

## **Safer Communities Conference 14 August 2006**

### **Topic: "Police Working with the Community"**

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to speak to you today.

First, I would like to recognise Sir Barry Curtis, Jenny Brash and Bruce Robertson for their excellent work on the Taskforce for the reduction of community violence, and acknowledge my Police colleagues and all of you for the work you do in making our communities safer.

The topic of my presentation today is 'Police Working with the Community'. This is extremely important for New Zealand Police because we police by 'consent' of the community. And fundamentally the community and Police are all aiming to achieve the same outcome - safety and security. Recent world events have certainly bought into all our minds issues of safety and security from an international travel perspective. In this conference we are looking at community and individual safety from a local perspective – our neighbourhoods, suburbs, towns and cities.

To ensure that we are operating with the support of our community we need to keep asking what the community expects and how they feel. I use that word feel very deliberately. Over the last few years reported crime has reduced but we don't collectively feel safer. We need to ask why?

It's easy to talk about community expectations but it's a lot harder to achieve in a meaningful way, given the ever changing nature of our community with the multiplicity of cultural, ethnic, generational and socio-economic influences at play in our increasingly sophisticated and complex society.

Police are very much aware that our communities are changing. Did you know that the total number of people identifying as European between 1991 and 2001 increased by only 3 percent while the number of people identifying as Maori increased by 21 percent, Pacific people by 39 percent, and Asian people by 138 percent.

I understand that by the year 2011, the combined populations of people of Asian and Pacific Island ethnicity in Auckland will outnumber the combined population of Pakeha and Maori ethnicity. It is also likely that people of European extraction are likely to make up less than 50% of the population by the end of this year.

We have to be alert to and accepting of the different perspectives that come with a changing ethnic mix.

As well as a changing ethnic composition our society is also an aging one. For example over the last ten years the median age has increased by 2 years and the number of children has reduced.

Right now, we are beginning to see a mini bulge in the 15-24 year age group move through the system, contributing to a rise in some categories of reported crime. This is a challenge for all parts of the system but pointing this group in the right direction is so important to our future well being. Take for example the 14 year old young man I heard about last week. He has an extensive police record but after 6 months in a local community intensive youth programme he has not reoffended, is back at school and has handed in his gang tee-shirt.

There's little doubt that among all these demographic changes community expectations are also changing. The community expects to be consulted, engaged and informed of progress.

So there's no better time than now to review and reflect on how we carry out our policing role, particularly our community policing role.

The need to ensure that our policing and our legislation is fit for purpose in the 21st century is very topical for us. In March this year Minister of Police announced a major rewrite of the Police Act. At 48 years old, our legislation is getting quite creaky and can be modernised to better reflect the principles and approaches that New Zealanders of today envisage for themselves, their children and their grandchildren. The new Police Act will be introduced to Parliament in 2008. It will look at all aspects of policing. And it is a highly consultative process. I encourage everyone here to look at the discussion papers on our website and have your say.

Before I move to local community policing I want to share with you a national perspective. We have a new Commissioner, Howard Broad and like all new Commissioners he has a list of things he wants to see change. I am going to share his list with you and I think you'll nod that they are indeed significant issues facing our whole community; in fact some of them are on your agenda during this conference.

Drugs and alcohol  
 Violence – street, family and sexual  
 Road trauma  
 Maori offending  
 Youth offending  
 Organised crime

One of the ways we are looking to address both community expectations and these issues is by developing our way of community policing. It is early days in that re-development but I thought I'd share the emerging thinking: a model based on participation, priorities, partnerships and protection.

Participation - ears/listening, local/individual needs, perceptions,  
 - street briefings, surveys

Priorities - graffiti, youth gathering, letter boxes, plants  
 - "What do you want us to act on first?"

Partnerships - issues beyond any agency  
- lead agency eg lucky 14 agencies

Protection - police good at

The implementation of the Local Government Act 2002 and the Long Term Council Community planning process is absolutely in line with, in fact a critical part, of this thinking.

The community policing concept was first introduced in New Zealand in 1973 through the establishment of Community Liaison Officers (CLOs), colloquially known as Community Constables. The role of Community Constables has evolved and will continue to evolve to reflect the changes in the community and the police. For example in 1973 we were smaller, less diverse and less technological. Now we have to be more flexible and more accommodating to reach out and meet people often in smaller groups in a much greater variety of settings. Unless we do this, we won't understand respond to our communities' real and perceived problems.

I acknowledge that in the past we have not always been as successful as we would have liked in 'reassuring' the community when in fact the crime statistics and the number of crashes have been reducing. Part of this reassurance involves providing meaningful feedback to the community on progress towards their solving problems. This will also be a focus in the next few years. Give Rotterdam example.

We also know that the public of New Zealand would like their police to be more visible, accessible and familiar to the public. We will be developing ways of doing this as part of this strategy.

And before I conclude obviously we would all rather prevent crime than console the victims and deal with the offenders. So for all the work in CPTED, local patrols, CCTVs etc well done and lets keep the good ideas and actions flowing.

Community policing and the way that we work with the community will be an evolving process over the next few years. The Commissioner and whole Police Executive are committed to making our organisation more flexible and more readily able to change in response to the community.

The impact New Zealand Police can make on our own is limited. But with the support of the groups and organisations of everyone gathered in this room today, positive results like reduced family and street violence, happy safe and drug free young people will be achieved.

I know I speak on behalf of all New Zealand Police when I say we look forward to working with you to improve community safety.

Thank you