Police LGBTI Community Relations

In the following I provide:

- An example of appropriate interaction between the police and a gay man from the mid-1980s.
- Further examples of conduct by police which may have undermined police-LGBTIQ community relations.

Mid 1980s: example of appropriate policing

The following account, of which I am personally aware, is an example of where a serving police officer responded to a crime against a gay man in an appropriate and non-judgemental manner.

Early one Sunday morning I was phoned by a friend who was a volunteer with the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service. He had been contacted by another Counselling Service volunteer (who I shall call David) who had just been robbed in his home.

David was not particularly experienced in the gay scene and found it difficult to engage with people. The previous night, however, a young attractive man (who I shall call Steve) had shown sufficient interest in David for him to invite Steve to his home. Once at David's home Steve and David had sex, and Steve then persuaded David to engage in bondage games, with David as the passive partner. David agreed and subsequently fell asleep – it was possible he had been drugged. When David awoke he was able to free himself and discovered he had been robbed. Steve had left.

I was able to put my friend in contact with   then a senior conciliation officer with the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board and Chair of its Lesbian and Gay Consultation.
also had carriage of responsibilities for liaison between the Board, police and the LGBTIQ community.

My friend   accompanied David to   Police Command where David was interviewed by a young detective   . David was persuaded to provide   a full account of what had happened, even though some aspects were personally embarrassing.

          subsequently told me that   was completely non-judgemental when he heard David's account and was able to encourage David to provide more information.   then left them for a short period. When he returned, he told them what action he had just taken and what action he proposed to take. He then asked David if there was anything more David wanted him to do.

I am not aware whether Steve was ever charged with the robbery.

This however is an example of a police officer doing his job in a manner which all of us are entitled to expect of police officers when responding to crimes.

June 1992: "Gays against Institutionalised Homophobia"

In June 1992, a young gay activist approached me as editor of the *Sydney Star Observer*, informing me of a plot by a group calling itself Gays against Institutionalised Homophobia (GAIH) to out 35 serving gay police officers. He claimed a representative of the group had met

him in Taylor Square with details of the plot. The outing could only be prevented by the Police Commissioner taking a stand against homophobia; positively supporting the recruitment of gay and lesbian police officers; and appointing more gay and lesbian liaison officers.

Then Commissioner Tony Lauer, subsequently made a public statement along those lines, but also condemned the outing threat as an invasion of privacy.

My suspicion was that GAIH existed only as a figment of the young gay activist's imagination.

At the time this activist was in a relationship with a gay police officer and was concerned that the officer may have experienced some prejudicial treatment from other officers because of the relationship. He may have invented GAIH to force the senior ranks of NSW Police to take a public stance against homophobia, and there was never any intention to out police officers. While I am aware the activist had met other gay police officers, it is doubtful whether he (or anyone) could name 35 serving gay police officers at that time.

While this activist's tactics may be questionable, they must be seen in the context of his wanting to take action against homophobia which was personally affecting his partner.

I do not wish to name the activist as he now holds a senior position in the inner-city LGBTIQ community.

Matters raised with the Bligh/Sydney Electorate Offices

June 1999: Inquisition raid

Police raided Inquisition, the annual Leather Pride Parade held at the former Sydney Showgrounds, Moore Park.

One man was arrested because he had an adult sex toy in his possession.

The raid was reported in the gay media.

Police subsequently conceded that some things could have been done better, but defended their action because of information about drug dealing.

Clover Moore subsequently expressed concern about the "stand-over tactics" employed by the police during the raid, given that in the past police had worked with the organisers, Leather Pride.

There was also a concern about the direction of police priorities – maintaining community safety in the face of homophobia and hate crimes, or targeting illicit drugs at a community social event where crime/violence levels were extremely low.

Community members were concerned that the Inquisition intervention represented a shift in shift in attitude between police and gay and lesbian groups.

Late 1999: Resignation of Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer,

resigned as Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer (GLLO) at Police, alleging homophobia at the Police Command was a factor.

Police denied this, claiming his resignation related to personnel and work performance issues.

had been asked to keep the alleged homophobia confidential, but he made the decision to air the allegations publicly.

The Bligh electorate office was inclined to accept the explanation of   Police for the resignation.

          Police continued education of staff about homophobia and appointed a replacement GLLO without delay.

Observation: While homophobia may not have been a factor in   resignation, it is possible that members of the LGBTI community may have believed it was, given the history of homophobic behaviour by the   Command.

Such historic behaviour and continued evidence of an ingrained anti-gay culture can make it difficult for NSW Police to defend itself against false or unjustified allegations of homophobia.

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