



“Operation Impala” Submission

Thankyou for opportunity to take part in the examination of corruption and corruption risks in relation to the improper access to and disclosure of confidential information in the public sector.

In 2011 I self represented and took civil action in the District Court against the QPS and against a police officer who I alleged was stalking me for over 4 years, the officer had deprived me of my liberty, after I was arrested in my home for an alleged traffic matter in 2006. That civil action by me was successful, and I received compensation as a result.

The impact of what occurred before, during and after that incident cannot be underestimated, it had a significant impact on each and every area of my life.

As a result of my experience, I later connected with other people that were facing various challenges both within the QPS, and with the QPS, who felt their complaints and concerns were essentially falling on deaf ears. In 2016 I was a guest speaker as a Human Rights Defender when the United Nations Special Rapporteur attended Australia. I was invited to speak on behalf of others who would be considered vulnerable, or at risk in relation to the abuse of power. One of the key issues I highlighted at that meeting, was the improper access to, and disclosure of personal and confidential information by the QPS.

People such as myself who take a public position in support of Civil Liberties and the rule of Law, especially when it entails certain rogue police officers, are particularly vulnerable to being affected by the misuse and inappropriate access of personal data.

I suspected my own personal details were being accessed after some particular officers came under scrutiny for poor behaviour on the Gold Coast. As a result of my concerns, I made an application for a copy of my QPRIME file, to try and narrow down who might be accessing and possibly disclosing my address. The document which I received from Right to Information revealed hundreds of officers had in fact accessed my file.

It was very apparent to me when I received a copy of my QPRIME file that the issue surrounding unlawful access to private information was nothing short of a wide spread epidemic. It not only revealed the extent of the misuse, but it revealed the lack of systems in place to monitor, and detect that misuse.

When the investigation was complete, it showed the complete inability by the QPS to properly audit all of the accesses to my details, and as a result not one of the officers were charged.

The response by the QPS was in my view completely inadequate, and it sent a further message that accountability was at an all time low in relation to the misuse of data.

An officer came forward to me at the time of the investigation into the breach to my privacy, to outline their concerns with how they had seen the investigation being carried out about my complaint in a manner that concerned them. Evidence existed of officers being coached by their superiors on how they should answer as to why they had accessed my details.

If it were mandatory for officers to enter reasons to access a person's details, they could have just gone back to the record of reasons in order to answer to the investigator, not having to rely on being informed what they should say from their superior when being questioned about their access.

Since the inception of the QPRIME data base, the QPS have essentially invited privacy breaches because they have had no system of random or regular audits into the way the data base is being accessed. They have relied that only the minority will find out about any breaches, as if what people don't know won't hurt them. The misuse is taking place secretly and silently behind a computer screen. It relies completely on self-regulation by the individual officer.

The misuse of the police data base in my case was equally, if not more traumatic than being stalked by the original rogue officer. I had no idea why I was being searched, and I relocated immediately. The overwhelm of having a real, or even a perceived invisible threat cannot be understated. The fact that this was not a widely recognised problem, and there was yet to be an examination of any solution, meant that I had to blindly find my way in raising my concern over the misuse of data. I have done this in order to shine a light for other people coming through behind me who might be confronted by this predicament moving into the future.

I have particular concerns about the safety of women around this data being misused. Domestic violence victims are extremely vulnerable, as are women who have been previously married and since divorced a current serving officer. In 2019 there are parts still within the QPS where the boys club culture very much exists, and these women's private details such as their new address, or even newly associated partners name, may not be accessed directly by their former husband, but indirectly within his circle, and with it able to go undetected.

If certain people such as these women were classified as particularly vulnerable because of their personal circumstances, the oversight could be adjusted for them. They should be part a select group whose files receives increased oversight and scrutiny in order to monitor who is accessing their personal details and why.

I have supported a woman who has relocated twice after a police officer gave her details to her former partner. Even after she was fortunate enough to have the evidence to provide to police, multiple officers failed to charge the officer. This woman detected the misuse, and had then had evidence to back it up, yet she was still having difficulty getting anyone to charge the officer. As a result, she then took her plight to the media, in what she describes as "a bid to keep my family alive".

A number of key questions have been addressed accordingly in this submission as per the call for submissions paper. **Risk and Impact, Management, and Prevention and Detection.**

I look forward to the opportunity to speak at the oral hearing conducted for Operation Impala, and being a part of some positive change moving forward.

Kind Regards,

Renee Eaves

www.reneeeaves.com



