

Probe joins the dots of corruption

THERE are several intelligence charts in the Office of Police Integrity that remind corruption investigators who they are after.

They are protected by the latest security technology and are often updated as new information comes in.

The secret charts contain the names of dozens of former and serving Victoria Police officers thought to be corrupt.

They detail all known and suspected associations of each officer.

Lines drawn on the charts link the officers to suspect businesses, shonky lawyers, shady bankers, dodgy private investigators, underworld figures and other police.

Details for the charts came from various sources, including former Victoria Police drug squad officers, corrupt police, criminals, police whistleblowers and corruption investigators.

OPI director and Ombudsman George Brouwer

Keith Moor

said some of those named date back to the 1970s.

"It's fascinating to see all the interconnections displayed on the charts," he said.

"They are very effective at highlighting common links and associations between suspect officers.

"You look at the lines drawn on them and there are literally dozens and dozens connecting them to businesses, lawyers, bankers, criminals and other associates.

"Now not all those connections will be corrupt, but we have had occasions where we have profiled a banker used by a suspect officer and found that same banker is used by other allegedly corrupt officers. Piecing together the network is what we are about."

Mr Brouwer said many of those named in the charts had been indoctrinated into corruption in the 1970s and 1980s by their peers and superiors.

"Those peers and superiors had escaped

the consequences of their corrupt behaviour, despite many of them being charged," he said.

The charts are being used as part of a longitudinal study ordered by Mr Brouwer into the history of corruption in Victoria Police.

He basically wants to paint an accurate picture of the size of the problem and its causes so he can more effectively fight it.

Mr Brouwer is convinced a past trend by middle managers to turn a blind eye to corruption has resulted in generations of police accepting and participating in it.

"History has repeatedly shown that once supervisors fail to supervise, the ills of bad policing appear," he said.

"That sort of culture of supervisors condoning the breaking of rules has been a problem in Victoria Police going back to at least the 1970s.

"Such an environment constitutes fertile ground in which corruption may grow," Mr Brouwer said.



Hunting bad cops: OPI director George Brouwer.

Watchdog tracks down bent police

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The royal commission plan is supported by federal Attorney-General Philip Ruddock and state Opposition Leader Robert Doyle.

Mr Brouwer was recently given the power to go after former police as well as serving officers.

Some of those identified to the OPI as corrupt reached ranks higher than senior-sergeant.

A detective senior-sergeant is the highest-ranked officer charged so far in the current spate of corruption arrests.

"Corruption is not confined by rank, though there is no evidence that it has reached anywhere near the top, as has happened in other states," Mr Brouwer said.

He predicted the establishment of the OPI last November would dramatically change the way police operate in Victoria.

Every facet of the 13,000-strong force will be examined during a series of investigations and studies ordered by Mr Brouwer under powers recently given to him by the State Government.

The OPI was created as part of the Bracks Government's response to calls for a royal commission into police corruption and a permanent anti-corruption body.

Mr Brouwer said the OPI had identified several problem areas within Victoria Police and he had ordered investigations.

He predicted those OPI probes would result in dramatic changes to the way police:

INVESTIGATE sexual assault complaints.

PROTECT witnesses.

USE the force's controversial computerised LEAP database of criminal records.

HANDLE informers.

DEAL with private investigators.

Mr Brouwer expects the OPI to

be instrumental in forcing quick changes in these problem areas.

"All this I think is do-able.

"Sometimes people get what I call paralysis by analysis. They think this is oh so complex that they need to analyse and analyse before anything really happens.

"I am not of that school. I think if you know where you are going — and we do — then you don't need 10 or 20 years to achieve it.

"It either has to happen, and happen fairly quickly, or it doesn't happen at all in my view."

Mr Brouwer said corruption had flourished for decades in Victoria because of a historic failure by management to seriously tackle it.

He said mediocrity, rather than professionalism, had been the norm in some areas of Victoria Police.

"I'm talking management failure at all levels, but particularly at the senior to middle-ranking level, say up to superintendent," he said.

"You have a lot of police who are very professional and they run a tight ship. But you have others who are very mediocre and they run a bad ship."

Mr Brouwer said it appeared some Victoria Police supervisors turned a blind eye to corruption because they were corrupt themselves.

He said those in charge of Victoria Police were to be praised for being equally determined to rid the force of corrupt officers.

"They are cooperating fully with our initiatives," Mr Brouwer said.

"It is certainly a joint enterprise and police command seems receptive to change."

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