

CONFIDENTIAL
Anti Corruption Branch
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OPERATION AWONGA

Operation Awoonga was commenced on 7th March and concluded on the 4th August 2002.

The impetus of the operation was an allegation made with regard to the former Assistant Commissioner (Crime) Colin Watkins. The allegation was that he had interfered in an investigation into a paedophile ring in late 1993. In addition to this the allegations indicated that his motivation might have been that REDACTED, REDACTED REDACTED and that such interference was to protect REDACTED from police interest and actions.

The paedophile investigation was commonly known as Operation Deny that officially commenced on the 3rd September 1993. The stated mission of the operation order was to apprehend nominated targets. A precursive investigation into the main targets of this operation commenced in May of that year but was confined to the Christies Beach CIB (Child Abuse Section).

On the 10th September 1993 several homes in the northern and southern suburbs were raided and four suspects were arrested. Elizabeth, Christies, Darlington and Holden Hill CIB's were involved. A further raid was conducted interstate on the same day.

To the surprise of the investigators at the time, the operation was terminated once the arrests had been made. This was despite a number of exhibits being located during these raids which could have led to other offences. The members were advised to collect and collate evidence/exhibits relative to the nominated target and to prepare briefs of evidence for court. This order emanated from the manager of the Operation, Chief Inspector Peter Simons.

Some investigators suggested that Simons had been ordered by Watkins to terminate the operation. A rumour circulated during this time suggested that REDACTED
REDACTED

The ACB investigation did not detect any impropriety by Watkins. A number of members and former members were interviewed resulting in a confirmation that there were rumours abound regarding the termination of the investigation into the paedophile ring. Simons suggested that the operation came to a natural conclusion and although disappointed that more was not done the investigators mainly agreed that the operation was only to raid and arrest the four targets.

Former Chief Superintendent Bartlett was OC Crime Support Group at the time and it was he who penned the Operation Deny order. He briefed Watkins periodically but stated that Watkins made no important decisions with respect to the investigation. He agreed with Simons in that the operation had

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fulfilled its stated mission and once the briefs were placed before the court then the matter was closed.

Bartlett did concede that they were surprised at the scope of the criminal group and perhaps in hindsight more could have been achieved by prolonging the investigation. However other corporate operations were being undertaken in a similar vein (Operation Keeper and later Operation Torpedo).

Watkins did have [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and he was investigated in 1991 after his [REDACTED]. The matter was investigated but was not substantiated. The matter was filed in 1992. It is believed that the accusations coincided with a [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. The ACB investigation did not find any links whatsoever with the Operation Deny target group and [REDACTED].

Finally, Colin Watkins was interviewed and had no independent recollections with respect to Operation Deny. Watkins retired in about 1994 and now suffers Parkinson's Disease.

The investigation by ACB made only two recommendations, one was to file the matter and second was to provide a copy of the post operation assessment to Detective Inspector McCaffrey of the Drug & Organised Crime Investigation Branch. McCaffrey is manager of a parallel investigation with respect to other allegations not within the charter of the ACB.


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