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Crime and Corruption
Commission

QUEENSLAND

Our Reference: AD-15-0514
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17 December 2015

The Hon Alan Wilson SC
Chairperson
Taskforce into Organised Crime Legislation
GPO Box 149
Brisbane QLD 4001

Attn: Ms Sarah Kay, Secretariat Office

Dear Mr Wilson

Intelligence Information

I advise that the CCC wishes to provide information to the Taskforce in relation to your review of legislation introduced in Queensland in late 2013, as part of a crackdown on organised crime.

Pursuant to section 62 of the *Crime and Corruption Act 2001*, I authorise the release of the following recent CCC intelligence arising from hearings, undertaken by our Criminal Organisations Hearings Team, suggesting that several OMCGs have been actively recruiting in a bid to re-establish themselves on the Gold Coast since the start of 2015.

Several OMCGs have sought to establish, or re-establish, a presence on the Gold Coast, after their influence waned in the wake of the 2013 'crackdown'. In recent times the most prominent groups seeking to obtain a foothold are the Hells Angels, Finks, Bandidos and Nomads.¹

Hearings have been undertaken which have touched on the first three of these clubs, and the fourth will be the subject of hearings in the New Year, through a drug investigation.

There has been some reporting of this apparent resurgence of OMCG activity on the Gold Coast.²

¹ The Rebels are also believed to have been taking steps to 'shore up' their position, but this has continued relatively constantly since the laws were introduced.

² <http://www.goldcoastbulletin.com.au/news/crime-court/finks-bikies-busted-in-surfers-paradise-drug-raids/story-fnje8bkv-1227639532207>
<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/crime-and-justice/queensland-bikies-plotting-spectacular-comeback-despite-ban/news-story/da80d7603b2dba8cb19480a50bc4e525>

History

It is notorious that, in the wake of the 2013 legislation, a number of members publicly disassociated from their clubs. Several more remained members, but the clubs became 'inactive' as they could not associate in public, could not maintain a clubhouse, and had difficulties attending 'runs' and club functions.

The other observation is that in October 2013, in the wake of the failed High Court challenge, the Finks 'patched over' to the Mongols at a national level. The decision was taken on a 'whole of chapter' basis, such that if the chapter elected to patch over, members were given the option of retiring or joining the Mongols. Members were not entitled to remain active members of the Finks if their chapter had not patched over. All bar about three Sydney-based chapters did patch over to the Mongols. The Mongols maintained an active presence in Queensland, but their ranks were severely compromised in mid-2015 with the closure of Operation Lima Interlude, a drug trafficking investigation targeting several senior members of the Mongols.

Existing dynamics

In late 2014, reports emerged of the Hells Angels and Rebels both taking steps to establish new chapters in Queensland. The Rebels did, in fact, establish a chapter in Tweed Heads. This led them into conflict with the Lone Wolf, who traditionally occupied that territory. This conflict involved a stabbing in August 2014, but while hostility remains, the conflict appears to have since abated.

Hells Angels

In late 2014 and early 2015, the Hells Angels continued to assert dominance on the Gold Coast. It appears that they were actively recruiting new persons into their club in early 2015 (and presumably, have continued to do so). The Hells Angels have traditionally been the club most resistant to law enforcement intervention, employing sophisticated communications (such as covert Blackberries for communications between members). The Hells Angels have used the business premises of one of their members as a 'de facto' clubhouse in Burleigh.

Information also emerged suggesting a resurgence of the Bandidos and Finks on the Gold Coast as 2015 progressed.

Bandidos

A crime investigation (Operation North Starboard) examined the re-emergence of the Bandidos on the Gold Coast. A number of persons asserting an association with the Bandidos were involved in a home invasion and kidnapping in June 2015. The investigation into this offending led to evidence suggesting that the Bandidos were actively recruiting, were aware of the publicity surrounding the 'push' by the Hells Angels to claim territory on the Gold Coast, and that those involved with the club had formed association with other organised crime groups to facilitate drug and firearms trafficking (this aspect of the investigation has led to two further organised crime investigations).

Finks

Intelligence hearings have also been conducted in relation to the re-emergence of the Finks. The resurgence of the Finks appeared a curious development, as the Finks had not abandoned the Gold Coast because of the laws, but rather had been removed altogether by the patch-over to the Mongols. Several people were identified wearing Finks paraphernalia, including colours, in late 2015. Information was obtained suggesting that a number of the new Finks members were formerly associated with the Hells Angels, and that had potential to cause conflict between the two groups. Since October 2015, there have been a number of 'tit-for-tat' exchanges of violence between members

of the Finks and the Hells Angels. It appears this conflict is escalating. (This is the subject of ongoing investigation by QPS, and intelligence hearings activities by the Commission.)

The Finks' logo has changed in its colouring. The character 'Bung' now has gold colouring, rather than the traditional black and white. This represents an allegiance between the Finks and the Commanchero. The Commanchero do not have a presence in Queensland, but have long considered establishing a chapter. The allegiance between Commanchero and Finks has ended in recent times, but it was considered that the allegiance was to give each a larger share and support for each other in case of coming into conflict with other clubs.

Others

A senior member of the Lone Wolf has also recently patched over to the Nomads. While the Nomads have not been as prominent as the other clubs on the Coast since the laws came into effect, this move has the potential to cause conflict, and suggests an active push by the Nomads to assert itself in this environment.

Trends

It is clear from the recent developments that several clubs (including three of the major clubs) have been actively recruiting new members on the Gold Coast. The timing of the recruitment activities suggests that, following the change of government in January 2015, it is perceived by clubs that there is a softening of the stance against OMCG activity. While there has been no evidence obtained as to the particular factors which have contributed to this resurgence, it may be inferred that OMCGs perceive that the laws will be repealed or reduced, and are positioning themselves to take control of 'turf' once any relaxation occurs. It is also possible that clubs are stepping in to take control of some of the market share left vacant by the disruption of the Mongols' trafficking network in Operation Lima Interlude.

The 'recruitment drive' has had certain common features across clubs. There appears to be a focus on numbers, rather than quality. The new members being recruited are (relatively) young. They tend to have little understanding of club dynamics, history and culture. In particular, they appear to have little understanding of the relationships between various clubs, or the reasons for animosity.

There appears to be little loyalty between the groups. (Part of the hostility between the Hells Angels and Finks seems to have come from several Hells Angels 'prospects' and 'hang-arounds' leaving the Hells Angels to join the Finks.) Many of the new recruits are only in the club for a short period. Many of these new members are either kicked out, leave the club voluntarily upon realising what is required of them, or patch over to other clubs because they dislike how they are treated at one club or another.

Members are being 'fast-tracked' through the process, either joining as probationary members, or having the traditional nominee period (usually a year) severely truncated before becoming full members.

Many of the newly-recruited members do not own, and cannot ride motorcycles. New members are being recruited, not through men meeting in regional pubs after going for a 'ride', but through gyms or on Facebook. Steroids use features prominently with the new recruits.

Most recently, this recruitment behaviour was observed in mid-2012 to 2013, with the expansion of the Hells Angels, Bandidos and Rebels in Southeast Queensland. Again, the Hells Angels and Bandidos were expanding in competition with each other to assert control in Brisbane and the Gold Coast. This led to open hostility and conflict between the clubs, with a series of violent attacks taking place between April 2012 and September 2013. The expansion of the Bandidos during that time exhibited a number of the same characteristics, with the recruitment of young members with little connection to OMCG culture.

These developments continue to be explored through the intelligence and crime hearings program.

Please note that the commission has assessed this information has a security level of 'in-confidence'. However, given the public interest in its release, I am content for the information to be published as part of your report or subsequent information to be provided to the Queensland Government.

I hope this assists.

Yours faithfully



A J MacSporran QC
Chairman

Reclassified as PUBLIC
as at 4 April 2016