

## **Police Professional: The world of hi-tech law enforcement**

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From Facebook to enterprise management, technology has become an essential part of day-to-day policing. Police Professional looks at some of the hi-tech initiatives being adopted by overseas forces.

A new records management system from Niche Technology is being rolled out by Victoria Police [Australia] in the wake of a damning report that criticised its “outdated information technologies that are unsuited to a 21st century approach to policing”.

This, said the Ombudsman of Victoria, George Brouwer, was “jeopardising the credibility of crime statistics, which go largely under-reported”.

In his Crime Statistics and Police Numbers Report released last month, the Ombudsman suggested that “antiquated, time-consuming administrative practices” were resulting in citizens’ experiences of crime not being reflected in the statistics.

The new LINK technology from Niche will replace Victoria Police’s Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database, which has attracted criticism in the past, including a report by the Office of Police Integrity in 2005.

Victoria Police’s information technology systems’ weaknesses were found to include incompatible systems, impeded information sharing, uncoordinated management information, variation in user interfaces, a lack of common data standards and an inability to link business intelligence with factual information about incidents.

The new records management system will be progressively rolled out from the latter half of this year.

Niche’s Records Management System (RMS) is currently used by 26 police organisations across Canada, the UK and Queensland.

Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner Kieran Walshe said the LINK project was progressing well and the improved security and audit features will increase data security for police and the community.

“LINK is an advanced system that will provide our members with an easy ‘link’ to secure, quality data. It will be more efficient and user-friendly and this investment in technology will meet the needs of Victoria Police now and for many years to come,” he explained.

The LINK project team worked closely with the Commissioner for Law Enforcement Data Security (CLEDS) on system security issues as part of the tender process.

Mr Walshe said Victoria Police will continue to work with CLEDS to ensure LINK complies with the required standards for the security of law enforcement data systems.

This has been prompted in no small part by the criticism in the Ombudsman's report that: "Debate about the integrity and accuracy of this data could undermine public confidence in Victoria Police and have a deleterious effect on the quality of public debate regarding law and order issues. These deficiencies raise serious concerns regarding the functionality and 'value for money' aspects of the information technology environment within Victoria Police."

Mr Walshe explained: "We understand that the community demands the collection, storage, access and use of information on Victoria Police systems be tightly controlled and that all privacy guidelines are stringently met.

"We have significantly tightened our processes regarding LEAP in recent years and conduct regular and thorough audits to identify misuse and make members accountable. Only those members who require LEAP as part of their core duties are now authorised to access the system.

"Our LEAP taskforce has done a significant amount of work across the organisation in educating members about their responsibilities. We have already seen a significant change in behaviour as highlighted by the notable drop in LEAP breaches in the last financial year.

"We believe the new LINK system, and further training for police on the appropriate access of law enforcement data, will continue to contribute to a drop in the number of breaches."

In 2007-08 there were 26 confirmed LEAP breaches, which fell from 47 the previous year. Another 21 information security allegations are still under investigation, however, the majority of these are not related to LEAP.

The figures highlight a notable drop in members checking LEAP for curiosity, training purposes or personal convenience, such as checking their personal vehicle registration details. Such incidents fell from 26 to 14.

However, there has been a rise in the number of allegations of improper disclosure of law enforcement data from various information sources to other police and members of the public, which rose from six in 2006-07 to 14 confirmed in 2007-08. Approximately 50 per cent of these allegations were related to LEAP. Another 12 allegations are still under investigation.

LEAP was implemented in 1993 and in 2005 the State Government announced that it would fund the replacement of the system. Initial work on the LINK project commenced in mid-2006 and is scheduled to be completed over a five-year period.

Implementation of the system and training for LINK users will be progressively rolled out across Victoria, over a period of 12 months, commencing later this year.

Australia's Queensland Police Service already utilises Niche RMS in its QPRIME system, which manages more than 330,000 crimes, 35,000 incidents of domestic violence, 3,700 sudden death reports, 29,000 traffic incidents and 145,000 street checks, as well as a wide range of other incident types. It was also the foundation for the delivery of mobile data and enterprise-wide information analysis.

QPRIME integrated 234 separate systems into one single application, which eliminated double-keying of data into legacy systems and in terms of operational policing needs alone generated time-savings equivalent to 900 officer years, or a ten per cent increase in effective time.