

Millions of words have been written about the proposed Criminal Investigations Bill — with few who have expressed views being fence-sitters. Police, and others, are either solidly for or against. Here the Officer-in-Charge of the AFP's Electronic Services Branch, Chief Inspector PETER BRITTLIFF, gives some personal thoughts on the Bill. He intends to write further on the subject in future issues.

'Police bible' Bill may bring radical changes

Recent indications are that the Criminal Investigation Bill is scheduled for introduction in the Parliament in the Budget sittings for 1984, although the final form of the Bill has not yet been determined.

Since 1975, the Bill has been discussed and argued, at great length, at numerous public seminars and conferences usually with the Police on one side of the table and the law reformers on the other.

It is generally accepted that any changes to the eventually published Act will not be great and the Act will follow the format of the first reading published in November 1981.

The Bill reads like a policeman's bible, covering everything from powers of arrest, the investigation of offences, rights of persons charged, search and seizure provisions to the destruction of records.

The introduction of this legislation will cause changes to some existing police practices and procedures and new initiatives in the Bill will require the application of technology coupled with comprehensive training programs.

Possibly the most significant change to police practice will come with requirements of section 32 of the Bill which deals with the admissibility of oral confessions in respect of interviews for indictable offences. It should, however, be stressed that this is not mandatory, although certainly the 'spirit' of this section is that police should record on tape all such interviews and

provide a copy of the recorded tape to the person interviewed.

Other matters, such as the bail provisions in section 46, provide specific criteria for persons charged, which appear to be additional to some of the procedures currently adopted by state police forces.

This could cause an unacceptable burden for State police forces, and therefore, members would find the need to establish their own facilities for the charging and detention of prisoners.

Within the AFP, a committee has been established under the control of Chief Superintendent Col Winchester, and of which I am a member, with the task of taking all necessary action to prepare for the implementation of the Bill.

The committee has looked into various aspects of training, equipment and the production of an 'Operational Procedures Manual' covering all the practices and procedures required by the proposed legislation. This manual will be issued to all members and provides information on the legal aspects and obligations of the Act, with advice on the use of magnetic recording equipment and recording tape management.

The Criminal Investigation Bill has been seen as either restrictive or blazing new trails in modern law reform, depending on your point of view.

What can be certain is that when the Bill does come into force, criminal investigation techniques will change. For the better? Well that's the argument.

Combined operation



• Customs Liaison Officer Allan Woods, right, examines suspect import goods with AFP Drug Unit Officer, Detective Inspector Ken Curnow.

Close Customs link heads off problems

With 15 years of Customs experience behind him and an array of contacts that most police officers would envy, Allan Woods is extremely well equipped for his new job as Customs Liaison Officer with Eastern Region AFP.

In fact, according to Allan, it's this on-the-job knowledge and ability to "get to the right person" that will ultimately determine if the liaison function is successful.

"My primary role is to communicate ... to stimulate communication and to make available to the AFP the information which provides them with a better operational understanding of Customs," Allan explained.

The Customs Liaison role has existed for approximately two years, and officers from Customs are today outposted to the AFP in Sydney, the ACT, and Melbourne. In Allan's case, he is formally attached to the Intelligence Branch at Customs and operates from within the AFP Drug Unit on the 1st floor at Eastern Region headquarters.

"The assistance provided — not just from within the Drug Unit, but from throughout all sections of the AFP — has been tremendous," he added.

To indicate his role as a "middleman" communicator, Allan used the example of a case involving suspected importation of drugs into Australia.

"If certain information was received by the Drug Unit that drugs were being brought in, say, through the airport, this co-ordination obviously would be vital.

"My role would be to monitor the planning from the AFP end, relay information to Customs, and in turn keep the AFP alerted to any activity from our side.

On more routine matters, Allan has already found that his knowledge of Customs operations is very useful in resolving misunderstandings or confusion on the part of the AFP.

"By being here on the spot I've had an opportunity to sit down and explain procedures, thus clearing up small problems before they become big problems," he said.

Team steps up WA tax probe

Investigations into AFP Western Region's first major tax fraud case have been stepped up.

A squad was formed in Perth late last year to try to unravel a complex web of affairs in the case. It consists of squad leader Detective Senior Sergeant Rolly Sellars, of Adelaide, Acting Detective Sergeant Peter White, of Perth, and Detective Senior Constable Doug Child, of Melbourne.

Two taxation officers also are involved, with a clerical assistant and a firm of accountants.

The group will be increased

shortly when computer facilities are made available and operators employed to input information.

It is early days yet for the special task group, but one or two years has been mentioned for further work in the case which began four years ago.

• Members of the squad investigating the WA tax fraud case are, from left: Acting Detective Sergeant Peter White, Detective Senior Sergeant Rolly Sellars, and Detective Senior Constable Doug Child, with Detective Sergeant Doug Veith, who was previously on the case.

