

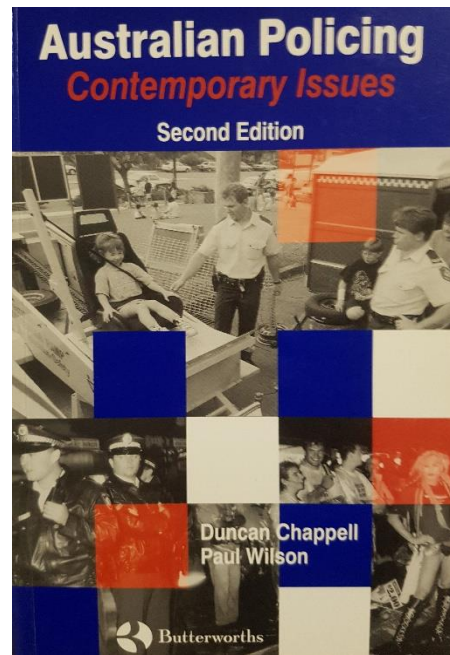
# Australian Policing: Contemporary Issues

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The nature of policing in Australia is changing. Australia, like other Western countries, is experiencing a privatisation of policing functions as the number of private security providers and companies increases. By the year 2000, in Victoria alone, there will be a ratio of private agent licence holders to police of 10:1. At present it is estimated that there are somewhere between 60,000-80,000 private security personnel nationwide.

The growth in private policing reflects growing demand for security and private agents. Fear and concern for violence and theft is causing more residents and companies to turn to personal crime prevention methods to protect their lives and property. As private policing has become more prevalent, there is a changing expectation of the role of police in our society and a delineation between private and public police functions.



As people and public police become more accepting of the functions of private policing, it is important that private policing powers are clearly defined and restricted. At present, it is difficult to determine the future direction of private policing in Australia and, if left unchecked, could fast become a law unto itself. As the private police industry grows, it is important that social order be maintained and proper regulatory safeguards are in place to ensure social accountability. Private police, like public police, must be responsible not only to their employers but also to the community they work within .

*Australian Policing: Contemporary Issues* is a collection of essays compiled and edited by Christopher Reynolds which address a number of the dynamics in policing in Australia today.