New management techniques and restructuring for accountability in Australian police organisations

Jenny Fleming
Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, and
George Lafferty
University of Queensland, St Lucia, Queensland, Australia

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Abstract This paper examines the implementation of new management techniques in Australian police services since the late 1980s, within an international context of demands for greater public sector efficiencies and accountability. Through an examination of police organisations in Queensland and New South Wales, the paper demonstrates that the impetus for organisational change, particularly in the context of employment practices has largely been driven by revelations of entrenched corruption and police misconduct. As a result, organisational goals of accountability and cultural change have been the critical influences on the restructuring agenda. The paper argues that management strategies should be suited to the specific organisational settings within which they are being applied. It suggests that the process of restructuring and the emphasis on changing employment practices have led to greater potential for conflict between management and police officers.

Introduction
During the past two decades, governments in the major industrialised countries have sought to achieve greater efficiencies in public sector expenditure. New management techniques, derived primarily from the private sector have been introduced to restructure public sector agencies along broadly corporate lines, but with the important added dimension of accountability. These main catalysts for change have been common between western nations (Bryett, 1999). However, there have also been important national and regional variations in the objectives driving them. While the restructuring process and the accompanying reforms have reflected the principles of “new managerialism”, it is crucial to consider the contexts within which reforms have occurred if we are to appreciate these variations. For example, the raft of police reforms proposed by Britain’s Home Secretary in the 1990s must be considered against a backdrop of “recurring public expenditure squeeze”, a “seemingly inexorable rise in recorded crime” and perceived “deficiencies in
Australian police organisations

internal management” (Cope, Leishman and Starie, 1997, pp. 448-9). Similarly, the radical reorganisation of the Dutch Police Force in 1993 should be understood, not only in the context of “an increasing concern with effectiveness and efficiency in public service provision”, but also in relation to national and regional concerns about rising crime, police accountability and “massive corruption scandals” (Jones, 1995, pp. 70-99; Wintle, 1996, pp. 181-95).

This paper, then, examines the implementation of new management techniques in two Australian police services, Queensland and New South Wales. While there have been some differences between the two states, universal principles of public sector organisational change have informed both restructuring processes. The paper demonstrates that revelations of entrenched corruption and police misconduct have driven the respective restructuring processes for accountability and cultural change. Widespread public support for restructuring has largely overcome traditional police resistance, although the emphasis on transforming employment practices has generated greater potential for future conflict. While New South Wales has adopted many of Queensland’s strategies in relation to employment practices, the paper does not advocate the uncritical implementation of a single model of police organisational change.

Background to restructuring
During the 1980s, in response to government demands for cost-effectiveness and administrative accountability, the Australian public sector endeavoured to apply the “private sector solution to the public sector problem” (Dixon et al., 1998, p. 1). New managerial practices were implemented with a view to changing the internal culture of organisations, increasing operational performance, efficiency and co-operation. In a relatively short period of time these managerialist techniques came to dominate public and police administration, not only in Australia but in most English speaking countries (Bayley, 1994, pp. 124-40; Dixon et al., 1998, pp. 1-2; McLaughlin and Murji, 1997, pp. 84-5; Cope et al., 1997, p.448).

Australia’s policing system has one federal, six state and two territory jurisdictions. Before the 1980s, these police services were structured on authoritarian, para-military lines, regulated through strict organisational rules and legislation. Recruitment, training and disciplinary processes were conducted internally, with little regard to merit or aptitude. Senior officers preferred this system and, although there were some misgivings within police organisations regarding its effectiveness, there was considerable resistance to change at all levels (Palmer, 1994, p. 85).

The move to reconstruct police services as corporate entities (Bayley, 1994, pp. 130-2) was resisted vigorously by senior police officers, rank and file police and their unions. Nevertheless, the restructuring of police organisations was initiated in several police jurisdictions during the 1980s, with the introduction of such managerial practices as strategic planning, performance management and performance-based contract employment for senior executives (Palmer,
Budgetary considerations forced police organisations to adopt program management schemes and to decentralise command. As responsibility for planning and budgeting was devolved to frontline managers, budgetary practices, once concerned solely with the management of police numbers, were re-focused on the distribution of limited financial resources and operational outcomes.

In line with administrative trends a process of “regionalisation” (Boswell, 1994, p. 36) devolved responsibility, authority and control in order to reduce overlap and duplication, improve efficiency and strengthen accountability. Greater local accountability, autonomy, delegation and discretion replaced strong centralisation. However, changes to recruitment, training and promotional practices were resisted consistently by rank and file police and their representatives. Reforms relating specifically to employment practices could only be seriously embarked upon in Queensland and New South Wales following revelations by public inquiries of entrenched corruption and misconduct.

These inquiries raised various concerns and proffered many recommendations. This paper, though, concentrates on the anti-corruption measures endorsed by the inquiries and the effects these had on employment practices in the respective police organisations. The paper examines the pursuit of accountability, understood both as the demonstration of cost efficiencies and the need for more open public scrutiny of police behaviour (see Bryett, 1990). The paper also identifies what has been perceived as the presence of negative police culture as the driving force behind changing employment practices.

Queensland
Queensland’s police service is the third largest in Australia, policing an area of over 1.7 million square kilometres (slightly more than twice the size of Texas). Queensland police numbers are approximately half those of New South Wales, in a highly decentralised state with approximately twice the land area. Queensland’s police have been highly organised industrially through the Queensland Police Union of Employees (QPUE). Registered as an industrial union in 1916, the QPUE quickly established itself as a major participant in the administrative affairs of the police. Over time, the union came to play a pivotal role in decision-making processes as they affected employment practices within the organisation. Few successful decisions were made without some negotiation with the union (Fleming, 1995, pp. 98-115).

The QPUE has consistently opposed operational and administrative police reform. Its considerable influence on senior appointments has also been noted. For example, in the 1970s, with the full support of the state Premier, the QPUE successfully resisted organisational changes proposed by the Police Minister and the Police Commissioner. As a result of the QPUE’s campaign, the Minister was removed from office and the Commissioner resigned (Swanton, 1982, pp. 23-6; see also Fleming, 1995, pp. 105-11). As in other Australian states, there have been historically close links between police and government. This was
particularly evident in the QPF, which, like its UK counterpart, had enjoyed considerable support from a Conservative government reliant on its police force to enforce its industrial relations and public order directives (McLaughlin and Murji, 1997, pp. 85-7; Brennan, 1983). As a result, the government had insulated the QPF from many of the tentative reforms effected elsewhere in the state’s public sector and was widely perceived to have developed an unhealthy relationship with senior members of the Force as well as the union. It was not until 1987 that this situation came under scrutiny.

The Fitzgerald Inquiry
Following media allegations of criminal activity within Queensland’s 6,000-strong Police Force (QPF), a Commission of Inquiry, chaired by Tony Fitzgerald, QC, was established in 1987. The Commission’s terms of reference, initially limited to matters arising out of the allegations, were expanded twice, when evidence emerged that police corruption was widespread and part of a larger problem (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 3). The Commission’s Report (hereafter referred to as the Report) was tendered to Parliament in July 1989. It revealed corruption at the heart of the state’s political institutions and serious misconduct in the QPF (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 2-10). The Report recommended radical administrative and managerial change to the QPF. It identified the organisation’s highly centralised, rigid and hierarchical structure as a major factor in police corruption, obscuring lines of communication between ranks and hindering decision-making processes (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 363-4). Fitzgerald argued that “deficient” management and support systems, “subjective and restrictive” recruitment processes, poor education and training standards and the lack of “proper, professional and appropriate assessment practices [and] performance appraisals” had “reduced the ability of the organisation to change with society and respond to new problems and ideas” (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 363-5). The QPF’s organisational culture was singled out as “corrosive”, “totally unameliorated by outside influences” and a “critical factor in the deterioration of the Police Force” (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 202, 212).

The Report, in addressing these problems, incorporated a package of reforms intended to restructure the QPF in line with contemporary theories of public administration. Priority was given to management style, supervision, discipline and a range of changes to internal employment practices, including recruitment, training, education, promotions and transfers. Fitzgerald maintained that these reforms would demonstrate the QPF’s accountability, in terms of both community perception and its administrative responsibility to government (see Bryett, 1990). Further, the introduction of effective accountability mechanisms for both the organisation and individual police officers would assist in eroding “unacceptable aspects of police culture” (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 209-81). Fitzgerald criticised the QPF’s organisational structure for its “unnecessary concentration of authority and decision making in head office”, making it difficult for management to hold officers accountable for defined areas of responsibility (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 273).
Queensland had not embraced the public sector reform agenda quite as enthusiastically as had other Australian states. This was particularly evident in the QPF. This situation changed in the late 1980s, with an extensive review of the state’s public sector. The review made a number of recommendations relating to structural and administrative reform which were duly incorporated into the *Public Service Management and Employment Act* (1988) (Thornton, 1998). The Fitzgerald Report endorsed these recommendations but argued that they had not addressed some of the police bureaucracy’s fundamental decision-making problems (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 267). Fitzgerald recommended a flatter structure with “as few organisational levels as practicable between the Commissioner and operational police officers to aid communication, expedite decision-making and ensure that policies are relevant”. The proposed structure formalised delegation of authority and responsibility. Managerial positions were matched to organisational responsibilities, and to “methods of ensuring accountability and supervision” (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 273-8). Fitzgerald also endorsed a more “professional” approach to policing, whereby recruitment and education would play key roles in changing the QPF’s organisational culture.

*Implementing reforms for accountability: key employment issues: Queensland*

Prior to 1990, Australian citizenship, good character, a junior certificate, age, height, weight and chest expansion requirements were the central determinants as to whether or not the QPF would recruit a potential police officer. Good character was determined by the absence of a criminal record and whether or not a police officer had had any illicit entanglements with the opposite sex and/or was the parent of an illegitimate child. The recruitment process was essentially by way of written application, a written test and subjective panel assessment. A year 12 certificate could ensure a potential recruit a place in the cadet program. Applicants with less formal education were placed on probation (PEAC, 1998, p.7). Unlike its state counterparts, the QPF had no formal validated instruments for tests directly applicable to police work (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 245).

Fitzgerald argued that new recruitment strategies could counter corruption through stressing aptitude, in contrast to “the tendency to select officers most likely to conform to present Police Force culture”. The “investigation and verification” of all applicants was recommended to ensure the “honesty and integrity” of potential police officers. All obstacles to the recruitment of women and minority groups should be removed, with a view to recruiting people “better suited to the crime prevention emphasis of the Force” (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 245-6).

On the grounds that a reliance on base grade entry and internal promotion bred “insularity and parochialism”, thus reinforcing the negative aspects of police culture, Fitzgerald recommended lateral entry to positions in the organisation. This recommendation “was not popular with a staff who previously had a planned career path” (Bolen, 1992, p. 13). Fitzgerald also endorsed term and contract appointments and the phasing out of a cadet
system that directly recruited “young and impressionable” school-leavers vulnerable to the negative aspects of police culture. According to Fitzgerald, recruits should be drawn from a more diverse range of backgrounds to reflect more accurately the composition of the broader community (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 245-6).

These ideas were not new. During the 1980s, several authors had suggested a relaxation of police entry standards to attract more varied applicants and reduce the insularity of police culture (Bahn, 1984, p. 393; Reuss-Ianni, 1984, p. 56). Fitzgerald also proposed a review of integrity standards, the incorporation of ethics into all aspects of training and regular training for supervisors to ensure consistency of outcomes (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 245-7). On the basis of US research indicating a correlation between levels of officer education and police effectiveness, the merits of higher education for police were advocated, as were ongoing training and education for existing personnel (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 250). In order to dissipate the solidarity aspects of police culture, it was recommended that external qualified personnel should replace existing police trainers. This it was hoped would limit the transmission of the negative aspects of police culture to new recruits by the “police elite” (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 246-52).

Not unexpectedly, senior officers and executive members of the QPUE argued vehemently against these recommendations. Union executive member, Charlie Grimpel, for example, argued that experience on the street was more valuable than hours in a lecture theatre. Grimpel stated publicly that the QPF would lose many a good officer if educational standards were introduced (Grimpel, 1990, p. 4; Courier Mail, 1990, 5 February). Fitzgerald had argued against this “school of hard knocks theory” as “totally outmoded and unacceptable in a modern law enforcement organisation” (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 243). He also viewed the QPF’s promotion system as outmoded.

The existing promotion system, which prioritised minimum lengths of service at various grades, seniority and “general experience”, rather than effectiveness and aptitude, was identified as harmful to the organisational culture. Its practice was to conduct promotional courses to qualify officers for promotion. Under this system, Fitzgerald observed, “Queensland Police must typically have the necessary experience, undertake the necessary training course, pass the prescribed examinations, apply for vacancies and satisfy the promotion panel” (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 253). Fitzgerald noted the potential for favouritism and “promotion as reward”, a point he had also made about the transfer system (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 265, 255).

Fitzgerald argued that “the effectiveness of an officer” was deemed of little consequence and that little regard was given to aptitude, experience, educational standard or skill in the promotion process (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 253). As a result, according to Fitzgerald, “management becomes characterised by outdated, insufficient and inappropriate skills”. As well, the promotional system ensured that those who reached senior positions were invariably within Australian police organisations
a few years of retirement, giving them “little time to adapt to management requirements or to become familiar with one position before moving to another” (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 265).

Fitzgerald recommended the advertising of all vacancies, with senior positions to be advertised externally, as well as in the internally distributed Police Gazette. This was a somewhat radical proposal in the late 1980s. Like the UK and Canada, Australian police forces had historically “rejected the idea of developing a specialised managerial cadre based on highly educated candidates recruited at mid-management levels” (Bayley, 1994, p. 131). In order to circumvent the potential for promotion as reward, regional promotion panels “of more junior officers” were proposed. Promotion by merit, further education and performance appraisals were endorsed. Fitzgerald suggested an informal administrative approach to the promotion appeals system, widening the scope of appellants. Just as many promotions were perceived as a reward, so too were many transfers viewed as punishments. The introduction of formal regional procedures, with no appeal process, was recommended to determine transfer decisions (Fitzgerald, 1989, pp. 253-6).

Fitzgerald’s recommendations for the QPF were well received and created considerable debate within the community. Following the change of government in December 1989, the Fitzgerald Report acquired the status of a “holy writ”. The Fitzgerald recommendations on employment practices, particularly with respect to organisational change, came to dominate the restructuring of the QPF (Dalglis, 1992, pp. 1-10). In 1990, the QPF was renamed the Queensland Police Service (QPS), formally signalling the acceptance and permanency of Fitzgerald’s proposed reforms. The Police Service Administration Act passed in 1990 incorporated many of the processes relating to recruitment practices, the concept of merit, transfers, employment conditions and probation conditions.

The Fitzgerald initiatives constituted a watershed in the reform of Australian police services, particularly through the introduction of systematic accountability measures through the process of restructuring. It is highly unlikely that major restructuring for accountability in the QPS would have occurred without the the Fitzgerald Inquiry. It precipitated the defeat in 1989 of a highly authoritarian, Conservative government that had been in power since 1957 and had been highly resistant to institutional change. Its findings and the community support they generated had also, at least temporarily, dampened the traditional police resistance to organisational change. The incoming Labor government, free of these constraints, was able to implement change with relative speed.

A decade on, the Fitzgerald Report and its concern for the eradication of the negative aspects of police culture continue to determine the terms and direction of organisational change in the QPS. For example, in May 1999, the director of human services for the QPS argued for the enforcement of maximum tenure largely on the grounds of the “corruption prevention aspects” associated with such a proposal (QPUJ, 1999, pp. 9-12). Fitzgerald’s emphasis on the impact of
the negative aspects of police culture on successful police organisation has become the starting point for commentary on police organisational change (James and Warren, 1995, p. 8). Several years after the Report’s release the same rationale for organisational change would inform the recommendations proffered by the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service (NSWPS).

**New South Wales**
The 13,000 strong New South Wales police organisation had already been the subject of several inquiries and reports identifying instances of corruption, raising serious concerns about police behaviour (Moore, 1992, pp. 41-54; Palmer, 1999, p. 336). However, the apparent inability of police management to address corruption in the Service had led to the Commission of Inquiry into the New South Wales Police Administration chaired by Justice Lusher in 1981. The Lusher Report was “the first serious attempt in the history of the organisation to assess issues such as corruption, management, training and education” (Brien, 1996, p. 152).

Lusher criticised the organisation and management of the NSWPS, pointing to a hierarchical structure that “stifled its capacity for innovation and responsiveness”. He identified serious management deficiencies, problems with the seniority-based promotion system, a lack of delegation of authority, and a confusion of the roles and lines of responsibility (Lusher, 1981, pp. 3, 40, 59, 470). Lusher’s report was largely neglected for over two years but it became the basis for reforms begun later in the 1980s by Commissioner John Avery (Moore, 1992, p. 43).

While new management techniques had been introduced extensively in the New South Wales public service during the 1980s, the problems of police accountability and corruption raised by Lusher had not been addressed. Following the appointment of Avery as Police Commissioner, the NSWPS undertook a series of reforms. Avery, a veteran of the NSWPS with almost 40 years of operational and administrative experience, determined to address “institutionalised corruption” by dealing with it as a management issue. Accordingly, he encouraged responsibility and accountability through regionalisation. The major restructuring took place in 1987 with the establishment of four regions, along with the “progressive devolution of centralised police agencies and squads to decentralised geographically based patrols”. Other changes included: a flattening of the command hierarchy; the establishment of a Police Board responsible for promotions on the basis of merit, career development and training; the introduction of a merit-based promotion system and a restructuring of training and recruitment (Brien, 1996, pp. 170-85). In 1990, legislation was enacted to consolidate the changes and the New South Wales Police Force officially became the New South Wales Police Service (Wood, 1997a, p. 70).

These and other changes implemented in the early 1990s failed to halt the systemic corruption in the NSWPS. In 1994, in response to Opposition
allegations of police corruption, Justice Wood was appointed as sole Commissioner “to make inquiry into the operations of the New South Wales Police Service”. Wood’s terms of reference related to the extent of corruption in the NSWPS, whether it was of the “entrenched or systemic kind”, and the capacity of the Service and civilian oversight agencies to deal with corruption (Wood, 1997c, App. 38). As in the Fitzgerald case, following the discovery of “a serious state of corruption”, the terms were amended in 1995 and the Commission’s resources were concentrated on the sources of corruption and the urgent need to reform the Service. An interim report was compiled in February 1996 detailing specific measures “directed towards minimising or reducing the incidence of such forms of misconduct” (Wood, 1996a, pp. 1, 11).

The Interim Report cited several critical issues that “involve[d] the fundamental restructuring of the Service and . . . industrial relations”. These issues included: the introduction of skilled management at command level; the development of strategies to secure a fundamental and permanent change to the culture of the Police Service; the move to a yet flatter organisational structure to achieve accountability at all levels; and “the establishment of strategies to ensure that the problems identified . . . do not re-emerge on a cyclical basis” (Wood, 1996a, pp. 11-117). Even at this early stage of the Inquiry, Commissioner Wood had begun to draw the same conclusions about organisational change that Fitzgerald had in 1989.

The extent of the corruption uncovered by Justice Wood was not as unexpected as the Fitzgerald revelations had been. As Wood noted, “while well motivated . . . the past rhetoric, plans and structural change have not by themselves been enough to reverse, or even contain, the problem” (Wood, 1997a, pp. 80-1). The organisational culture needed to change:

... the significance of the code of silence, which is an incontrovertible and universal product of police culture, cannot be understated. The code of silence and other negative aspects of police culture need to be vigorously addressed as part of the reform process (Wood, 1997a, p. 33).

Wood recommended a number of initiatives relating to discipline, the external review of the Service and a “determined restructure of the Service and its management, in which corruption risks are identified and minimised, and all members of senior command to the most junior constable are empowered and given the confidence to reject corruption” (Wood, 1997a, p. 82).

The Interim Report had recommended structural changes in February 1996 (Wood, 1996a, p. 117) and again in November 1996 (Wood, 1996b, p. 3). By March 1997 the newly appointed Commissioner, Peter Ryan[1] had flattened the structure of the NSWPS by replacing the existing regions and districts with a larger number of regions. The restructuring sought to replace the outmoded military-hierarchical model, with “the absolute concentration on front line policing in local area Commands under a flatter management structure”. Justice Wood endorsed the new model and recommended that “there be a continuing review to further flatten the structure” (Wood, 1997b, pp. 237-43, 250). Like
Fitzgerald, Wood looked to internal employment practices as a way of “resist[ing] the virus of corruption and serious misconduct” (Wood, 1996a, p. 117) and reversing the negative impact of police culture.

Implementing reforms for accountability: key employment issues: New South Wales
Unlike Queensland in 1990, the NSWPS already had various recruitment initiatives in place to test aptitude and psychological capacity, with background checks for integrity and professional recruitment panels to conduct interviews. These initiatives were a result of the reforms introduced by Commissioner Avery during the 1980s. There were also sporadic attempts to increase representation from women and minority groups, despite some police resistance (Brien, 1996, pp. 159-85).

In 1997 the Wood Royal Commission cited the Fitzgerald Inquiry and other police organisations in its proposal for an increase in the minimum entry age for police officers to 21 years. As with Fitzgerald, Wood also recommended that “steps be taken to encourage through recruitment a greater diversity of membership of the Service” and proposed lateral entry to break up “inappropriate associations” and utilising skills and experiences from other Services (Wood, 1997b, pp. 257-9, 269).

Earlier, the 1981 Lusher Report had made several recommendations in relation to training but, according to Wood, the initiatives “had been lost in their translation”. Like Fitzgerald in 1989, Lusher criticised the tradition of police training police, particularly in transmitting the negative aspects of police culture. Wood noted in his Report that the NSWPS had basically ignored Lusher’s recommendations and essentially “maintained its dominance of the Academy” (Wood, 1997b, pp. 269-72). In his recommendations, Wood endorsed tertiary education, external civilian educators, and the inclusion of ethics and integrity teaching in all police training programs (Wood, 1997b, p. 282).

Wood contended that the “nature of the employment contract and its terms can have a significant impact on the development and control of corruption”. He encouraged the Service to consider fixed term employment either for all ranks or for all commissioned officers. As well, Wood suggested that the Service look at “compulsory supply of declarations” whereby officers would officially confirm, at the expiration of their contracts, that they had not engaged in corrupt conduct. Officers would also need to supply details of potential conflicts of interests in the execution of their duty (Wood, 1996a, p. 119).

In his final report, Wood apparently abandoned these ideas but still saw term employment as “consonant with the spirit of the reform process and Workplace Agenda principles, and with the objective of ensuring that the Service is staffed by officers performing to the best of their abilities and in accordance with standards of professionalism and integrity” (Wood, 1997b, pp. 265-6). He recommended that the Service “move to a system of term
employment, and enter into industrial negotiations to settle the terms upon
which it might be introduced”. In 1999, the Police Association of New South
Wales and the NSWPS are still negotiating the concept.

The Second Interim Report, referred to as “the Immediate Measures Report”
(Wood, 1996b, p. 1), endorsed the reform initiatives of the new Police
Commissioner, arguing strongly for the immediate implementation of his
“important management initiatives”. These initiatives included vesting power
in the Commissioner to control all appointments, transfers and removals from
the Service and the introduction of a power to “remove from the Service those
officers in whom he has lost confidence”[2]. This would be understood as “a
managerial and not a disciplinary procedure”. Reviews would be heard on
“administrative law grounds” only and there would be no appeal mechanism.

The New South Wales Police Association (NSWPA) argued strongly that
these initiatives were “unacceptable” on the grounds that “officers have to be
satisfied that their employment futures cannot be determined by rumour or
pernicious and capricious behaviour by line and senior management but rather
by objective assessment of their performance and competence”. The
Association contended that the process would cease to be an open and
accountable one, reminding the Commissioner of Australia’s obligations under
international treaty “requiring fair and equal treatment of employees in
dismissal situations”. The Association did not regard the administrative review
process as satisfying this obligation. However, the Association’s arguments
were disregarded and legislation to implement these and other
recommendations was tabled in parliament one week after the Report was
made public (NSWPA, 1996). Since then, the Association has continued to make
similar arguments, with varying levels of success.

Other employment issues, such as promotions and transfers, disciplinary
processes, management and leadership training, civilianisation and career
development were all considered by the Wood Commission in the context of
controlling the spread of corruption, ensuring individual and organisational
accountability and countering the negative aspects of police culture. In his final
report, Wood concluded that it would:

… be necessary for all current systems, regulations, procedures and Commissioner’s
instructions to be reviewed. Some will have to be rebuilt with a keener focus on the objective
and the need of the user, and with an eye to limiting any potential for corruption (Wood,
1997b, p. 216).

Wood had reached the same conclusions as Fitzgerald had in 1989 – changes to
organisational practices, particularly in the context of structural change and
employment practices would need to be considered in the context of limiting
the potential for corruption and maximising the level of organisational and
individual accountability.

Conclusion
New managerial techniques, derived principally from the private sector,
provided a framework for Australian public sector reform during the 1980s. In
line with this trend, police organisations in Queensland and New South Wales introduced such techniques as flatter managerial structures, decentralised decision-making and doing “more with less”. Yet throughout there has been a traditional resistance to police organisational change (Skolnick and Bayley, 1986, p. 211), particularly from strong police unions and senior officers unwilling to implement reforms that they perceived correctly would ultimately undermine their own positions.

Commissions of inquiry in both states provided further impetus for change in police management and operations. The very public nature of these inquiries and the degree of public support for their recommendations ensured that change would be effected with or without wholehearted support from the relevant parties. As this paper has shown, both Fitzgerald in 1989 and Wood in 1997 identified the reasons why systemic corruption flourished in the Queensland and New South Wales police organisations: unwieldy and complex bureaucratic structures, the lack of accountability measures and the negative aspects of police culture.

The public and media emphasis on the more sensational aspects of these inquiries has overshadowed the less exciting, but no less significant changes to employment practices such as recruitment, training, promotion, career advancement and general terms of employment for police officers effected by Fitzgerald and Wood. Amendments to existing employment practices were intended to increase individual and organisational accountability and to erode the insularity of the two police organisations.

There have been few systematic attempts internationally to eliminate police corruption through the introduction of new management techniques and accountability mechanisms. The notable exception is the New York Police Department’s attempts over several decades to eliminate corruption by the restructuring of their organisation. While several commentators (for example, Henry, 1994) have suggested that corruption is endemic and will resurface cyclically, both Queensland and New South Wales police authorities have claimed publicly to have substantially reduced levels of corruption through organisational change. As Henry (1994, p. 175) has argued, a major challenge for contemporary police services is to remain vigilant and be prepared to adapt policies and strategies to deal with new strains of corruption. Clearly, this is not possible through the uncritical implementation of a single model of police organisational change. As demonstrated in this paper, the identification of national and regional variations is critical to the development of appropriate policies and strategies.

Further, techniques derived from the private sector cannot be transposed in unmediated fashion to public sector organisations such as police services. Public sector accountability is usually more complex than the primary accountability of private corporations to shareholders. It is a truism that public servants are rarely praised but often criticised for their efforts to provide a public service. This is particularly the case with police, who occupy a highly distinctive position and enjoy a significant degree of operational discretion.
The nature of police work creates a tension in community attitudes, so police often come to depend on “their own” for support. Any feelings of frustration and low morale associated with employment practices specifically, can be vented through strong police unions and associations, often the last bastion of support for disenchanted members. The unions’ support, such as legal representation, provides mechanisms and avenues for police to resist and criticise policies and practices, to harness discontent and perpetuate both positive and negative aspects of “cop culture”.

Whether police culture itself can become the explanatory variable in any discussion of police corruption is the subject of much debate (see for example, James and Warren, 1995; Prenzler, 1997). Nevertheless, stringent and unwelcome organisational changes may well have the effect of throwing police officers back on each other for support in numbers significant enough to generate significant pockets of resistance among rank and file police officers. Police union journals and newsletters in both Queensland and New South Wales suggest an ongoing battle between the rank and file and senior management over the implementation of new employment practices. This scenario is being replicated in another Australian state, Victoria. In July 1999, the Victorian Police Association in conjunction with the Police Federation of Australia passed a no confidence motion in the Police Commissioner whose attempts at organisational change have been vigorously opposed by the rank and file (The Australian, 25 August 1999).

New management techniques do not adapt readily to the police context. Police cultures articulate very different values (such as loyalty to fellow officers) from those articulated in new management techniques (such as individual performance and organisational accountability). This contradiction indicates a practical limitation to the effectiveness of organisational change practices. The implementation of new management techniques has produced a management division between senior police and rank and file officers. If indeed, the police culture as a whole has been fragmented, it may be that a stronger “us and them” situation between police officers and their superiors is being created. Whereas once managers and police officers were members of a common, highly insular organisational culture, the restructuring processes have inaugurated a more formal employer-employee relationship. In such a situation, management will need to be very careful to avoid reigniting the very aspects of solidarity amongst the rank and file they sought to dismantle.

Notes
1. Commissioner Peter Ryan was recruited from Manchester Police, UK in 1996.
2. The 1979 Australian Federal Police Act (Th) so (2) (b), 2F has a similar provision.

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