



# TAKING POLICE & SECURITY PARTNERSHIPS SERIOUSLY

By Rod Cowan\*



**W**hen two representatives from the Victorian Government Department of Human Services (DHS) at the recent Nexus Policing Conference, in Melbourne, were asked about engaging with the private security industry, they both laughed.

Asked to explain, one responded: "We find the levels of knowledge and the levels of skill are so low in the security industry, it is just too hard."

The other agreed.

The irony is that the conference attended by 270 senior police and academics had a strong theme of police and community engagement and participation, with an emphasis on collaboration.

Indeed, the community engagement and the delivery of policing services part of the program read:

- How are police to respond to the increasingly pluralised nature of policing?
- What does research tell us about the quality of the interface between police and local communities, especially culturally diverse and disadvantaged ones?
- What has been the impact of counter terrorism upon police-public relations?
- What are the implications of the changing nature of serious and organised crime, on criminal investigation?

The only problem for the private security industry being even given the pluralised nature of policing is that it is not necessarily seen as a part of the community.

"You should take a look at the concierge program," one of the DHS bureaucrats suggested.

He was referring to a scheme run by the Victorian Government and Brotherhood of St Laurence program designed to train and employ residents in a community enterprise.

"A community enterprise is a business that's established in a local community not to maximise profit but to meet a local need and achieve social outcomes directly through its activities in a way that's financially sustainable," says the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence's Community Contact Service not only provides training for long-term unemployed public housing residents at Collingwood and Fitzroy, it also provides services on the two estates, including security, concierge and information services.

Trainees work in the enterprise for a year before moving on to the open labour market.

Not that the industry is without some serious collaboration with police, but it tends to be with individual companies, in some cases involving an education or research element.

For example, Emirates Group Security has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Western Australian Police (WAPOL) for co-operation in areas of investigative practices and to carry out research into security operations.

Dr Abdulla Al Hashimi, Emirates" Divisional Senior Vice President of Group Security, and Murray Lampard APM, Acting Commissioner of Western Australian Police, signed the MoU in Perth and the partnership will be based at the Centre of Aviation & Security Studies (CASS) in the security division's headquarters at the Dubai Airport Freezone (DAFZA).

CASS offers training programs in collaboration with Perth-based Edith Cowan University, which also houses WAPOL's police academy.

Dr Al Hashimi said: "With the recent establishment of the Centre of Aviation and Security Studies, Group Security is now in a better position to positively contribute towards research and learning within the aviation and security industries. Part of this is the development of connections with other security organisations, such as the Western Australian Police."

WAPOL will extend its security education curriculum and best practices as part of the mutual exchange program.

WAPOL Commissioner Lampard said: "This important partnership and association with Emirates Group Security – CASS will definitely provide an added dimension to the ongoing research on security learning. Being a pioneer in many aspects of aviation security, the experiences and systems in Emirates will provide an excellent perspective from an airline operator and how this shapes the security ecosystem."

Other collaborative efforts, again usually through individual companies, tends to centre on local crime prevention efforts, such as NRMA Insurance partnering with the NSW Police and local councils to combat burglary and car theft at the neighbourhood level.

Localised programs in Redfern, Dubbo, Gosford and Shellharbour include a mix of a mobile crime prevention van, community building projects, community education campaigns and mentoring for youth at risk.

The NRMA Insurance Crime Prevention Van provides on-the-spot advice to approximately 600 people every month on how to reduce crime and stop it happening around their home and car.

Other programs include providing support to victims of break and entry (Operation never again) and the Good Neighbour Program.

In developing these programs NRMA contributes data, employee expertise, employee time and funding.

Then there is the Eyes on the Streets concept in Perth, based on a UK program.

The program encourages and enables state government agencies, local governments and businesses to:

- Join in the fight against crime and criminal activity
- Gather information about suspicious occurrences and

report this to police

- Encourage active participation of employees
- Support the Eyes on the Street campaign through branding of vehicles

More than 100 organisations are already taking part in Eyes on the Street, including local governments, Australia Post, Western Power, security firms, shopping centre cleaners and universities, and since its statewide expansion in 2005, more than 2500 reports have been forwarded to police by participating agencies.

Broader collaboration has not fared so well.

Various police and intelligence business liaison units focus on the general business community.

While there are various State and Territory industry councils and committees, they tend to focus on regulatory matters and licensing issues.

There are, admittedly, some MoUs between police and security, but again, they tend to be specific, such as alarm response protocols.

Where steps have been taken to work with police, they have often fallen into a hole. In one area, a MoU has been discussed since 2002 and gone nowhere, mainly because police are reassigned and, when replaced, the entire process has to begin again.

Many argue that the security industry represents a huge resource with four times as many security patrols on the road at night in most areas and one that is being under-utilised.

That being the case, enhancing security and safety in the community needs to include bringing together members of the private security industry, as well as other businesses and non-profit organisations, and the public sector, including government, intelligence and police.

Doing so is possible as individual organisations have shown but it will be no laughing matter.

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