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SDU - Health and Wellbeing – CSD Review

The duties of the staff at the SDU are that of a human source controller / handler which entails being available 24/7 to speak with a variety of high risk human sources in person or on the telephone. The majority of these high risk human sources are career criminals who are extremely manipulative persons. The duties require them to make decision often very quickly that can have significant ramifications if they do not make the right one or misinterpret the information supplied by the high risk human source.

There can be a real sense of excitement and pride in their work, as they are at the cutting edge of criminal conspiracies and acts, however the down side is that their work can not be publicly or internally praised outside the CSD due to the risk of exposure to the human source. This brings about an attitude of being different to other areas and often they see themselves as being highly specialised group that has no real day to day connection with the organisation. Further that simple administrative tasks and expectable behaviours within the organisation do not apply to them.

Officer Preston

The case is an example of when a member of the police force is exposed to a covert world outside the established norms of policing for an extended period of time and how it can effect their grasp of reality and what is appropriate as a police officer. Without doubt Officer Preston would still be a member of Victoria Police if he had not had such a sustained exposure to an unrealistic world of high risk human source management and covert policing, which primarily involves dealing with extremely manipulative persons 24/7 who are high risk human sources and nearly exclusively career criminals.

Recently Cruze - DSS of the UCU made an observation that the staff at the SDU are at greater risk of 'falling over' due to the fact that they are exposed to criminals 24/7 and develop intricate relationships with the long term high risk human sources. After some thought, I agree with Cruze - DSS assessment. The staff at the SDU are at higher risk than the covert operatives and controllers at the UCU as the very nature of the work undertaken by the SDU has the staff exposed constantly where as the UCU have limited exposure to a variety of targets and do not build up the long term handler / source relationship.

In 2010 the SDU moved back from to All the staff were devastated by this move and resisted the decision of management constantly. They could not accept the decision of management, even stating that their lives were being put in danger by the decision. A comment that had no basis. In 2012 they are still trying to fit circumstances into bolstering a push for reinstatement of a covert site. An example of not being able to accept a reasonable management decision.

The health and well being of one of the senior staff in the SDU is of a concern, the members has been a covert operative at the UCU and has had a short period out of covert policing and now has been back in covert policing at the unit for an extended period of time. In the past 13 years the member has had approximately 10 years in

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covert policing area. Although a subject matter expert in the field of undercover and human source development the member struggles to accept any management decision that differs from his view of the world, he struggles to see the world of policing outside CSD and this affects his decision making and consequently his stress levels. The member desperately needs to connect back into mainstream policing, but due to the allowances that the staff receive at the unit this member and others can not see any benefit for them outside the SDU, except if they were to be promoted. Additionally another senior member within the unit who is a subject matter expert in covert policing continues to struggle with any reasonable management decision that he is not part of or is contrary to his view.

The SDU members are financially rewarded with a variety of well paid allowance, the members do not take into account the damage they are doing to themselves by being constantly exposed to high risk human sources that are extremely manipulative in their very nature. Several members in the past few years have experienced significant domestic issues brought on by the pressure of the job. One member has resigned and another transferred to a more regular shift pattern with no or minimal disruption.

Culturally the staff do not accept any intervention from management, as the staff see themselves as experts in the area of high risk source management and that management can not understand the risks that human sources bring. They fail to see that management act as governance across their work to ensure the Victoria Community and Police Force are not exposed to unreasonable risk brought about by the activities of high risk human sources.

In 2011 at an operations meeting several staff believed that the first loyalty was to the high risk human source and not the Victoria Community and the Victoria Police Force. When it was explained to them that their loyalty should be to the Victorian Community, the people that they had sworn to protect, they still believed that "they should look after the source first." This clearly demonstrates that they have lost connection with the organisation.

Two of the original handlers to transfer to the unit have remained in place for 8 years, they both had promising careers but have remained stagnate performing the role but struggling with organisational priorities and needs. They remain in position due to the nature of the work, conditions and the cost of leaving the unit to their superannuation.