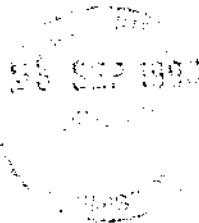


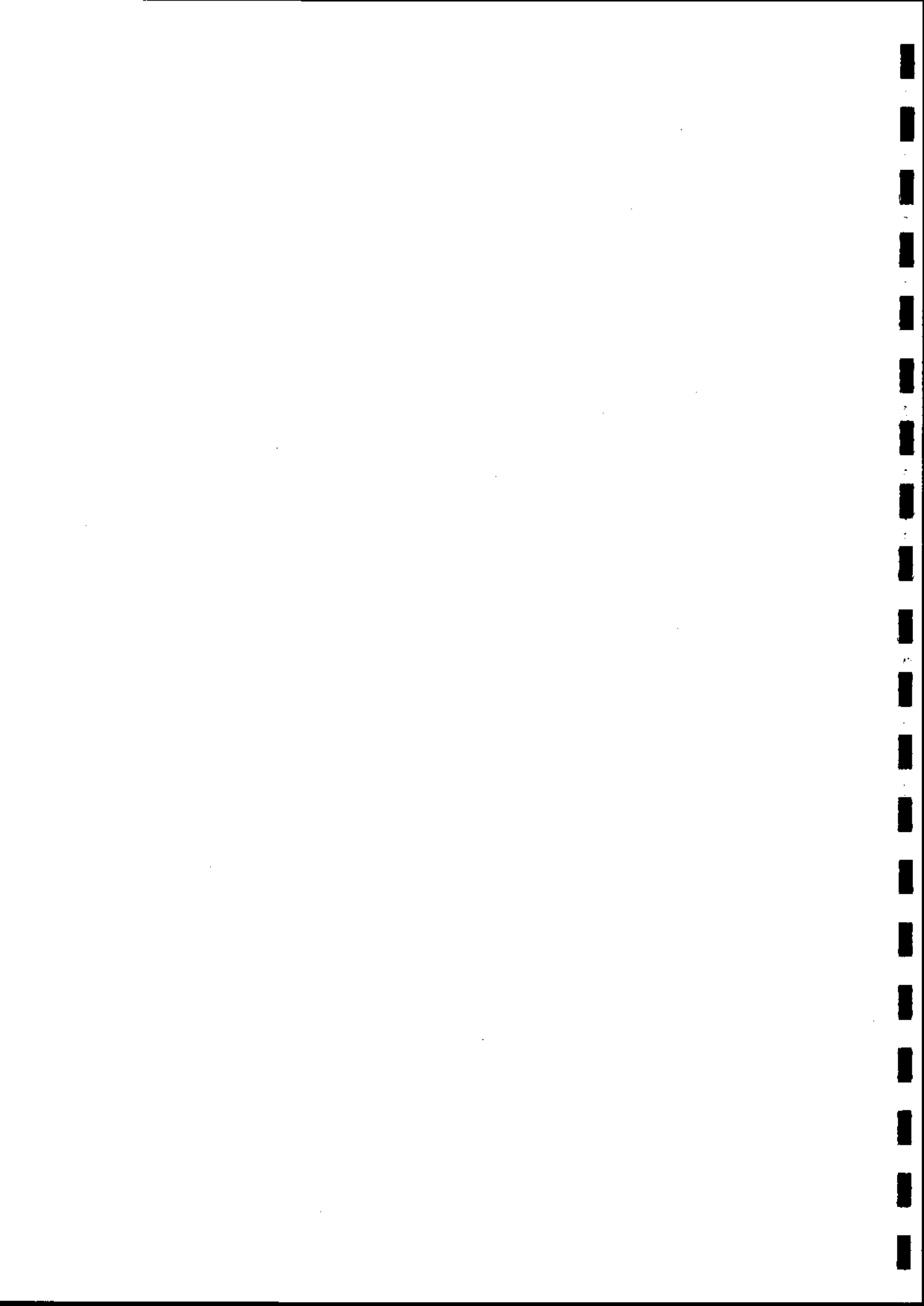


CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION
QUEENSLAND



**Report of
the Committee to Review the
Queensland Police Service
Information Bureau**

January, 1992





CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION
QUEENSLAND

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Sir Max Bingham QC
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Dear Sir Max

The Committee of Review of the Queensland Police Service Information Bureau hereby furnishes you with its Report.

Yours faithfully

Associate Professor David Chant
Chairman
Committee of Review of the Queensland Police Service
Information Bureau

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee received assistance from several individuals and criminal justice organisations.

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Associate Professor David Chant
Chairman
Committee of Review of the Queensland Police Service Information Bureau

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee of Review of the Queensland Police Information Bureau was established by the Criminal Justice Commission in early 1991 in response to a recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry. The role, functions and inadequacies of the Information Bureau were critically examined by the Commission of Inquiry which recommended in its report that the Police information systems be comprehensively reviewed with the help of a group of specialised external consultants.

The Committee included a number of academics and representatives of the Queensland Police Service, the Criminal Justice Commission, and the Government Statistician's Office.

The primary aim of the review was to assist the Queensland Police Service to improve its information capability. The Committee's terms of reference required it to examine the following issues:

- legislation affecting the functioning of the information bureau;
- the use and integration of information systems within the Queensland Police Service;
- the development and operation of statistical systems within the Police Service;
- the levels of staff and resources required for the information bureau;
- the dissemination policy of the information bureau;
- an appropriate cost effective charging policy; and
- a system to ensure confidentiality and security of data.

The Committee sought information from a wide range of sources in preparing its report. It visited the Information Bureau and spoke to staff there to determine the structure and functions of the Bureau. The Committee also visited a number of busy metropolitan Police Stations to examine the initial collection of data and to ascertain the operational requirements of police in the field.

Representatives of the Committee visited all mainland states to discuss current practices and to view and evaluate existing information systems, holding discussions with Police Services and other criminal justice organisations.

The Committee identified four major deficiencies in the operation of the Information Bureau's functions:

1. inadequate access to Queensland Police Service computer resources;

2. lack of integration of computing resources;
3. poor co-ordination between the needs of operational police and information systems; and
4. limited dissemination of data held by the Information Bureau.

The Committee concluded that a number of the functions of the Information Bureau could be decentralised, however there was a need to retain a centralised information bureau as an independent organisational entity with an enhanced profile. The objectives of the "new" Information Bureau should include the following:

- to provide timely and appropriate information to assist the Queensland Police Service meet its mission and corporate goals;
- to provide information that adequately supports Police Service operations;
- to provide adequate training in the compilation and use of information;
- to develop and implement appropriate security and privacy safeguards;
- to provide an efficient means for exchange of data between the Police Service and other criminal justice agencies.

During its review the Committee was surprised at the ever increasing demands placed upon police resources by the Information Bureau's role in overseeing the service of warrants. After some investigation it determined that the issue of warrants, their place in the administration of justice and the role of the Queensland Police Service and the Information Bureau in their execution be comprehensively reviewed.

In the report the Committee made 29 specific recommendations. Many of these concern transitional arrangements for the Information Bureau and are contingent on the major recommendation that proper funding be allocated to resourcing of information systems for the short term (a two year period is envisaged). It also recommended a review in December 1993 of the direction and magnitude of change taken place.

The Committee recommended that:

1. The Information Bureau be represented when policy regarding the allocation of computer resources is being considered.
2. The Information Bureau be allocated a Computer Systems Officer to service the specific requirements of the Information Bureau.

3. Procedures should be established to ensure that the Bureau is kept informed of policy initiatives (such as the creation of Task Forces to target specific offences or areas) so that it can better identify potential information to support such initiatives.
4. The Police Service consider developing a spatial information system, in consultation with the Department of Lands and other interested Government Departments.
5. The Police Service continue discussions about access to administrative records with State agencies.
6. A uniform form design method be utilised and that professional assistance be sought in this process.
7. Documentation detailing the operations of the different sections of the Bureau be updated if the relevant system is not undergoing significant change in the next two years, and that all new procedures be accompanied by well-written procedural manuals.
8. The Queensland Police Service undertake appropriate consultation, both within the Service and with other agencies, in framing policies for the compilation and dissemination of official information.
9. The Information Bureau be retained as an independent organisational entity within or outside the Queensland Police Service.
10. Agreements be reached regarding the use of Departmental information by the Police Service, and that the Information Bureau should act as a central liaison point. The Committee recommends that the Information Bureau co-ordinate such data exchange, and establish guidelines for the exchange of information.
11. The appointment of the head of the Information Bureau be based on merit and suitably qualified serving or past police officers not be restricted from applying.
12. The Police Service continue to implement interim systems to provide for the immediate requirements of the Information Bureau for calendar years 1992 and 1993.
13. The Information Bureau should maximise the use of all data sources available to it and, in respect to Police Service data collections, it should have responsibility for co-ordinating data collection and data collation in order to minimise duplication and overlap.

14. The Information Bureau be given responsibility for the application of classifications used to collect data by police and co-ordinate the scope of data items collected to ensure the information obtained is fully and effectively used.
15. The Information Bureau prepare, for distribution within the Queensland Police Service, a User Guide which describes the range of information available, limitations, and possible interpretations.
16. The Commissioner of Police produce and release quarterly bulletins reporting the number and distribution of offences occurring throughout the State.
17. A system be developed, particularly in the statistics areas, that allows ad hoc queries to be readily and easily met.
18. The acquisition of new communications and computing systems be given high priority and brought forward to the earliest possible date.
19. The Information Bureau remain within the Finance and Administrative Division during the two-year period of restructuring and development.
20. A Charter for the Information Bureau be developed and adopted.
21. Either a senior, respected academic, or the senior executives of an established Information Technology consulting organisation be nominated for any Police Service committee reviewing the mainframe facility.
22. There be a full and detailed review by an Inter-Departmental Committee of the role of the Queensland Police Service in serving warrants, particularly Warrants of Commitment.
23. Facsimiles of warrants be used in the same manner within Queensland as they are in the Commonwealth.
24. The Warrant process be examined, along with the other procedures adopted with respect to warrants, and that the Police Service take legal advice as to the most resource efficient methods to be adopted.
25. The summons screen on the Police Service mainframe be redesigned and kept as a separate screen, and that new instructions be issued for its use. The Committee also recommends that outstanding summons be updated on the screen as well as Justice Department records.
26. As a matter of administrative efficiency (and irrespective of what future arrangements are made with respect to the serving of Warrants of Commitment), consideration be given to requiring the Department of Transport to check warrant indices prior to issuing driver's licenses and

motor vehicle registrations to assist in the execution of outstanding warrants.

27. There be a two-year transition period covering calendar years 1992 and 1993, and that at the end of this two year period, (December 1993), a review of the direction and magnitude of change take place.
28. Each section within the Information Bureau prepare an annual Forward Work Program that details activities to be undertaken during the year. These Forward Work Programs should contain performance indicators and be available to the Implementation Team for review.
29. An Information Bureau Advisory Committee drawn from within the Police Service be established with representation from the potential and actual users of Information Bureau data.

Location of Recommendations in the Report

The headings of the recommendations made in this Report are listed here in their order of appearance.

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GLOSSARY

The purpose of this glossary is to provide an easy reference point for the lay reader. Computer experts may contest details of the explications.

byte -

The amount of computer memory or disk storage required to hold one character or letter.

database -

A computer machine-readable file in which selected attributes are stored in a well defined way, permitting rapid retrieval.

DOS -

An acronym from Disk Operating System. The Disk Operating System is a software program that is always present in the computer. Its role is to facilitate communications between the application software program and the hardware.

floppy disk -

A disk for the storage of data that can be read by a personal computer. Typically, floppy disks have the capacity to store the equivalent of about 100 to 500 pages of text.

gigabyte -

A byte is one character ("letter") of information. A gigabyte is about 1,000,000,000 bytes.

hardware -

This refers to physical devices, usually the computer, peripherals and communications equipment, as opposed to software, which refers to the programs that provide instructions to the computers.

imaging technology -

Devices that can scan, store and retrieve images, such as photos.

information technology -

A general label for the technology and processes designed for the collection, storage and retrieval of information in organisations.

Lancashire (Crime Recording) system -

Crime recording software developed in Lancashire, England. The central feature of the Lancashire system is that police officers phone trained data entry operators from the scene of the crime and dictate their Criminal Offence Report. The report is immediately entered into the Lancashire system using a semi-standardised vocabulary that facilitates subsequent retrieval.

local area network (LAN) -

A set of interconnected personal computers, which together form a network. Typically, LANs do not extend beyond a building.

mainframe -

A large computer with considerable computational and storage capacity.

micro-computer -

A synonym for personal computer or PC.

network -

A set of interconnected computers that may share access to common database. Typically, a network comprises one central computer (the "server"), and a set of less powerful computers linked to it.

open systems -

This is an ambiguous term, but generally refers to the capability of software to run on the hardware of different vendors and on different platforms of the same vendor. Thus it is possible for software to run in any environment--mainframe, minicomputer, workstation, or personal computer.

personal computer -

Personal computers which are also known as PCs, are relatively small, desktop computers, which may be used for word processing, spreadsheets and database management. Originally, personal computers were designed to stand-alone; however, personal computers may be networked together to form a local area (LAN) or a wide area-network (WAN). In addition, they may be used as terminals to access mainframe computers at distant locations. The computational power of some personal computers is approaching the power of small mainframes.

PC -

Acronym for personal computer.

platform -

The latest computer jargon for a computer, particularly the hardware.

QUID -

A criminal intelligence system, written in INDEPOL, for the ICL mainframe.

software -

Computer programs that contain instructions for the computer to perform particular operations.

Unix -

An operating system (like DOS) suitable for computers ranging in size from personal computers to mainframes. Operating systems reside between the application program and the hardware. Unix is generally the preferred operating system for open systems.

INTRODUCTION

Currently the Queensland Police Service Information Bureau lacks both the resources and the corporate commitment needed for producing information to assist the Queensland Police Service. The role, functions and inadequacies of the Information Bureau were critically examined by the Commission of Inquiry (Fitzgerald Inquiry). In its report the Commission recommended that the police information system be comprehensively reviewed with the help of a group of specialised external consultants.

Commissioner Fitzgerald correctly pointed out that "Most information comes from operational police. . ." (Fitzgerald Report, 1989, p. 269). Indeed, it is the operational police officer at street-level who is the single most important component of the Police Service both in terms of producing information and using it. Adequate systems must be provided for operational police to be able to provide accurate and reliable information which is then correctly stored and available both to those operational police officers, and to management to assist in the management of resources.

The need for an effective information system cannot be overstated. In order for managers to deploy their resources to counter trends in criminal activity, they need information. They need to know what criminal incidents are occurring in their Districts and Regions; they need to know where the "black spots" are; they need to know which types of offences are causing the most problems. Without an upgraded Information Bureau - one free of many separate and duplicated systems - they are unable to adequately manage their limited resources.

The Need for Standards

The Fitzgerald Report also pointed out that the ". . . reliability and comprehensiveness is totally dependant on the individual officers who provide it. Controls over input quality and consistence are inadequate." (Fitzgerald Report, 1989, p. 269).

Any new system that is introduced must ensure that there are proper standards for the classification, input and storage of data. There must be defined rules for information recording and defined rules for information storage. Such standards must be initiated by senior management and then effectively applied to the entire Police Service. Police management must ensure that different standards do not evolve in different Districts and Regions.

Data Capture Plan

In addition to defined standards, there needs to be a defined data capture structure, which is effective from Divisions and Districts through to Regions through to Headquarters. The Police Service, in consultation with other agencies, must define exactly what information it wishes to capture, and then identify the methods by which it can be captured. If these methods do not already exist, then they must be designed and introduced. This may necessitate either the creation of new forms of data capture or the adaptation of current forms.

The Information Bureau as a Support Function

The primary role of the Information Bureau should be to store accurate information for use by other units of the Police Service. The type of information that these units require revolves around two main areas: incidents or crime offences, and people, particularly criminal histories. A necessary aspect of both of these matters will be the ability to also provide information on modus operandi and suspect generation, a link to QUID and to store court briefs, fingerprint forms, photographs, details of persons of interest, missing persons, property of interest or stolen property.

Crime Statistics

Users of Crime Statistics

Accurate, reliable and timely crime statistics are of immense value, not only to the Queensland Police Service, but also to numerous other agencies, community groups and individuals. The diverse group of users of crime statistics include:

- the Queensland Police Service;
- the Office of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services;
- State Government departments, e.g. the Attorney-General's Office, Department of Justice and Corrective Services, Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, the Government Statistician's Office, etc.;
- Members of Parliament;
- the Criminal Justice Commission;
- the Judiciary;
- the public;

- the media;
- academics, researchers and students from colleges and universities;
- private commercial organisations, including security firms, insurance companies, industry organisations;
- community groups;
- libraries;
- other State and Commonwealth agencies;
- overseas users - Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates, academics and scholars from overseas universities and research institutions, Interpol, and United Nations agencies.

Quality of Crime Statistics

The Fitzgerald Report identified a number of deficiencies in statistics produced by the Police Department. The Report observed that the nature and presentation of statistics by the police did not inform the people of Queensland about the level and seriousness of the crime problem in the State; that the artificial grouping of offences gave a false understanding of the incidence of crime; and the system lacked adequate controls over data input quality and consistency. The Criminal Justice Commission, during the last 18 months, has faced considerable difficulties in completing a number of projects because of the lack of accurate and timely crime statistics.

Statistics must be carefully and systematically defined. Reliable statistics to police officers should be offence based, incident based, and victim based. For these to be useful, the methods of counting incidents, offences and victims must be accurately defined and adhered to. It is noted that from time to time methods and reasons for counting statistics may change. The system that is put in place must therefore be flexible. Statistical questions not anticipated today may be asked tomorrow and the system must have the capability of being able to answer those questions. Police boundaries, for example, have changed in the past and will probably change in the future. Any storage of particular data in respect of offences or incidents, people, offenders or victims must therefore be recorded in such a way that the system can be adapted to cope with changes in boundaries. Consideration could be given to storing information by street address and/or the Census Collector's Districts, or to overlaying geographical data and street maps together with the above information in order that boundaries can be re-defined and so that the system will be sufficiently flexible to recognise new definitions.

Uses of Crime Statistics

An exhaustive list of users of crime statistics has been set out above. It is very important to describe in what ways information and data produced by the Police Service could be of assistance to the Service itself and to other users. It is with this objective in view that the present section explains the use of statistics by the Queensland Police Service and research use by various users.

1. *Use of Statistics by the Queensland Police Service for Operational and Management Purposes*

The goals of the Queensland Police Service as defined in its Annual Report of 1991 are:

- To enhance the safety of people in Queensland.
- To prevent crime.
- To investigate and solve crime.
- To improve the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the police organisation.
- To enhance professionalism of the Police Service.
- To restore public confidence in the Queensland Police Service.

In order to meet these goals effectively the Queensland Police Service requires effective management in all aspects of its operations. Crime statistics could be of value to police management and operations if they were to employ them for purposes of planning, allocation of resources and evaluation of effectiveness. For example accurate, reliable and timely crime statistics will help police administrators to:

- know the volume and kind of counteraction necessary to contain or reduce criminal behaviour;
- determine the extent of population involvement in crime - i.e. whether many criminal acts are committed by few persons, few acts by many persons, many by many or few by few. This kind of measurement provides data for making rational decisions in developing methods of engineering a crime control system and whether to focus control resources at the beginning or end of a police-to-prison continuum;
- locate the major social areas of criminal activity. That is, it is necessary for purposes of control and reduction to know precisely the age, sex and other social attributes of the population that have a disproportionate share of involvement in crime;

- plan and project. Because various major features of a culture are intricately interrelated, any one of the them (such as crime) may have enormous systematic effects upon others. In order to determine effects which crime and criminals may have upon other aspects of culture and upon the future, knowledge of the present activities of criminals is necessary;
- measure the efficiency and effectiveness of prevention and deterrence programs such as community action, police activities, sanctions imposed by private or judicial practice;
- measure the efficiency and effectiveness of police activities *in toto*.

2. *Uses by other Individuals and Organisations for Research Purposes*

Systematic collection and dissemination of criminal statistics will facilitate research which will help to:

- provide a set of empirical variables upon which scientific theories of human behaviour may be based;
- provide data for testing operational hypotheses about the causes of crime as a social and institutional process, and criminal behaviour as a reflection of, or a reaction to, the social system;
- measure the impact of ancillary social variables on deviance (such as economic conditions, technology, TV, automobiles, alcohol, weapons, etc.);
- know the extent to which the parameters of freedom of movement in a democratic society are restricted or otherwise impaired by criminal assaults on persons and damage to property of its citizens;
- compute the cost of criminal deviance in terms of injury inflicted on the community, and maintaining police, judicial and correctional agencies;
- understand the biases, if any, in the processing of disadvantaged communities.

Since its establishment the Criminal Justice Commission has received numerous requests and inquiries for accurate, timely and disaggregated crime statistics for the State of Queensland in particular and for specific areas. Such requests and inquiries have originated from a diverse groups of users (mostly listed above) and the type of data required most often can be roughly summarised as follows:

- number of offences reported/becoming known to police, number of offences cleared and number of arrests made by type of offence.

The offences on which data are required most often are:

- homicide, assault, rape and sexual assault, robbery, burglary, break, enter and steal, drug offences, vandalism, etc.

For all these, the disaggregated information required relates to the involvement of population of particular age, sex, occupation, employment, marital status, family background, prior criminal record of offenders, quality of neighbourhood, characteristics of victims, victim offender relationship, ethnicity, education, etc.

Furthermore, in recent months significant interest has been shown by the community through media and certain special issues related to crime such as:

- multiple and serious killings, use of firearms, spouse assault, value of property loss/damage as a result of crimes such as robbery, burglary, etc., theft by employees, school vandalism, youth violence, group involvement in crime, computer crime, environmental violations, violations by multi-nationals, consumer fraud, drug trafficking, drug abuse, trends and patterns of criminal incidents, use of high speed pursuit by police, etc.

Major Recommendations

The key recommendation of the Committee is that the Queensland Police Service Information Bureau be retained as an independent organisational entity, with an enhanced profile within the Police Service, recognizing that the role of the Bureau is properly a Police Function. The Committee further recommends that the Bureau be located, at least for the next two years, within the Division of Finance and Administration of the Police Service.

Many of the recommendations concerning transitional arrangements for the Information Bureau appear in Chapter Four, and are contingent on the major recommendation that proper funding be allocated to resourcing of information systems for the short term (a two year period is envisaged).

It must be noted that the proper implementation of such interim systems is itself contingent on the funding of adequate Police Service communication systems.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

The Commission of Inquiry Pursuant to Orders in Council 1989, (hereinafter referred to as the "Fitzgerald Report") investigating corruption in Queensland, expressed substantial concern regarding the effectiveness of the Police Service Information Bureau and recommended that the Information Bureau be reviewed by the Criminal Justice Commission. Commissioner Fitzgerald, Q.C., said that:-

"The level of community awareness about the seriousness of the crime prevention and control problem has been masked by the nature and presentation of Police Department statistics in recent years."

"Crime categories were grouped in a way which tended to artificially inflate the overall clear-up rate. This gave the reader a false understanding of the incidence of crime and the performance of the Police Department in its prevention and control."

"The facts are that the fight against crime has been a losing battle and the crime statistics published by the Police Department for more than ten years have tended to hide the state of crime within our society."

"Comprehensive, accurate information is essential to combatting crime, especially organised crime. Yet our national system of sharing and acting on intelligence about crime is hopelessly inadequate."

"Most information comes from operational police, and accordingly its reliability and comprehensiveness is totally dependant (sic) on the individual officers who provide it. Controls over input quality and consistency are inadequate."

(Fitzgerald Report 1989, p. 157, 157, 161, 168, 269.)

Following its creation, the Criminal Justice Commission established a Committee of Review of the Queensland Police Information Bureau (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) to conduct a review of the Information Bureau, particularly its information systems. (A copy of the terms of reference of the Committee constitutes Appendix I. The membership of the Committee is recorded in Appendix II). The Criminal Justice Commission indicated to the Committee that the review should be a co-operative venture with the Police Service; and that its primary aim was to assist the Police Service to improve its information capacity.

The decision to review the Information Bureau and its information systems reflects the Criminal Justice Commission's concern that without access to comprehensive information systems, the Police Service's ability to adequately serve the community is impaired. The inclusion of academics and representatives of other agencies in the Committee was primarily to seek independent input on the types of, and means by which information is to be collected, processed, stored and disseminated by the Information Bureau.

During the past 12 months the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service has identified several instances where lack of timely and adequate information has affected his ability to provide quality advice to the Government and direct his resources in the most effective way. The Commissioner has publicly expressed his concern about the existing systems, claiming that he is unable to provide up-to-date advice about the incidence and distribution of offences reported within Queensland. This in turn limits his ability to respond to emerging or changing requirements for allocation of police services. It is recognised that information about offences, offenders and suspects is critical to the effectiveness of operational police.

Substantial changes have occurred within the Queensland Police Service since the Fitzgerald Report was presented in 1989. Among these changes has been the appointment of a new senior management team including civilian directors and managers, which reflects the need for specialised and professional senior managers to administer information and research functions in a modern police service. Such a change necessitates the realignment of priorities and the review of systems. Inevitably there will be debate and disagreement regarding new priorities and directions; the possible future shape and role of the Information Bureau has already been a focus of such debate.

Visit to Other States

In preparing this Report, Committee members sought information from a wide range of sources. Representatives of the Committee visited all mainland States to discuss current practices and to view and evaluate existing information systems. In total, discussions were held with eight police services and other criminal justice organisations. A list of these organisations is provided in Appendix III. The purpose of the visits was to seek information in the following broad areas:

- The functions, staff, physical resources and volume of transactions of Information Bureau analogues in other States.
- Description of different local systems in operation.
- Efforts to standardise data definitions to enable comparability and exchange of data among the States.
- Compatibility of information/statistics systems across Government Departments.
- Dissemination of information on crime.
- Executive information systems.
- Constraints, if any, imposed by legislation.

- Cost-effective charging arrangements.
- New directions.

One result of these visits was to confirm the view that the Queensland Police Service must exploit fully the opportunities that exist for the integration of information systems. Systems developed within the Police Service must be compatible with each other, and ideally, compatible with systems developed in related organisations. Ultimately, there must be adherence to a consistent data model across the information systems used by the Police Service and related organisations. Some urgent initiatives can be undertaken using available resources and can be achieved within the existing Police Service budget, and these should be implemented forthwith. Such initiatives must be compatible and able to be integrated with future information systems.

The Committee was mindful of the financial constraints within which the Queensland Police Service must frame its future policies and programs. However, the Committee's view is that adequate resources must be directed to Information Bureau functions in order for the Police Service to adequately meet its responsibilities.

Structure of this Report

While this Report examines some matters that tend to go beyond the objectives, administrative arrangements and functions of the Information Bureau, its recommendations are restricted to the seven issues reflected in its terms of reference.

Chapter Two contains a description of the current structure and functions of the Information Bureau, and identifies several deficiencies in its current operations.

Chapter Three describes the characteristics of an Information Bureau which, in the Committee's view, are necessary to meet the objectives of the Queensland Police Service.

Chapter Four suggests future action in the short and long term, including the transition from the present situation to one more in accord with the characteristics described in Chapter Three.

Chapter Five discusses the role of the Queensland Police Service in serving warrants.

Chapter Six deals with proposed implementation, evaluation and advisory arrangements to ensure that Information Bureau functions are addressed adequately.

CHAPTER TWO

FUNCTIONS OF THE INFORMATION BUREAU

This Chapter outlines the structure and functions of the Queensland Police Service Information Bureau. The following description may be taken as an accurate reflection of the state of affairs early in 1991; a state of affairs that, for the most part, is still the case. Some changes within the Information Bureau, which occurred during the course of the Committee's investigation, have superseded some of the processes described here. One difficulty the Committee encountered in building a composite picture of the Information Bureau and its procedures was the lack of adequate documentation. Many procedures are communicated by word of mouth. When documentation does exist, there are discrepancies among these documents.

Overview of the Information Bureau

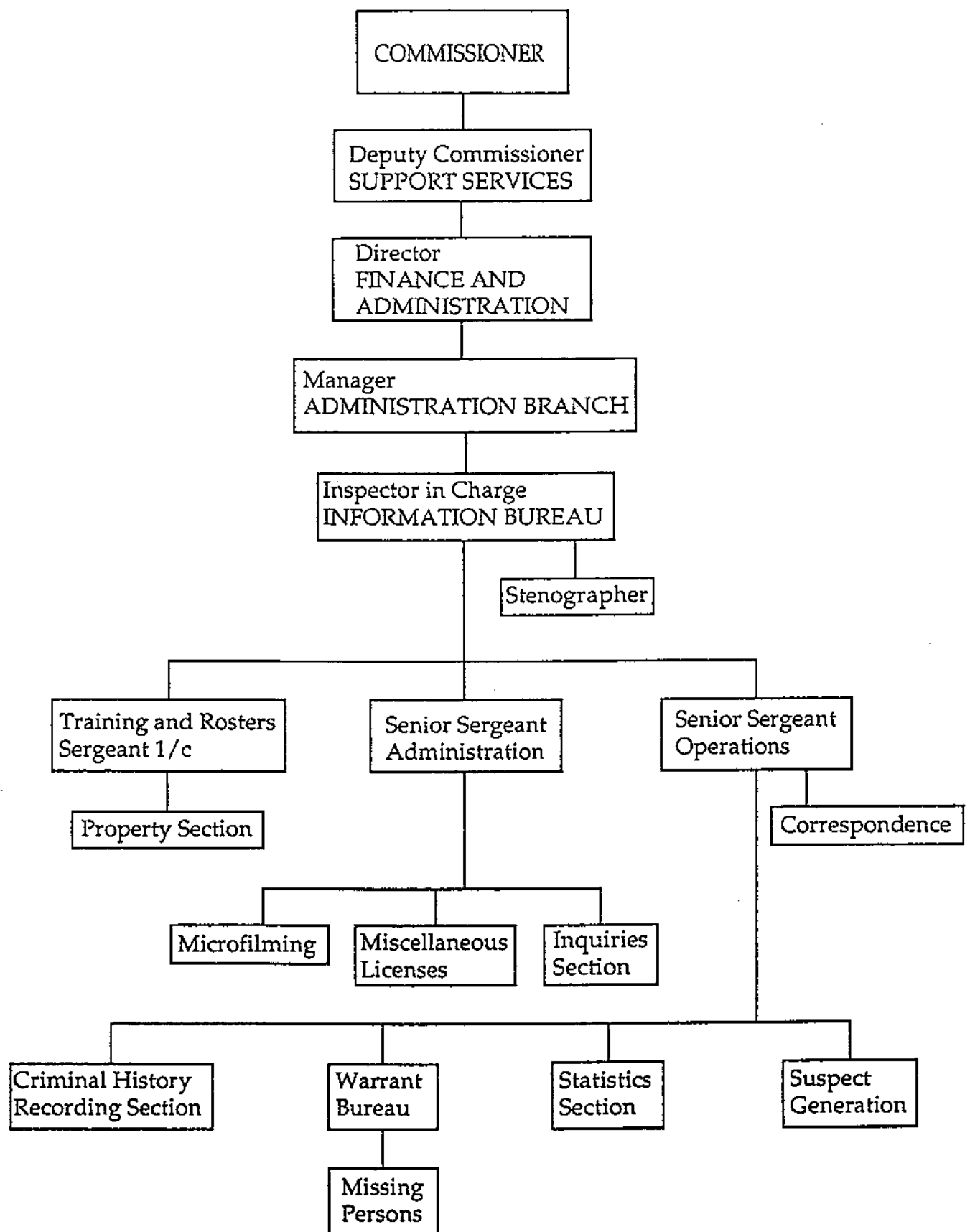
The Information Bureau of the Queensland Police Service, located at the Police Service's headquarters, has operated for at least the past quarter century. The Information Bureau is part of the responsibilities of the Director, Administration and Finance. The Information Bureau is administered by a commissioned officer (Inspector), and has an approved staffing level of 104, consisting of 38 police officers and 66 public servants. Figure 1 shows the position of the Information Bureau within the Queensland Police Service organisational structure, and the organisational structure of the Information Bureau.

Currently, the expenditure of the Information Bureau is about \$2.3 million per annum for salaries and allowances (including overtime) and \$50,000 for stores, equipment and freight. These figures are deceptive. The Information Bureau imposes additional costs in the form of externalities; that is, hidden costs that are incurred every day at police stations throughout Queensland as police officers spend time completing forms to satisfy the requirements of an antiquated crime recording system. These costs include the costs of paper, printing and staffing. Consequently, any improvements in efficiency in the Information Bureau, while perhaps not showing up in its budget, will generate significant efficiency and productivity gains throughout the Police Service.

Functions of the Information Bureau

This Section is based on material provided to the Committee by the Queensland Police Service in an internal document *Functions of the Information Bureau*. The Committee recognises that several amendments have been made to the functions and operations of the Information Bureau since the preparation of this document.

Figure 1
An Organisational Chart of the Information Bureau



The Information Bureau receives information in one or more of the following forms:

- Criminal Offence Reports. The Criminal Offence Reports (Form QP10) are completed by police officers, usually based on details from their notebooks, and contain a summary of facts relating to an alleged offence. A sample Criminal Offence Report form is contained in Appendix VII.
- Court Briefs. A cover sheet (Form QP 9) and supporting documents containing the particulars of the offence, charges, summary of facts of the alleged offence and description of the defendants.
- Fingerprint Forms. When an arrested person is fingerprinted at the Watch house, a Fingerprint Form (Form QP13) is made. It contains the fingerprints of the alleged offender and his/her particulars.
- Warrant Reports. A Warrant Report (Form QP20) is completed by the officer-in-charge of a station when a warrant is received. The Report indicates the location of a Warrant. The Information Bureau uses the Warrant Report to update its records.

The Information Bureau is divided into operational sections as follows:

1. Criminal History Recording Section
2. Warrant Bureau
3. Statistics Section
4. Suspect Generation Section
5. Inquiry Section
6. Property Section
7. Missing Persons Section
8. Microfilming Section
9. Miscellaneous License Section

Criminal History Recording Section

This Section maintains the Persons of Interest system, which resides on the Police Service ICL mainframe computer. The Persons of Interest system contains the particulars (name, physical description, criminal offences) of all offenders. The section updates the Persons of Interest file on the basis of different forms.

All Fingerprint Forms (Form QP13) are forwarded to this section. When a Fingerprint Form is received it is matched against the Persons of Interest System. If there is a match, the alleged offender's record is updated. If there is no prior entry, the person's name and particulars are entered on the system. The relevant photo number of the alleged offender is also entered to allow retrieval of the person's photograph from the photogallery.

When a Court Brief (Form QP 9) containing witnesses statements and supporting documents is received from the Prosecutor's Office, the person's name is checked on the Persons of Interest system and the appropriate offence code is entered.

The Prosecutor also advises if a person is remanded to appear at a later date and this information is entered. After a person has appeared before the District Court or Supreme Court, the results of committal proceedings, the relevant form, Result of Committal Processing (Form QP7A) is received and the person's name is matched against the Persons of Interest System and the appropriate adjustment made to the person's record.

The Criminal History Recording Section also has the responsibility of filing a copy (the "white" copy) of Criminal Offence Reports and Court Briefs.

Warrant Bureau

The Warrant Bureau has the responsibility of maintaining computer records on the current location of all warrants, and filing unexecuted warrants.

On 1st October 1991, the Queensland Police Service introduced new warrant handling procedures (Commissioner's Circular No. 71/91). With some exceptions, all warrants issued by a court are forwarded to the Warrant Bureau for immediate entry on to the police mainframe. The warrants are then sent to the appropriate police station for serving.

The dimensions of the workload at the Warrant Bureau are reflected in the number of warrants. Each year police serve over 100,000 warrants. Currently, there are about 162,000 warrants State-wide, of which approximately 108,000 are Warrants of Commitment; about 3,500 are Warrants of Apprehension; and 1,200 are Warrants of Execution. (In addition, there are over 8,000 Mesne Warrants, and over 4,000 are of other varied types. Some 37,000 are not designated as to their type on police records.) Clearly, Warrants of Commitment constitute the bulk of police officers workload in serving warrants.

Statistics Section

The Statistics Section is responsible for the capture of statistical data from Criminal Offence Reports and court briefs. On receipt of the criminal offence Reports, a crime classification is noted on the copies. They are then ordered chronologically according to Police Division. The operation of this Section was computerised to a limited extent in mid-1991.

Suspect Generation Section

The Suspect Generation Section is an intelligence gathering group within the Information Bureau. The role of the Suspect Generation Section is to identify suspects based upon the modus operandi of the offences, or the characteristics of the perpetrator. The Suspect Generation Section records details of break and enter offences, unlawful use of motor vehicles, sex and violence offences, armed robbery, graffiti, and some fraud offences. The modus operandi of the offences are recorded from details supplied by Criminal Offence Reports and Court Briefs. Support staff spend up to one third of their day manually searching court briefs and Criminal Offence Reports for the types of offences and offenders they will record.

The Suspect Generation Section also maintains records of the attributes of suspects, such as tattoos. In addition, the Suspect Generation Section maintains the photo gallery. The particular categories of offences and offenders being recorded follows no written policy.

Since mid-1991 the Suspect Generation Section collects data on a local network which is not accessible by the Police Service's mainframe computer. Furthermore, civilian staff cease duty at 4.00 p.m., depriving police of ready access to the information outside of "office hours".

Inquiry Section

The Inquiry Section of the Information Bureau is staffed 24 hours per day to supply information to police officers in the field for investigative and court requirements. The principal requests are for criminal histories, driver's license records, and stolen vehicle checks for Queensland and New South Wales (via the N.S.W. Police Service "Eagle" System.)

Property Section

All Criminal Offence Reports involving stolen property are checked on the Police Service's mainframe computer. Only selected property, typically high value or easily identifiable property, is entered on the Property of Interest System. This section was closed down in mid-November, 1991.

Missing Persons Section

Details of missing persons are entered onto and removed from the police mainframe computer by staff at the Information Bureau. One public servant has the responsibility of maintaining the filing system associated with this section. The public servant who maintained the missing person files also recorded stolen property onto the Property of Interest system. This latter duty is now performed by the officer-in-charge of the Miscellaneous License Section.

The Missing Persons Bureau has now taken over the Information Bureau's duties of entering all missing persons' information onto the police computer. This eliminates double handling of missing person files, which have been removed from the Information Bureau and located at the Missing Persons Bureau, Task Force.

Microfilming Section

The Police Department is placing on microfilm all Criminal Offence Reports, Court Briefs, and Criminal Histories dating from 1934. This is an on-going process to eliminate storage of all paperwork until crime recording is entirely computerised.

Miscellaneous Licenses Section

This Section processes license applications under the Second-hand Dealers and Collectors Act, Pawnbrokers Act, and Hawkers Act. Applications are completed at station level and processed by the Miscellaneous License Section. Staff check the background of the applicant by searching criminal history and person of interest records. As licenses must be renewed every 12 months, the necessity for a central recording system has developed under the control of the Information Bureau.

This Section also issues police certificates for visas, work, and where necessary, supplies the particulars of criminal histories. This section also responds to applications for information from insurance companies and loss assessors. Insurance companies submit about 100 applications for information each week. The cost of each application is \$15.

Staff Allocation Within the Information Bureau

Table 1

STAFF ALLOCATION WITHIN THE INFORMATION BUREAU

Section	Police Officers		Public Servants		Total	
	Allocation	Vacant	Allocation	Vacant	Allocation	Vacant
Inspector's Office	2	1	1	0	3	1
Senior Sergeant Administration	1	0	0	0	1	0
Mail Section	0	0	3	0	3	0
Criminal History Recording Section	2	0	16	1	18	1
Warrant Bureau	2	0	12	1	14	1
Statistical Section	2	0	12	0	14	0
Suspect Generation	2	0	9	0	11	0
Inquiry Section	24	10	0	0	24	10
Name Checks Section	1	0	1	0	2	0
Missing Persons*	0	0	1	0	1	0
Microfilm Section	0	0	9	0	9	0
Miscellaneous License Section	1	0	3	0	4	0

* Missing Persons Section is no longer within the Information Bureau.

Deficiencies Identified by the Committee

Overall, little in the way of advances in information systems and technology have flowed through to the Information Bureau during the last quarter-century. For example, the Statistical Section of the Information Bureau, like many other of its sections, operated until mid-1991 using a manual, paper-based collection, compilation, retrieval and distribution system.

The Committee has identified four major, and a series of other, minor deficiencies in the operation of Information Bureau functions:

- (i) inadequate access to Queensland Police Service computer resources;
- (ii) lack of integration of computing resources;
- (iii) poor co-ordination between the needs of operational police and information systems;
- (iv) limited dissemination of data held by the Information Bureau; and
- (v) other deficiencies.

The deficiencies and the problems that arise from them are discussed in the remainder of this Chapter.

(i) Inadequate Access to Queensland Police Service Computer Resources

The Queensland Police Service mainframe computer system is based around dual ICL 3980 computers. This facility currently operates 16 major applications and services 760 terminals located in Queensland Police Service administrative areas (600) and police stations (160) (*Queensland Police Service Information Technology Operational Plan 1991/92*). The system accesses approximately 50 gigabytes of on-line data and operates 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Approximately 200,000 transactions per day are processed on this equipment.

In addition to the ICL mainframe, the Queensland Police Service operates a Computer-Aided Dispatch System which runs on dual HP 835S processors utilising three gigabytes of on-line disk, local area networks connect 30 HP workstations to the 835S processors and also provide an on-line link to the Police Service mainframe. A further 150 microcomputers are available and serve principally administrative areas. The main use of personal computers are the Police Service's financial systems, word processing and spreadsheets. In recent months local area networks have been established in the Information Bureau to support the statistics and suspect generation functions. The finalisation of a recent tender will see a substantial increase in the penetration of personal computers throughout the Police Service with at least one Apple personal computer and laser printer being allocated to every police station in Queensland.

Since 1987-88 the Queensland Police Service has spent in the order of \$11.4 million on computer equipment and currently maintains a staff of 63 in its information technology functions. In addition, consultancy services equivalent to three man years were commissioned by the Police Service during 1990-91.

By the very nature of its functions the Information Bureau collects, compiles and processes huge volumes of material into information to be accessed and used for operational policing, management and policy research. In 1989-90 for example, the Criminal History Recording Section alone processed almost 90,000 Court briefs; the Warrant Bureau handled more than 108,000 warrants, while more than 250,000 Criminal Offence Reports were processed. Despite the magnitude of this task and the benefits of having available reliable and up-to-date information on offences, persons of interest, suspect generation, and so on, the priority of the Information Bureau in obtaining computer resources within the Police Service has been low.

Until mid-1991 when a small local area network was installed, the Information Bureau's Statistics Section, which has responsibility for processing all offence reports to provide basic information on the level, location and types of offences occurring in Queensland, operated almost entirely using manual systems. In spite of being a prime candidate to benefit from computerisation, this section operated into the 1990s using methods established in the 1930s. Because of the low priority accorded to the Information Bureau functions, data which could have been expected to describe the Police Service in Queensland have been inadequate, and there have been allegations of impropriety regarding its accuracy and presentation.

A number of sections within the Information Bureau have fared better than the Statistics Section in achieving a level of computerisation, albeit, in many respects, still inadequate. The areas which have been computerised are mainly inquiry functions where warrants, a tattoo index, persons of interest and a number of other data bases have been developed on the ICL mainframe.

A disturbing feature of the development of these systems is that they have been made by computerising existing manual systems with little attention given to the changing requirements or enhancement of systems which take advantage of the processing and analysis power of computers. Moreover, the design of the computer systems did not include a revision of forms to make them, at the minimum, more acceptable for data entry purposes.

Discussions with Information Bureau officers indicate that even simple amendments to existing computer systems are difficult to achieve. This reflects resourcing problems within the Police Service's Information Systems Branch and the low priority afforded to the Information Bureau. Most of the resources of the Information Systems Branch are directed towards maintaining the aging ICL computer and developing new systems, such as the Firearms Registration Recording System. The resources required to enhance existing, and develop new Information Bureau systems have been consistently allocated to other, apparently higher priority tasks. Significant benefits, including greater

productivity and higher clear-up and crime prevention rates, would occur from high-quality and timely information.

The Committee recommends that the Information Bureau be represented when policy regarding the allocation of computer resources is being considered. The Committee further recommends that the Information Bureau be allocated a Computer Systems Officer to service the specific requirements of the Information Bureau. This officer should be highly knowledgeable of modern information technology, and database design and administration. This officer would not be responsible for all Information Bureau computing requirements but would assist in representing the Bureau in discussions on information technology matters, design smaller systems, and make enhancement to existing mainframe systems. This officer should report directly to the Head of the Information Bureau.

(ii) Lack of integration of computer systems

The efficiency of large-scale data bases requires not only the provision of adequate computing resources but also their integration in order to avoid costly and unnecessary duplication of human and machine resources. By this standard, the computer resources currently available to the Information Bureau are inefficient.

The lack of integration of computing resources within the Queensland Police Service is a serious deficiency that has had a substantial impact on the Information Bureau. Over many years the computing resources of the Police Service have been allowed to develop without adequate control or direction. Consequently, resources allocated to computing have been poorly expended and have resulted in the development of separate computer systems which have often been developed in isolation.

This lack of co-ordination is still continuing despite a recent substantial change in management and management practices. For instance, the *Queensland Police Vedette* (August 1991, p. 12) recently reported the development of a new computer system "designed to provide the Task Force (to target breaking and entering and unlawful use of motor vehicles in the Sunshine Coast District) with up-to-date information and statistics on offences and likely offenders". This system, which largely duplicates activities undertaken by the Information Bureau, has been developed without the knowledge of the Information Bureau.

Forms

As a result of the separate development of computer systems, their cost has been greater, and the effectiveness of Queensland Police Service computing services has been less than can reasonably be expected by Government and the community. The Committee has seen examples of multiple inputting of information relating to the same person on different computers or information systems. Indeed, there is in the order of 60 or more forms that serving police officers may have to fill out. Information is usually entered on these forms by means of manual typewriters. As all input into the Information Bureau comes from these forms they are of considerable concern to the Committee.

A number of these forms contain basically the same information, which is typed repeatedly. Once the relevant copy of the form reaches the Information Bureau, data from them are entered into separate computer systems. The duplication in this process is wasteful in the extreme.

It is instructive to consider an example. Suppose an offence -- a break and enter with property stolen -- is committed. The first form to be completed is a Criminal Offence Report (QP10), a copy of which appears in Appendix VII. If, as is often the case, further property is reported missing when the premises are tidied up, then a Supplementary Criminal Offence Report (QP11) must be completed. When a suspect is located, an interview is recorded, the suspect is arrested, and a Bench Charge Sheet, a Court Brief (QP9) and a Fingerprint Form are typed. If the charge proceeds to trial an Electronic Recording of Interviews with Suspects Synopsis Form is completed. Statement of Witness forms are typed (QP125). There follows any Summons of a Witness (Form 7, Justice Act 1886-1985). If the charge is heard at a higher court an Antecedent Report (QP7) is needed.

It can be seen, therefore, that police officers investigating a routine break and enter with stolen property have to complete many forms involving substantial duplication of information. (Our brief account omits many other forms, such as several watchhouse forms, that may also be completed.)

A tender was let in late 1991 for the supply of personal computers to be installed in police stations throughout the State. It is hoped that they will significantly reduce the need to re-enter data. It is envisaged that once the basic data, such as the particulars of an offence, have been entered it will only be necessary for that information which is peculiar to a specific form be entered when that form is required. (Note that the coding of the offence will take place at the Information Bureau.)

It is essential that these data are conveyed to the Information Bureau in a machine-readable form. There are some remaining problems. The major difficulty is that without adequate electronic communications between police headquarters and police stations throughout the State, the information entered on the personal computers can only be transferred by courier or post. The logistical and security problems associated with sending through the mail

hundreds of diskettes containing confidential information underscore the need for direct communication links. The personal computers require an upgraded communications network in order to ensure the orderly and efficient flow of information between distant outposts and Police Headquarters. The Committee has received advice that an upgraded communications system will place additional strain on an already over-loaded mainframe.

It is clear from the Committee's discussions with officers within the Information Bureau that development and enhancement of computer systems are not proceeding on a basis that will minimise duplication and produce compatible results. This fragmented and independent approach fails to achieve economies in meeting the information requirements of police administrators and operational police.

The Committee considers that these separate and often incompatible systems have developed because of a lack of clearly enunciated directions in Queensland Police Service computing and the absence of effective central authority to advise or decide upon allocation of priorities among urgent and competing needs.

It is evident that the Information Bureau's position as the Police Service's primary collator and disseminator of information has been eroded. This is partly because the Information Bureau's resources have been limited as demand for its services has expanded greatly; and partly because of the development of information systems by other units within the Police Service; for instance, the Drug Squad and the Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, Queensland. These factors have tended to compound and reinforce each other. The greater the demand for Information Bureau services (particularly following the introduction of the Message Switching System) the greater the need for adequate computer services, and the more difficult it becomes for the Information Bureau to meet them. Furthermore, the greater the inability to adequately service demand for timely and accurate information, the greater the incentive for other units to establish their own information systems. This has increased the tendency for information collection to become fragmented and for systems to be duplicated and, in some cases, to be incompatible.

(iii) Poor Co-ordination Between the needs of Operational Police and Information Systems.

Effective communication between the producers and users of information is necessary to ascertain the needs of users and to establish priorities between their competing demands. Police in the field and police administrators are the principal users of information generated by the Information Bureau.

The Committee has concluded that the present level of communication between Information Bureau officers, computer systems officers and the principal users is deficient. There have been neither formal procedures for regular consultation between the Information Bureau and operational police to discuss each other's requirements, nor regular arrangements by which priorities on other aspects of

system co-ordination could be discussed between Information Bureau officers and staff of the Information Systems Branch.

The present position is that feedback from operational police is provided to the Information Bureau on an ad hoc basis. At times this feedback or initiatives by officers of the Information Bureau, are conveyed to the police hierarchy by way of memoranda. If an initiative receives support from the senior management it must then gain the support of the Information Systems Branch and compete with other information technology priorities. It has been indicated to the Committee that it has taken up to 12 months following initial approval to obtain a minor amendment to a screen on a mainframe system.

Another aspect of inadequate communication between the Information Bureau and its customers is the absence of any arrangement for ensuring that the Information Bureau is aware of organisational initiatives and their information needs. Key clients of the Information Bureau include the Minister for Police, senior management, and regional management. In discussions with Committee members, several officers from different branches of the Police Service, argued a need for "local" systems as the Information Bureau was unable to meet their information needs. The Committee recommends that procedures should be established to ensure that the Bureau is kept informed of policy initiatives (such as the creation of Task Forces to target specific offences or areas) so that it can better identify potential information to support such initiatives.

It is clear that the Information Bureau could do more to inform its customers of available services. The information held by the Bureau is extensive and its ability to obtain information from other sources within the criminal justice arena is excellent. A number of initiatives have emerged from the Information Bureau in the past which have proved valuable for police in the field. For example, the Suspect Generation Section obtained regular information from the Corrective Services Commission (and the former Prisons Department) on the release of offenders from gaol. Information on the modus operandi, criminal history and a photograph of selected types of offenders released from gaol were compiled and forwarded to relevant police. The Committee understands that this service was very well regarded by police officers but it has been discontinued because of resource constraints.

This type of "specialist" service, which utilises information available from both inside and out of police sources, demonstrates the benefits of a well-organised and adequately resourced Information Bureau.

(iv) Limited dissemination of data held by the Information Bureau

The fourth main deficiency of the Information Bureau is the degree of accessibility of information held. The Committee found that much of the data contained in Information Bureau systems is less accessible to potential users, both inside and outside of the Police Service, than it should be. This is due to a

combination of inadequate resources poor planning and secretiveness that permeates the Police Service.

In general there is a degree of uncertainty on the part of police officers as to why they should expend so much effort to submit information to the Information Bureau for so little result. The Information Bureau has done relatively little to initiate feedback to police in the field, and in many cases the only public dissemination of data is via the Queensland Police Service Annual Report. The amount of data which could be supplied to police and interest groups within the private and public sectors is much greater than initially thought.

The Committee, at the conclusion of its deliberations, was still unclear as to the extent to which the output of some 14 staff of the Statistical Section was utilised. One view expressed by a senior commissioned officer was that the statistics (including the location and type of offence) produced by the Section were of no use in the administration and operations of the Police Service. An alternative view was that the range of information produced, albeit limited, was useful in the allocation of staff to Police Regions, contributed to policy formulation, assisted in addressing community inquiries and provided a quantitative basis for community and police education purposes.

There is little doubt that with several minor additions to the range of information collected, and the addition of a finer spatial classification, the information generated by the Statistics Section would have considerably more utility than is currently the case.

The Committee reached the conclusion that inadequate access to police information by both Police Service personnel and the public generally, resulted in under-utilisation of valuable information collected at substantial public cost. The problem is exacerbated by the limitations of the existing computing system. In general, any significant departure from basic (computer terminal) look-up screens requires substantial cost and is therefore difficult to achieve. The Committee understands that more complex searches across mainframe data bases by Information Bureau staff are restricted to three searches per day because of the load such searches place on the mainframe and the consequent delay to other essential services. This restriction is clearly counter to the Police Service's fundamental mission of reducing crime and apprehending offenders.

The Committee believes that the inaccessibility of information is attributable, in large measure, to the combination of inflexible computer systems and insufficient resources. The Committee has concluded that, with existing equipment and resources, the Information Bureau can improve access in one area of its operations only at the expense of other areas. Significant improvement in the credibility of output data from the Information Bureau is dependent upon the allocation of adequate resources and, in most cases, the re-development of existing computer systems to achieve the dual aims of relevance and integration.

(v) Other Deficiencies

The lack of a flexible and comprehensive system of spatial information is a serious deficiency in the existing information systems. At present most information produced by the Queensland Police Service is available only at the Police District or Division level. In many instances these Districts cover vast areas of Queensland and large population bases. Accordingly, this information is of only limited value for operational purposes and police administration. It was suggested to the Committee that because different users require data for different geographical areas, a spatial information system based upon parcels of land is required. While recognising that the development of such a system would be a major undertaking, the Committee notes its relevance for other areas in the portfolio of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The Committee recommends that the Police Service consider developing a spatial information system, in consultation with the Department of Lands and other interested Government Departments.

The Committee also noted deficiencies in the criminal offence classification system operated by the Information Bureau's Statistics Section. Until very recently, the system operated only on the date of receipt of a Criminal Offence Report at the Statistics Section, and not on the actual date that the offence was reported to Police. Both dates are now recorded. Consequently, the information produced by this Section may be misleading. The Committee understands that, on occasion, Criminal Offence Reports are submitted to the Information Bureau some months after an offence comes to the notice of the police.

The Committee notes that the Queensland Police Service is planning to conduct a pilot test of the Lancashire Crime Reporting System, which is designed to alleviate delays in reporting. (A modified version of this system has recently been dubbed CRISP--Crime Reporting Information System for Police; however, we refer to it as the Lancashire System as it was, as the name suggests, developed in Lancashire, England.) The central feature of the Lancashire System is that police officers phone trained data-entry officers and dictate their Criminal Offence Reports. The data-entry officer types in the report modifying it where necessary to conform to a semi-standardised vocabulary, which facilitates subsequent retrieval. The Lancashire System runs on an ICL mainframe and is therefore, easily implemented on the Queensland Police Service's mainframe.

Other deficiencies relate to the fact that a great deal of information gathered by State and Federal agencies is not used by, or available to, the Queensland Police Service. There is an urgent requirement for the police to obtain more reliable and timely information on the addresses of wanted persons. Currently, police are forced to rely, among other things, on drivers licenses and electoral rolls, which are often poor sources of up-to-date and reliable information.

The most reliable sources of information on current addresses are the files of the following Commonwealth organisations: Medicare, the Taxation Office, Social Security and Australia Post; and various electricity authorities at the State level.