

Herald Sun

Union calls for state to adopt anti bikie gang laws as documents reveal arrival of two notorious outlaw groups in Victoria

- Geoff Wilkinson, Edwina Scott
- From: AAP, *Herald Sun*
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A Comanchero member. Picture: Craig Greenhill *Source: Herald Sun*

UPDATE 3.02pm: VICTORIA'S police union wants dedicated laws to control motorcycle gangs after a confidential police report revealed two notorious outfits are looking to set up new chapters in the state.

As exclusively revealed by the *Herald Sun* this morning, two bikie gangs - the Finks and the Comancheros - are scouring appropriate areas of Victoria to set up their first chapters in the state.

The police intelligence report revealed that the Comancheros have been looking for a location in Richmond or Port Melbourne, while the Finks are already operating a tattoo parlour in Port Melbourne.

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Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Simon Overland told reporters this morning there was nothing to stop outlaw gangs setting up clubhouses in Victoria.

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Police Association secretary Greg Davies says Victoria should follow the lead of other states - including South Australia and Western Australia - and introduce anti-association legislation to deal with bikie gangs.

Victoria may be more attractive to gangs who find laws in other states too difficult to operate within, Mr Davies warned.

"That seems to be the inescapable conclusion that we come to," he told reporters today.

"It's a little ironic that it was in fact the Victoria police force that proposed nationally anti-bikie gang laws almost a decade ago and that several other states have taken up the cudgels in that regard and Victoria hasn't.

"It would be easier and more efficient if there were specific laws."

But Mr Overland rejected the need to introduce tougher laws into Victoria, following the lead of other Australian states with anti-association laws in place.

"There is no law that actually stops people or organisations from coming to Victoria and setting up," Mr Overland said this morning.

"What we will do is if we believe that they're coming here for criminal reasons we'll obviously monitor that.

"If we get evidence or information that they are behaving criminally we will target them, we will arrest them, we will charge them and put them before the courts.

"I think we have a very strong range of organised crime powers here in Victoria.

"The thing that gets lost in this discussion, South Australia is touted as having the harshest laws - they don't have coercive powers, we do.

"And our coercive powers are operating, unlike the supposed tough on bikie legislation that's not because it's been struck out by the Court of Appeal."

The confidential police report should not have been released, Mr Overland said.

"If I find the person who's done this they can expect to be charged and if they're convicted we will then look at their continued employment within the organisation but I would expect them to be dismissed."

Earlier, Police Minister Bob Cameron said he is happy with the current approach, which takes a broad view of organised crime rather than NSW and South Australian laws which specifically target bikie gangs.

"I look at Simon Overland and see the reputation he made for himself in tackling organised crime and think he's the best person in Australia when it comes to this," Mr Cameron told 3AW radio this morning.

"We have the laws that he wants. If he wants any changes to the law, he'll come and see us."

Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner (Crime) Dannye Moloney confirmed police intelligence has revealed the Finks and Comancheros are spreading operations to Victoria.

He denied, however, that Victoria Police has dropped the ball by not having a specific bikie squad or laws targeting outlaw motorcycle gangs.

"The laws we have are tough laws and they are achieving the results that we want." he says.

"We are monitoring them very closely and we will be interfering with any issues with regard to any fight for territory."

A confidential police alert issued this week confirms that the gangs are setting up new bases in Melbourne.

The police intelligence report, seen by the *Herald Sun*, says the Comancheros and Finks - both well established in other states - are in the process of establishing their first chapters in Victoria.

The report by the Victoria Police gang desk says Finks members are already operating a tattoo parlour in Port Melbourne and are "likely to be attempting to secure a locally based clubhouse".

The Comancheros are reported to be expanding their membership by adding local bikies and trying to find a location for a clubhouse in Richmond or Port Melbourne.

"Neither of these gangs has previously held an official presence in Victoria, although they hold strong positions in other states," the police report says.

The arrival of interstate bikie gangs will revive calls for tougher laws in Victoria to control the gangs.

The State Government refused to join other states in strengthening bikie laws after a fatal brawl between bikies at Sydney Airport last March.

It rejected suggestions then that interstate motorcycle gang members would head for Victoria to avoid tougher laws in South Australia and some other states.

South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland, NSW and the Northern Territory have all enacted or are planning anti-association laws designed to disrupt and dismantle bikie gangs.

The Victoria Police Association said yesterday bikie gangs had been "invited to set up shop here and have happily accepted the invitation".

Mr Davies said Victoria's failure to tackle the problem of outlaw motorcycle gangs had created a risk of open warfare.

"If that information is right and both gangs set up clubhouses in the one suburb there's obvious potential for a vast increase in violence," Sen-Sgt Davies said.

"And won't that be a nice Christmas present for the good folk of Port Melbourne.

"We've ignored the problem and stuck our heads in the sand and now these gangs are apparently on our doorstep."

A senior member of the Victoria Police crime department told a federal parliamentary committee late last year the force had "bigger fish to fry" than outlaw motorcycle gangs.

But this week's alert by the crime department's gang desk seeks help from all police to add to the force's intelligence on the Comancheros, Finks or any other gang.

The intelligence alert asks all police to report details of sightings or intercepts of any bikie wearing club colours.

Police had acknowledged the presence of 19 other outlaw motorcycle gangs in Victoria before the arrival of the Comancheros and Finks.

- with Greg Thom

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