

New Strategies

"In future as part of the overall strategy plan we will be dedicating more resources to recovering assets by using the Proceeds of Crime Act. The use of this Act will be intensified by the AFP because one of the best ways to hurt the criminal is through his pocket.

"We are working in conjunction with the DPP and Tax in this area. We are also constantly reviewing our electronic data processing systems to fine-tune our strategies for the future. There is, of course, close liaison with the NSW Police Fraud Squad and the Corporate Affairs Commission.

"Part of our strategy is to intensify the targeting of large-scale tax evaders and money launderers by using the conspiracy and defrauding provisions of the Crimes Act. The Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, currently pending, will also be a great tool for law enforcement. [The Act will cover international co-operation with Australia on criminal matters].

"We are constantly reviewing our training needs and liaising with the training staff in Canberra. Our detectives are encouraged to do external studies, such as law, accountancy and criminology," he said.

PINCHING THE WELFARE CHEATS

"THE value of welfare fraud successfully prosecuted and stopped is running at about \$2 million a year," Acting Inspector Bob Moodie (Major Crime Squad) said.

"Most of our inquiries are for multi-claim welfare frauds involving at least \$200,000 and we always have about four cases running simultaneously with four to six possible offenders. If it wasn't so serious you could almost say welfare fraud provides the bread and butter of this area because it gives us up to 70% of our work.

"We concentrate on conspiracy. This type of crime has always been with us and although the welfare authorities have tightened up the system there are still loop-holes."

Mr Moodie, an 18-year police veteran, said the welfare cases being investigated ran into millions of dollars and the Major

BANKRUPTING THE BUSINESS OF CRIME

"COMPANIES can achieve a massive market advantage by not paying sales tax of 20% to 30% and it is that practice by unscrupulous businessmen which provides the bulk of our work," Detective Sergeant Peter Baxter (Special Crime Squad) told "Platypus".

The squad is taking the fight to the unscrupulous. "The projected recovery value of taxation assessments issued following investigation by us in the past two years is expected to exceed \$45 million dollars soon," Mr Baxter said.

"At present a total of \$8.2 million is in the process of being recouped. We have tax cases across the board involving a myriad of products such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, amusement machines, video recorders and cars; in fact any product attracting a sales tax can be the subject of a Special Crime Squad investigation.

"The Special Crime Squad has existed in its current form since 1986. The original unit was set up with six officers in 1982 and now our officer strength is 31 with 14 support staff.

"The importance of the support staff cannot be stressed enough, particularly those from the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Australian Taxation Office and we couldn't exist without our computer operators," he said.



Acting Inspector Bob Moodie

Crime Squad had a very close liaison with the Department of Social Security Benefits Control Section. Liaison with of-



Detective Sergeant Peter Baxter

Mr Baxter, a 15-year AFP veteran, began his police career in England. He said the involvement of organised crime in tax evasion was a disturbing one.

"Organised criminals are all businessmen of one form or another and 'black' money is laundered through businesses. Those behind a number of the laundering operations we investigate are known to be involved in the criminal milieu."

Mr Baxter said that although operations could run for years, the Squad gave value for money to the Government, a sentiment supported by the Squad's commanding officer, Inspector Ross Bannister.

"We are helping recoup the Government millions of dollars which would otherwise have been lost and crime in this area is always expanding," he said.

Officers from the Director of Public Prosecutions was also close.

"This Squad, with 39 officers, is unusual in that it also does most of its own surveillance because the unit designated for surveillance work is generally tied up with other priorities."

The Medicare fraud workload had been lifted because the Health authorities now had their own investigators.

Mr Moodie said his officers had recently been involved in work outside their normal area.

"The case involves alleged pirate copying of videos. Video outlets in Sydney and the South Coast have been raided and 1300 videos seized. Several people have been questioned and the investigation could go interstate."