSCs with regard to the development of local policing plans, which in turn has become the key feature of the work of Police Authorities (Jones & Newburn 1997).

The process of forming the LSC raises some important issues in relation to their democratic representation. The LSCs are initiated and chaired by the District Inspectors, who in turn are to address the list of 'essential' and 'optional' representatives. Even the much-maligned Police Community Consultation Committees allowed for some local effort to attract potential participants through calling public meetings to select community representatives. On the other hand, LSCs are formed unilaterally by the police without a public meeting or any advertising for nominations. In addition, the LSCs are focused on forming geographic 'community of interests' and lack mechanisms that guarantee the adequate representation of disadvantaged and less powerful groups e.g. young people. It cannot be assumed that official agency representatives will ensure this occurs, with such democratic deficits in partnership forums raising questions as to whether membership is truly representative (Crawford 1997).

Finally, in a number of local government areas the LSCs overlap to some degree with existing partnership structures. These include PCCCs, Neighbourhood Watch, and Senior Management Teams developed under the Victorian community safety and crime prevention program Safer Cities and Shires, itself a corporatist consultation and partnership structure (see Victorian Department of Justice 1997). The relationship between these various community safety structures is unclear. For example LPP documentation states that it is quite legitimate for Senior Management Teams to be adopted as LPP local safety committees (Victoria Police 2000b). This raises issues as to the compatibility between the goals and objectives of what is essentially a police initiated strategy (i.e. LPP local safety committees) and a community safety management structure established by local government (i.e. Safer Cities and Shires Senior Management Teams). However, District Inspectors can choose to establish an LSC even if a Senior Management team is already in existence. The problem here is the potential tension and overlap between the priorities and membership of both the LSC and Senior Management Team[14]. Also, while PCCCs can be utilised as an LPP local safety committee (Victoria Police 2000b), they are conceived more as a grass roots forum that lacks the strategic focus necessary for an LSC[15].

Conclusion: bending granite?

Having assessed the reforms to the Victoria Police Force embodied in Local Priority Policing, it now remains to return to the issue identified by Guyot (1979) concerning the difficulty or otherwise of producing organisational change in contemporary Australian police organisations.

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14   Research being undertaken by one of the authors towards a PhD, indicates that there is some variability in how smoothly LPP local safety committees have been combined with existing Safer City and Shires Senior Management teams. While some have integrated their functions with very little difficulty, other local government municipalities have felt, that, due to the requirement of Victoria Police to establish a local safety committee or some equivalent forum, the police have tended to try and take over the existing Senior Management Team, and reorientate its agenda to meet the objectives of LPP. On the other hand some Victorian local government municipalities have found that since LPP local safety committees have been police initiated and resourced the rate of agency participation in them has been far higher compared to previously established Safer City and Shires Senior Management teams.
15   The same comment can be made in relation to Neighbourhood Watch groups. Victoria Police perceives them as a mechanism through which LPP local safety committees can receive information and community feedback about local safety issues (Victoria Police 2000b).

Local Priority Policing represents significant change in the structure of the Victorian Police Force. Through regionalisation policing is far more clearly identified in geographical terms. Related to the regionalisation process, the introduction of 'front line' service delivery staff – District Inspectors – further enhances the geographically based nature of service delivery. The introduction of Local Safety Committees, though unclear in terms of how they interact with or impact upon Police Community Consultative Committees or Safer Cities and Shires Senior Management Teams, certainly continue the PCCC tradition of having a forum for consultation between police and local community 'representatives'.

There is no doubt that the Victorian case study provides an indication that currently it is possible to produce significant organisational changes to police agencies in Australia. Yet despite the significance of what is embodied in the new management and service delivery models in Victoria - such as loss of two ranks, new regional boundaries, alignment of police Districts with Municipal boundaries, and the introduction of Local Safety Committees with responsibility for developing local policing plans – the majority of changes represent further refinement to existing programs and practices. In other words, despite the claims of a fundamental change in the delivery of policing services in Victoria, much of the change continues along enhanced customer responsiveness and corporatist consultation identified in earlier manifestations of community policing (Crawford 1997, 1998, Hughes 1994; 1996; 1998).

This is not to deny the possibilities contained within the formal aspects of the changes. There is potential for enhanced responsiveness to local community safety issues and increased police accountability through planning police services and the monitoring of performance against these local plans. Producing structural change in contemporary Australian policing is no longer as difficult as 'bending granite', though thus far the evidence that such changes produce substantial shifts in the practices of policing remains to be seen.

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