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VICTORIA POLICE

New policy on registering and managing informers

A new policy on the registration and management of informers appears on page 8 of this issue of *The Gazette*.

The Informer Management Policy contains local and central procedures and controls to ensure informers are recruited, registered, managed and rewarded appropriately.

It also contains provision for inter-agency cooperation and instructions for deactivation once an informer is no longer providing useful information or is deemed unsuitable to continue as a registered informer.

The policy applies Force-wide with the exclusion of Crime Stoppers and internal informers or sources, who will continue to be managed by the Ethical Standards Department.

An informer is defined in the policy as 'an identified person who provides information to police which, if acted on, could lead to an arrest or action against criminals. The identity of an informer is protected and remains confidential'.

A person must be registered as an informer if he or she is an external person who:

- makes a practice of providing information; or
- receives a financial reward; or
- requires indemnity from prosecution; or
- is to receive any benefit; or
- is to receive any reimbursement; or
- presents an organisational/personal risk; or
- is to be operationally tasked.

An Informer Management Unit (IMU) has been established within the State Intelligence Division, Specialist Operations Department, to administer the policy and assist and advise police. A/Commander Ian Thomas, of Intelligence and Covert Support, has overall responsibility for informers and he reports to Deputy Commissioner (Specialist

Operations) Peter Nancarrow.

The IMU is headed by Detective Inspector Doug Cowlshaw, with Detective Senior Sergeant Geoff McLean having day-to-day operational control. The unit also comprises two detective sergeants and a PAO-2 data entry member. The unit is supported by the recently established Criminal Intelligence Unit, which comprises 17 staff.

"Not all informers by definition require registration," Det Insp Cowlshaw said.

"For example, victims of crime, community-minded citizens or persons who supply a statement to police as part of routine enquiries into an offence do not require registration. Nor do professional contacts, who may provide ongoing information for no benefit or reward. The policy does not necessitate registration of any of these persons.

"If any doubts exist as to the requirements of registration, members should contact the IMU.

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"IMU staff are available to assist all members with registration considerations, risk assessments and operational assistance with individual informers. Members are encouraged to seek assistance with any query and the detective sergeants attached to the unit are available at all hours for informer related assistance."

Initially, forms for registration and ongoing management will be available only through the IMU. Once an informer is registered, he or she will be allocated a computer-generated number and a Local Informer Management File will be created.

Documents that may identify an informer must not be kept on any local files, including the Local Informer Management File, and should be forwarded to the IMU at the earliest opportunity.

Copies of Informer Contact Reports and Information Reports are required to be forwarded to the IMU.

Each document must be assessed as to security classification and thus the method of dissemination will be at the discretion of local areas.

Where possible, the IMU position-based e-mail account (Informer-Management-Unit) would be the preferred option for document dissemination. A password will be supplied and instruction provided to members who elect this option.

A/Cdr Thomas will be the Central Informer Registrar. Divisional superintendents in regions and Crime Department and superintendents in other areas will take on the role of Local Informer Registrar.

A/Cdr Thomas said: "If the informer fits the policy's criteria, he or she must be registered. But the handler will continue to handle the informer in the same way as before.

"The policy gives us a more efficient way of informer management, which was needed particularly in view of the criticism earlier this year by the Police Ombudsman following the Drug Squad Review.

"Once members get used to the policy and it is working well, it should cut out any duplication of informers and leave us much less exposed to corruption.

"Best of all, it will give us better intelligence. We'll be able to search the database to see whether an informer in one area can assist an investigation in another. This will be handled confidentially and sensitively and in consultation with the handler. If the handler tells us the informer won't cooperate, then we won't take it any further."

An Informer Payment Committee will be set up to decide payments based on a matrix developed by the IMU. Payment can be made [redacted] has to be paid by a member at officer rank who is required to obtain the [redacted]

Reimbursements for informers will continue to be paid via local Imprest Accounts.

Deputy Commissioner (Specialist Operations) Peter Nancarrow said that the policy was developed after research of best practice within Australia and

overseas and lengthy consultation with stakeholders throughout Victoria Police.

"Informers are a Victoria Police resource and critical to our intelligence process and I encourage all members – not just those in crime investigation – to cultivate and handle informers and to have a good working knowledge of the policy," Mr Nancarrow said.

The policy is effective from today, 22 September. It allows a 60-day transitional period, to give members time to register current informers who fit the policy criteria.

Current registered informers (who fit the registration criteria) who are not registered within the transitional period will be deemed to be unregistered. The Local Informer Management Files of any informers not registered under this new policy or not registered by the end of the transition period should be delivered to the IMU as soon as practical. The details will be entered on the database and stored for later use if required.

The IMU will commence presentations on the policy for all Crime Department squads, regional officers and CIUs over the next few months and will address Crime Course Unit classes.

An informer handling training course is being developed in conjunction with the Crime Courses Unit and members will be advised when training is available.

See the following page for questions and answers about the policy.

The IMU is based at the St Kilda Road Complex and can be contacted on the following:
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