



UK undercover police teaching in Australia

In 1968 a young boy called John Barker, only 8 years old, died from leukaemia. 19 years later an undercover UK police officer called John Dines stole John Barker's identity.

Using the stolen identity of a dead boy, and a complete lack of principles, John Dines then sought to infiltrate British environmental and left-wing movements. John Dines wasn't working alone. He was just one of a number of undercover police employed by the UK Special Demonstration Squad using the stolen identities of dead children to infiltrate protest groups.

The SDS was established in 1968 and operated until 2008. Its purpose was to infiltrate left wing groups using undercover police officers, who provided intelligence to MI5. It has been revealed that the SDS used the names of at least 80 dead children to create the false identities for its agents. Many of these agents then entered into long term personal and sexual relationships with protest organisers and activists to gain trust and increase their access to information.

John Dines started attending Greenpeace meetings in 1987 as a member of the squad, using the name of "John Barker". As part of his undercover activities he, and other members of this squad, entered into close and often intimate relationships with the activists that they were spying on.

In 1990 John Dines entered a serious relationship with activist Helen Steel that continued until 1992 when he simply disappeared. Helen, who is present in the chamber tonight, spent years searching for Dines. In 2011 Helen was informed that he had been an undercover police officer.

The first case similar to this that came to public attention was portrayed by the police as just being a rogue officer, but this was not an isolated incident. 8 women including Helen, then took legal action against the police as a result of being deceived into relationships with 5 different undercover officers who infiltrated environmental and left-wing movements over a period spanning 25 years, strongly suggesting an institutional practice. There are not the only cases being taken over these relationships.



There have been a large number of legal challenges to the Metropolitan Police Service as a result of the SDS actions. This includes a £425,000 payment to a woman whose child was fathered by undercover police officer Bob Lambert when she was a 22 year old activist. When her child was 2 years old his father vanished, she only found out his real identity 25 years later through reading a newspaper article.

The Metropolitan police now accept this practice was morally and legally offensive. In a public apology issued in November 2015, they said:

“officers, acting undercover whilst seeking to infiltrate protest groups, entered into long-term intimate sexual relationships with women which were abusive, deceitful, manipulative and wrong”

It is hard to truly understand the impact that this would have on someone’s life.

In Helen Steel’s own words:

“I certainly feel violated by what they have done. It’s about power. We didn’t consent, and wouldn’t have consented if we had known who they were.”

“They’ve allowed this to happen in a unit of mainly male officers, in a culture where sexism is undoubtedly at play. Politicians and police officers have tried to justify it on the basis that it’s ‘necessary’, or that we deserved it in some way ... The whole thing just demonstrates institutional sexism. The assumption is that, as a woman, you haven’t got the right to make a fully informed decision about who you want a relationship with, or have sex with – and that basically it’s not a problem for police to use women in this way.”

Why am I raising this case in the NSW Parliament? The answer is disturbingly simple. John Dines is now teaching police in Sydney. He is currently attached to Charles Sturt University. Since at least 2012 he has been at the Australian graduate School of Policing & Security at that University, and is now Course Director for the Mid-Career Training Programme.

This program is intended to provide senior level guidance to police officers. The learning outcomes of the unit include providing students with advanced knowledge in areas including:



- Identifying and sharing good practice
- Human Rights
- Gender Sensitivity

It is offensive in the extreme that John Dines can be involved in teaching these matters to police in this State. This is a man who professionally and systematically abused human rights as a police officer in the UK and showed a culpable lack of gender sensitivity. He has no place teaching police in NSW or in any country that says it respects human rights.

We need to ensure that similar abusive political undercover policing tactics are not replicated here or abroad. This must start with an investigation into whether NSW police have been trained by any officers from these UK units.

As part of the Metropolitan Police's public apology, a spokesperson said:

"I acknowledge that these relationships were a violation of the women's human rights, an abuse of police power and caused significant trauma. I unreservedly apologise on behalf of the Metropolitan Police Service. I am aware that money alone cannot compensate the loss of time, their hurt or the feelings of abuse caused by these relationships.

...

The Metropolitan Police recognizes that this should never happen again and the necessary steps must be taken to ensure that it does not.

Was Charles Sturt University aware of John Dines past when they employed him? Are the NSW police aware of the history of this man?

Whatever their knowledge before now, this much is clear, he must cease any involvement with teaching police in this state, before a similar apology is needed by the NSW Police.