**MEDIA RELEASE 27 JUNE 2018**

**ACON RESPONSE TO NSW POLICE FORCE’S STRIKE FORCE PARRABELL REPORT**

The NSW Police Force has released the final report into Strike Force Parrabell, which reviewed 88 deaths between 1976 and 2000, and focused on whether gay-hate bias were a factor in these deaths.

The NSW Police Force’s Strike Force Parrabell Report includes an academic review and case summaries. Of the 88 case reviewed, 63 were declared solved, 23 remain unsolved and 2 were not reviewed. Of the 86 cases reviewed, 27 cases were determined to have had evidence or suspected evidence of bias crime – 5 of which remain unsolved. A further 25 were found to have insufficient information to make a determination.

In commenting on ACON’s initial review of the Strike Force Parrabell Report, ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill said: “The Strike Force Parrabell Report confirms a substantial number of these crimes were motivated by anti-gay bias. It is also states that there was a high proportion of cases where there was insufficient evidence to absolutely determine bias. These findings are alarming and speak to the extraordinarily high level of violent crimes that were directed to members of our community during this time, often going accounted for.

“We acknowledge the work the NSW Police Force have undertaken in reviewing these cases which helps to provide greater understanding and clarity.

“Of course, any moves to place unsolved cases under active homicide investigation would be very welcomed. Victims of these crimes, as well as their surviving loved ones and family members, deserve truth, justice and closure,” Parkhill said.

The Strike Force Parrabell Report contains 12 recommendations, most of which can be summarised as reinforcing existing processes, policies and training.

However, there are some new initiatives outlined the Report’s recommendations, which are encouraging including the establishment of a LGBTI conference for police, the development and implementation of a revised system for the early identification of bias crimes, and an expanded Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer Program (GLLO) program.

“The GLLO Program has had significant benefits for the LGBTI community and we support the recommendation for the program’s expansion,” Parkhill said. “But before we expand it, we would like to see a review – involving LGBTI community members and organisations – to enhance its effectiveness,” Parkhill said.

Following the release last month of ACON’s report [*In Search of Truth and Justice: Documenting Gay and Transgender Prejudice Killings in NSW in the late 20th Century*](https://www.acon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/In-Pursuit-of-Truth-and-Justice-Report-FINAL-220518.pdf) *–* which also included a series of recommendations – Parkhill queried whether Strike Force Parrabell’s recommendations go far enough.

“While we support Strike Force Parrabell Report’s recommendation for a revised system that can assist frontline, operational officers to better identify and record bias crimes, we believe this needs to be coupled with a strengthening of Bias Crimes Unit’s capacity to more fully respond to the needs of LGBTI community members. Bolstering the Bias Crimes Unit is among the recommendations listed in ACON’s report,” Parkhill said.

Among the other recommendations outlined in ACON’s report was an independent inquiry into the actions of the various arms of the criminal justice system to fully understand the impediments to justice during this period in history.

“Concerns have been raised in the past about whether the police can objectively review themselves and their practices, and an independent process would provide confidence that we have explored the issues and that any recommendations to ensure this cannot happen again are robust and sufficient,” Parkhill said.  
  
“Moreover, out of respect to the many victims and their families – not to mention the broader LGBTI community – an independent process would demonstrate that these are issues that our governments and institutions take seriously, which we learn from, and prevent from reoccurring.”

Finally, ACON is seeking a formal apology by the NSW Police Force to the LGBTI community for the inadequate or slow responses to violence throughout this period.

“We would welcome an apology from the NSW Police Force to the LGBTI community. This would send a positive sign to any same-sex attracted couple who are still too frightened to hold hands in many places around the state for fear of violence. Importantly, it will go a long way in healing the grief and trauma experienced by victims, families and other members of our communities.”