

Neil Comrie, B.A., Assoc. Dip. C.J.A. Chief Commissioner Tel: 320 3654 Facsimile: 320 3366

Office of the Chief Commissioner Police Headquarters 380 William Street Melbourne Vic 3000

7 June 1993

Sergeant P. Mericka, 21776 Box Hill Police Station

Dear Sergeant Mericka,

Our Media Director, Ms. Jane Munday, has brought to my attention a report submitted by you of 5th June, 1993, regarding a matter referred to you from Mr. Connellan of the Fitzroy Legal Service.

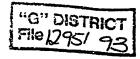
I commend you for the manner in which you have handled this matter, effectively resolving a potential complaint against police in a most satisfactory manner. If all supervisors in the Force acted in a similarly responsible manner, then we would have to spend a great deal less time in defending our position against what is often factually flawed criticism.

Keep up the good work!

Yours sincerely,

Neil Comrie,

Chief Commissioner.



#### **Internal Investigations Department**

### **MEMO**

From:

Assistant Commissioner, Internal Investigations

To:

Assistant Commissioner (Operations)

Date:

8 June 1993

SUBJECT:

Complaint through Alphaline - good work by Box Hill Members

The complaint from Greg Connellan was handled in a most professional manner. This was particularly so in view of the Legal Centres public condemnation of the Force which many members might have used to justify an insulting or less than satisfactory response.

While it is a less than satisfactory fact that people can jump to erroneous conclusions about police activities, the real facts and feedback to all involved have occurred shortly after the incident and obviously to good effect.

Please pass on my congratulations to Sergeant Mericka and all others involved. The Media Director brought the incident to my notice.

Gavin Brown ( ) Assistant Commissioner (Internal Investigations)

INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS

DEPARTMENT

No. 731 193

POLICE STATION
BOX HILL-3128

File No. 98593

OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

FILE #25/93



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Officer in Charge Box Hill Box Hill Police Station 5 June, 1993

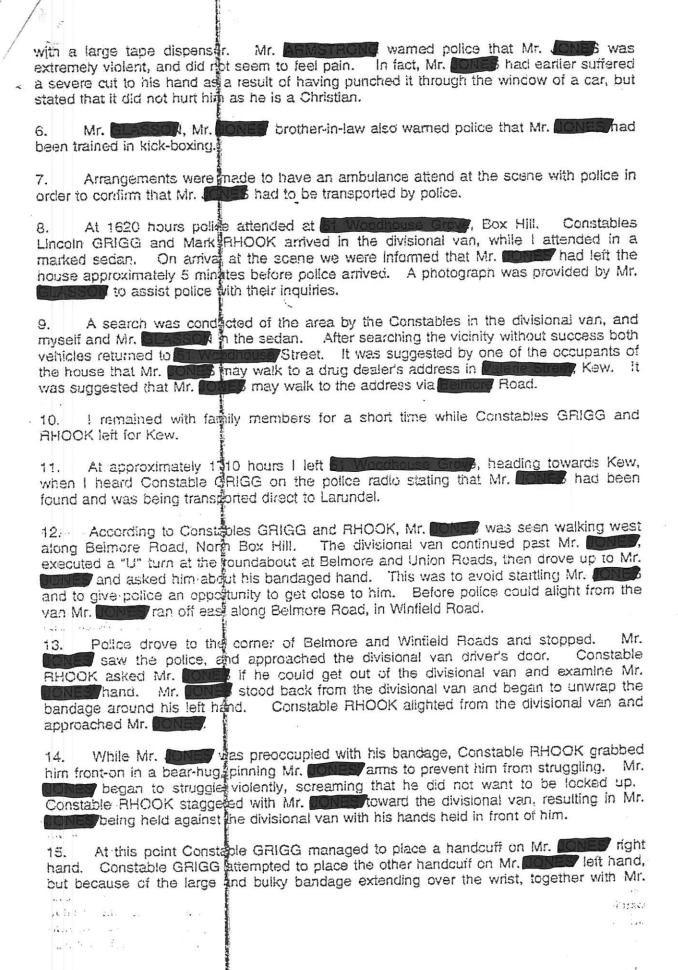
Complaint re' Violence Used By Police During Arrest of Offender

# The Complaint

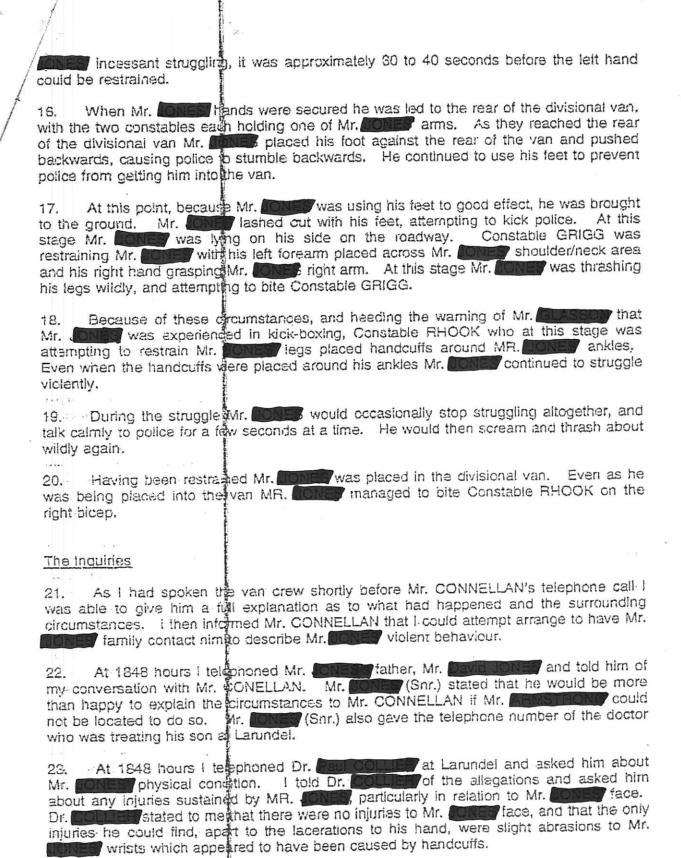
- 1. At 1840 hours I received a telephone call from Mr. Greg CONNELLAN (who I believe is a founding member of the Fitzrcy Legal Service) who stated that he was manning the "Alphaline" citizens' advice telephone line, wishing to report an incident.
- 2. Mr. CONNELLAN stated that a concerned member of the public had telephoned him and reported that he had just seen police at the intersection of Winfield and Belmore Roads arresting a young man for no apparent reason by placing handcuffs around the man's legs and hands, then bundling him into the back of a divisional van. He stated that the caller had also reported that one of the police had grabbed the man's head and deliberately rammed his face into the pavement before throwing him into the van.
- Mr. CONNELLAN stated that he had suggested that the caller report the incident to IH.D., but that the caller was reluctant to do so. (I must say that this is very similar to the incidents said to have been collated by members of the Fitzroy Legal Service for their recent report on police violence anecdotal material collected from people who are reluctant to make formal cumplaints). In any case, Mr. CONNELLAN wanted to ensure that as supervising sergears I was aware of what my men were alleged to have done.
- I have no doubt that this incident would have found its way into some report on police violence had it not been for the explanation given to Mr. CONNELLAN.

#### The Circumstances

watch-house of the Box Hill was suffering upper right cheek. He seemed, Box Hill North had Larundel Psychiatric Centropolice, without contacting	Police Station, accompanied by Mr.
police, without contacting violent. Apparently Mr.	the ambulance service because Mr. Was extremely had attended to Mr. In his capacity as Mr. had attacked Mr. by kicking and tage during the attack had attempted to strike him to the head



CHRISTING BENEFIT HERE



At 1904 hours I telephoned Mr. CONNELLAN and informed him of the comments of

Mr. ONE (Snr.) and gate him the name and telephone number of Dr.

1745

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CONNELLAN stated that he had spoken to the person who had phoned "Alphaline" and

25. At 2230 hours Mr. The land telephoned me and, after I had spoken with him, telephoned Mr. CONNELLAN. At 2240 Mr. again telephoned me and stated that Mr. CONNELLAN had told him that no complaint would be laid as both Mr. CONNELLAN and the anonymous complainant were satisfied with the explanations given.

# Conclusion

- 26. It is very rare that solice are in a position to placate those who are so ready to criticise us. Even when it is possible, time and other constraints prevent it. In any case, those who criticise are often more interested in the negative than the positive aspects.
- 27. On this occasion, I went to a great deal of trouble to satisfy Mr. CONNELLAN. Although police are not answerable to such people I saw this as a good opportunity because:
  - (a) I know who Mr. CONNELLAN is, the work he does and the way in which such data is manipulated by certain members of our community;
  - (b) I was in the fortunate position of being able to answer the allegations then and there without having to hang up and find out the circumstances;
  - (c) It was clearly a matter of potentially destructive misinformation in terms of what was passed to Mr. CONNELLAN by the "concerned citizen" who phoned him.
- 28. It is easy to see how a complaint which could have been made directly to police can be the subject of distortion when, instead, it is given to an intermediary. In this case the distortion takes the form of an embellishment (the ramming of a young man's face into the pavement) and an omission (the fact that the man was a mental patient with a history of violence and proficiency in kick-boxing).
- 29. Perhaps the next time a police member is interviewed or questioned in relation to anonymous reports of alleged police violence this incident could be used as an example of the way in which uninformed and anonymous observers, and those who listen to them can get it wrong.
- 30. For transmission to the Media Director's Office.

P. MERICKA Sergeant:21776

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