

Smart Justice

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Media Release

Government must set up independent crime stats body

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Ongoing concerns over crime statistics reporting by Victoria Police highlight the need for the Victorian Government to set up an independent crime stats agency in Victoria, says Smart Justice, a coalition of 22 leading legal and community agencies.

"It's a conflict of interest for Victoria Police to be responsible for reporting and auditing crime stats when their performance is measured by those same statistics," said Hugh de Kretser, Smart Justice spokesperson. "Police data is the main way Victorians assess whether crime is going up or down. It is the focus of public debate on criminal justice issues. It's critical for public confidence that this role be given to a trusted independent agency. New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia all have crime statistics units independent from police."

In 2008, the Victorian Ombudsman acted on a complaint from then Opposition Leader Ted Baillieu to investigate whether crime statistics were being manipulated. The Ombudsman's 2009 report identified problems with Victoria Police crime statistics and recommended that the Victorian Government consider setting up a crime statistics unit independent of Victoria Police to monitor, audit and report on crime statistics and trends. The Office of Police Integrity report released yesterday endorsed that recommendation.

"The Baillieu Government raised concerns over police crime reporting when in opposition. Its legacy should be setting up an agency so that public trust in crime reporting can be restored," Mr de Kretser said.

A Smart Justice factsheet "*Crime statistics – the real picture*" is available at www.smartjustice.org.au. Information on the NSW model is available at www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au.

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