



# “Crime, The People and the Policeman”

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It is with much pleasure that I accept the opportunity to express certain views relevant to the role of the police and their relationship to the community, directed toward the common goal of the prevention of crime.

As the only Police Representative on the Australian Crime Prevention Council, I am fully aware that in this capacity I may be seen to be, if not expected to be, the effective representative of all Police Officers, including Commonwealth Police, throughout Australia. Hence, I perform this function with the full realisation that it is the interests of the police in Australia that I am endeavouring to place before the Council for the sole purpose of achieving a beneficial result that will assist to some degree in reducing the amount of crime in Australia.

It would be accepted, I believe, that crime is not only increasing noticeably in quantitative terms, but is increasing in form as well. It would seem in fact that with each change or innovation in our society comes a new opportunity for those criminally inclined to spread like a cancer within the fabric of our community. Similarly, as this crime increases, so too does the amount written and spoken as to how this crime increase should be combatted. Many people have constructive and useful ideas with regard to the method of prevention, but their variety defies any single categorisation for the purpose of meeting the challenge with one concerted effort. To some degree, the task of prevention of crime in our modern society may be likened to pushing the waves back from the shore.

At present a District Superintendent in the Tasmania Police Force, I have worked in most branches of the service and have been privileged to have had the opportunity of making a close survey of other Police Forces overseas, including the United States, Canada, Japan, Hong Kong and New Zealand. I have also worked as a Detective and Special Branch Officer in most Australian States. This background of wide and general experience has enabled me to make a number of observations, particularly in the area of crime and I have found that Australia's problems are not unlike those that I have witnessed overseas.

Police in every country, by virtue of their accepted role, are charged with the endeavour to prevent and detect crime, together with their concern for the protection of life and property. In view of this role, it is unfortunate that in some areas the attitudes of the public are unkind to the police function, especially at a time when the Australian

crime scene itself appears to be reaching alarming proportions. This situation is even more tragic when one considers that the Australian policeman is no less human than his fellow citizen, and in fact participates in the same social functions as any other member of the society in which we live. Personally, I could imagine no more unfortunate situation than the adoption of a hard-line attitude on the part of our police, similar to that of the United States, and we are all familiar with the stereotyped television image of unbuttoned gun holsters and armed police ready to use a lethal weapon in the handling of a minor traffic breach. In many cases the officers wear dark glasses, and to the motorist must just appear as a face with a gun. This image in Australia, I feel, must be avoided at all costs and can only be the result of an irreparable breakdown in police community relations. It was not by accident that the second of the nine principles of British Policing was, “to recognise always that the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect”.

I am a married man with two children and grandchildren. I enjoy sport and I like people. Like most others, I dislike the thought of inflicting either capital or corporal punishment upon my fellow human beings, but I do consider that there are times when only a strong deterrent will maintain the right of innocent people to live in society without fear. In the case of the murder of those who choose to protect the community, such as police and prison officers, and where sexual offences occur against young children, I personally feel that capital punishment should be retained. Despite the drastic and inhuman appearance of such an opinion, I firmly believe that such powers, if retained in our criminal justice system, may be used intelligently and discreetly as a deterrent against those who commit the sort of acts that lowers our society to the level of the predatory animal.

Naturally, it would be wrong for me to put forward definite views on subjects such as this as a representative of the Police of Australia, without having the support of the majority of my fellow policemen in their fight against crime. Therefore, I should point out that I recently wrote to each Commissioner in every Australian State, asking for any suggestions that their crime prevention officers would like me to place before the National Australia Crime Prevention Council meeting in Adelaide this year. The response I received was gratifying, although the suggestions are too numerous to relate in their entirety.