

had resulted in significant arrests and the seizure of illicit drugs and cash.⁷ For this, he'd been paid nothing until the brass finally approved a smaller payment than I'd asked for. On 23 July 2003, Inspector Adrian White and I drove to Albert Park Lake and met Terry in a car park. He jumped into the back seat of our car, and White handed him a thick envelope containing \$10,000.⁸

'Thanks!' said Terry, clearly chuffed – not at the amount of cash, which would probably seem like small change to him, but at the official recognition of what he was increasingly seeing as an adrenaline-fuelled vocation. In fact, having barely put the envelope down the front of his overalls, he began talking about another job. He was impressed that Adrian White was an inspector, and off he went.

'I know you all are really busy and I've been trying to get Dave and Paul involved – I know a guy who's bringing in blocks of cocaine—'

'Come on, Terry, remember what we agreed,' I said.

Terry ignored me and talked straight to the inspector. 'If you can just get the boys organised, we can—'

Adrian White raised his hand. 'One job at a time, Terry. One job at a time.'

Terry Hodson's longevity had something to do with his people skills. Terry had the charm to convince everyone that he was their best friend.

Prior to my arrival at the MDID, one of the jobs ran into a snag when the brass wouldn't authorise payment for a big purchase of ecstasy tablets. The squad had asked for about \$25,000 to make a buy of 1000 tablets with a street value of \$50,000, but the money wasn't available. Unwilling to let the deal slide, Terry had offered to pay for the drugs himself, and this had been okayed. I think Terry paid about \$22,000 of his own money and bought 1000 ecstasy tablets. He'd then ordered another 3000. As a result, the crook he'd bought them from, Jayson Rodda, had been pinched when the MDID arrested him in possession of the second lot of drugs. Terry was able

to convince Rodda that he'd had nothing to do with dobbing him in. I'd reviewed all the Hodson folders and wondered at the whereabouts of the 1000 tablets – which legally constituted a commercial quantity and carried a life sentence in jail. It was also an amount that far overstepped Terry's police indemnity. The Drug Squad had let Terry buy a commercial quantity of drugs *and he still had them*. Whoops.

I wanted to handle this delicately, because I was aware that Terry had outlaid his own money for the drugs to help the squad, and I didn't want to jeopardise our ongoing relationship.

At our next meeting with Terry, I asked him if he still had the ecstasy tablets.

'Yeah, sure,' he said. 'I've got them at home.'

'Hold on to them,' I told him.

'I've got a bloke that I can set up with them—'

'Nah,' I said, shaking my head. 'Just hold on to them. It's a commercial quantity, Terry. Your immunity only gives you the right to buy small amounts. A thousand tablets would put you in jail forever.'

Terry shrugged; he always knew when he was offering something we didn't want. He'd wheel and deal another day. I told him that I'd find out what we could do about his thousand tablets.

Back at the offices at MDID, Dave and I went in to see a more senior officer. I briefed him about our current operations and then flagged the issue of Terry's tablets.

'Go get them off him,' the senior officer said.

'Er ... but the problem is that he paid for them with his own money.'

The officer hesitated. He was fully aware of the value of Terry's information, and none of us wanted to lose him as an informer.

'Can't we just pay him what he paid for them and destroy the drugs?' I asked.

'Hmm,' the officer said.

We all put forward a number of scenarios where Victoria Police could benefit from the drugs' sale without having to pay for them. The officer suggested that Terry sell them and we could arrest the people who bought them from him. I strongly disagreed: this was the kind of thing that could get Terry killed. It had happened too often; if we arrested everyone who bought drugs from Terry but he remained free and unarrested, the crooks themselves would put two and two together.

Finally, the officer told us to tell Terry to sell the drugs and get rid of them. We were also instructed to forget that this conversation ever took place, and not to record the meeting in our diaries. But it's hard to forget a conversation like that.

Terry took it all in his stride. He was happy to sell the drugs, but he was a little disappointed that they wouldn't be used to make more arrests. Silly bugger. He never showed any concerns for the consequences of what he was doing at all. This may have had something to do with his frequent snorting of cocaine and drinking of Scotch.

To Terry, it was the thrill of the involvement; it was never about the money. You only had to meet him a couple of times to know that he wanted to be in the thick of things. He was an extraordinary man, using his own money and his own drugs to ensure that we got arrests. When we weren't working with him on a job, he'd constantly call us, and he knew how to press the right buttons. If we weren't interested in a small ecstasy bust, he'd immediately offer us a bigger bust. It was certainly a gift for the MDID – one that Victoria Police is unlikely to see again.

The bit that I don't get was that he was willing to give anyone up, including his own kids, his best friends and his favourite associates. Anyone he had dealings with was fair game. He didn't seem to care. And I had to wonder if his wife, Christine, knew and was okay with it. She seemed like a really caring woman. Did she know and approve? Or did Terry keep her in the dark?