

CAROLINE JONES: Tonight - a unique insight into the frightening world of Melbourne's gangland killings and police corruption. Simon Illingworth is a young detective sergeant who's spent the last four years working for Police Internal Affairs in Victoria, weeding out crooked police. He's been commended for his work and brought successful prosecutions against corrupt officers. But Simon Illingworth says he's been isolated, threatened and bashed - not by crooks, but by other policemen. Now at the end of his tether, he's risking everything to tell his inside story.

SIMON'S MOTHER: Simon seems to be on a journey to nowhere, in a way, at the moment, because I think he doesn't quite know what the future holds for him.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: The city brings back memories. It does bring back a lot of the bad memories. You turn on the radio, you can't get away from it. There's corruption. Those sorts of things just continually bring back, you know, what you're about.

SIMON'S SISTER: For completely unselfish reasons, Simon put his life at risk. He didn't know that it would be as severe as it was, but he didn't do it for himself, yet his entire life has been completely changed as a result of it.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I do look back and wonder, if I had my time again, whether or not I would have just taken off, gone interstate and worked interstate, but I love Victoria Police. I like surfing here. I love this place. I didn't want to leave, I didn't want to go somewhere else. It's not in my nature to flee something, to leave it unfinished, and so I won't.

SIMON'S MOTHER: When Simon first started in the police force, Victoria was thought to be the best police force in the whole of Australia, absolutely no corruption at all.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I was nineteen. I'd come straight out of the surf into the academy. Looked pretty naive, I suppose. You know, it was something that was worthwhile. I mean, it sounds corny, but when you get interviewed for a police career, you say, I want to help the community, and I still believe that.

SIMON'S MOTHER: We were really thrilled, we were very proud. We thought it would be just the thing for Simon.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I could be an investigator and a detective, and I thought that this was an opportunity for me to live something that was exciting. There's an element of danger, everyone knows that, but it was just something that gripped me and that's why I thought, this is for me. Up to the first two years, it was everything that I wanted - you know, there was mateship, I was playing in the police football team, I had got information that led to the arrest of one of the top ten, which was just unheard of. I saved two young kids out of a burning building - it was a dream come true, everything was great. It was the job that everyone should do. Two years in and I ran into corruption.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: Early in Simon's career, he was rostered on duty with a sergeant who'd been newly promoted from the Armed Robbery Squad, who came to the station with a high profile.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: We thought, this guy's a legend. He was what I wanted to be. I wanted to become, you know, a gun detective. He asked me to take him around where the card games and the gambling took place. We went in there, and I started writing everyone's name

down and told them to leave the money on the table. All of a sudden, the till's ringing behind me and there's money being stuffed into a pocket. And I didn't want to look back because I knew who it was and I didn't say anything. The money on the table went into his pocket as well. I was compromised. I didn't even get a choice in it. And I thought, well, what's going to happen now? Is he, he's gonna offer me half. I mean, thankfully, not only was he a thief but he was greedy as well, and he didn't offer me half. We drove off. We went to the Armed Robbery Squad and he asked me to grab a bag off the lockers. And the bag was really heavy, and I knew - I didn't even have to look in it - I knew there were guns in it - nothing is that heavy. I didn't know what to do. And then he picks his own night shift crew, as they do, you know, you pick the people you can trust, no doubt, and, of course, who can he trust? He can trust me. Because I was willing to just, you know, passively take part in it, I guess, which isn't me, because I've always had the strength of character, but I was becoming someone that I wasn't. We ended up on this night shift and he'd hatched a plan to kidnap a criminal. He talked about having - put a boilersuit and a balaclava on. He spoke about a quarry, taking him to a quarry, and then I asked him what he was going to do, and he made this, you know, "boom". And this was going to be an execution.

SIMON'S MOTHER: He rang me up and said Mum, I've got to disappear for two days, and I had no idea what was going on, and I was worried, and I said Simon, what on earth's the matter? He said, I can't explain now, and that was the end of the conversation.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: Everything was going through my head. Do I get out of the police force and just pretend that this plan had just never happened? Or do I stick true to what I said when I was getting into the police force? But what happened then? I went to Internal Affairs and I made a statement.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: Whistleblower is a tag - it's like mobster, gangster. It's like having a tattoo on your forehead. All the criminals that you've locked up, all the times where you've put your life on the line for someone, that becomes incidental because you're a dog.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I had to go to court for the committal hearing, and I walked to court because I guess the situation was is that no-one wanted to drive me there. And I walked up and stood there whilst all the other police, detectives from the squads or places where he'd worked stared at me like I was some sort of a freak. And then one of the police took it to another level and pointed at his forehead and went "boom" in my face.

SIMON'S MOTHER: From then on, the police force was different for Simon. But he stayed there, he wasn't going to let them win. But he had court case after court case and it was really difficult. One of the barristers for Simon rang us up and said, we're so proud of Simon. He was so brave. This will be the worst thing that could ever possibly happen. But we didn't know what was to come. And, yeah, there were worse things to come.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: One night, I went out, as we generally did after finishing night shift. We went to a pub in Carlton. I went to take a drink and I was king-hit. I fell down to my knees. I was kicked in the head a number of times. I recognised him. He was a copper. It just takes me back, but I got onto my hands and knees and stood up. I wanted to show that a whistleblower had what it took. And then I fell. Head first. Into the floor. But I'm still here. Football and, ultimately, sport were really my escape from the policing problems that I'd had.

SIMON'S SISTER: Once I was standing on the side of the field and all of a sudden Simon goes running off the field. And one of the opposition in the grandstand was screaming out, you stupid whistleblower, and I guess it just gets to the point with Simon where the frustration's too much, and he went up to the guy and he said, do you know why you're yelling that out? And the guy had no idea.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: It was one of those moments where you just think, is this gonna follow me into every aspect of my life? I thought if I went into the corruption area, that I could actually do some good. I could hopefully make a difference because of where I had been and where I had travelled.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: We had a team of men, up to sixteen. We used to conduct integrity testing. It was a new way of policing. It hadn't been done in Australia before and was quite successful. Simon, as a young sergeant, was outstanding in his ability to analyse situations. He was very perceptive and quite focussed.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: Investigating corrupt police is probably the hardest thing that you could ever do, because it's not a cat and mouse; it's a cat and cat. Both of you have the same skills. They know the loopholes. They know to speak in code. They know to write things down and hand them to each other rather than speaking over a telephone. They know all those things.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: All internal investigators get names - there's toecutters, dogs. The current name is the filth, which I believe derives from The Bill, which is the English term for 'em, so it's a worldwide phenomenon, because you are hated.

ABC NEWS: The ABC has learned the investigation by the police's Ethical Standards Department isn't confined to the Drug Squad. It's believed out of nearly forty members under investigation, twenty-five are from the Drug Squad but the remainder are members of regional and suburban stations, including Brunswick, Prahran and St Kilda.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: In 2000, we undertook a search of the St Kilda police complex which yielded a number of exhibits - guns, drugs, other contraband that shouldn't have been found where it was. Simon was responsible for the analysis and review of that material. Once we pulled it together, he was assigned the investigation.

SIMON ILLINGWORTH: Things started to open up. It really - to describe it, it was like finding an octopus that was peeling off everywhere, and you were going down different arms.

ABC NEWS: After years under a cloud, Victoria's drug investigation team is being scrapped with an internal corruption review recommending sweeping changes to clean out the squad. One crooked drug detective has already been jailed, and confidential squad files stolen four years ago have never been found.

ABC NEWS - CHIEF COMMISSIONER CHRISTINE NIXON – VICTORIA POLICE: The Ethical Standards Department, though, was involved, and it is in fact their work that has found this officer.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: We weren't the most loved people in policing, and I think it was a victory for some of these people that we were closed

down. The publicity at the time was that police were being given these extra resources to fight corruption. But effectively, what was done was robbing Peter to pay Paul.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: People ended up going into different areas. Neil, who was, you know, a terrific copper and spent years in it - an old-school tough man, but very pro-active - I walked him out to the car park with a cardboard box of his possessions in it.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: It was fairly emotional for all of us. And Simon said to me that night, he said, if they treat you like this, at your rank, he said, how are they going to treat me or anybody else at this level? The system is very carnivorous.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: This nightmare that I am living with will continue. I am a task force of one. My investigation was given to me and me alone. If I'm not here, um, you know, happy days for some.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: Simon's gone from a close-knit working environment to an area now where it's like a ghost town where he's been plonked amidst all these empty work stations with another person up another end. That in itself tells the story - you've been cast off. You're superfluous to needs.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I'm not going to say why this has happened. People can make up their own minds.

ABC NEWS: Ms Nixon has confirmed the Ethical Standards Department is investigating claims a suspended senior detective gave a criminal a gun which was later used in a gangland killing.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: In the course of this investigation, there's some intelligence been provided that implicates a lot of prominent criminals, a lot of prominent police.

ABC NEWS: The now disbanded Drug Squad is at the centre of a police corruption investigation focussed on two officers accused of drug trafficking.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I'm unable to elaborate on what corruption I have found, other than to say that it's now a matter before the court. I've arrested and charged six people.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: One of the accused has pleaded guilty. The other five are out on bail.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: I believe Simon has reason to believe that his safety will be in jeopardy. We're playing for high stakes here.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: You don't know whether you're gonna turn a corner and get a handshake or a bullet, and I don't like that.

ABC NEWS: Police are investigating reports that a man found murdered with his wife in Kew last night was due to give evidence in a drug case against police. It's believed to have been an execution-style murder with gunshots to their heads. The dead man's lawyer says the killing points to a direct link between the spate of gangland murders and police corruption. There appears to be

no sign of a let-up yet to the spate of killings, the likes of which have never been seen before in Australian criminal history.

ABC NEWS - CHIEF COMMISSIONER CHRISTINE NIXON – VICTORIA POLICE: It's a very difficult area to work in, police corruption. I think what we're seeing is a whole range of tactics being used both by perhaps the police under investigation, by in some cases their lawyers, I think, and others who perhaps don't want this whole process to continue.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I have had a drink with a friend, and I have had the target of my corruption investigation walk through the hotel where I'm at with a person who's now accused of one of the underworld killings.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: They weren't there for the good beer or the good company. That was a firm message, obviously, to intimidate.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I've got this underworld figure staring at me. And I'm thinking, how vulnerable am I?

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: I think it's devastated him. You have this air of invincibility. After a while, that veneer wears thin and the fear and that becomes an ulcer inside you.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: Someone in the police, I believe, has risked my life and my family's lives, for whatever reason, by handing over my address to criminals.

ABC NEWS: Tonight, bullets in the letterbox as a top cop concedes a link between underworld murders and police corruption. It's alleged the bullets, similar to these, were police-issue, etched with the names of an investigator and his wife and put in their letterbox on.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I see today, you know, the bullets in the mail and all that sort of thing, and I feel - I truly feel for those people.

ABC NEWS: It's understood that one member of the Cija Task Force has taken stress leave and another may do so. However, police say they do have measures in place to protect their staff.

SIMON'S SISTER: I think the calm exterior that Simon portrays was ruffled with the recent threats - all the things that would run through your mind about, what's going to happen next? What do I have to be aware of? What can I possibly do to ensure my safety?

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I have had to sell my home. I have had to carry a firearm.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: He has had electronic and physical surveillance of his house and his being and his family. It becomes a major factor in your life, in your relationship. You don't want to go out - oh, someone might see me.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I'm unable to settle in one place and then have to move again. I've probably moved, I don't know, three or four times in the last few months

SIMON'S MOTHER: It's really difficult for me at the moment, I think, to see him so upset. I just want him to do something else.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: My dream was always to be a detective. But I've got to a point where I don't think that I'm capable of doing it anymore. I don't believe that, physically nor mentally, a person can continue being put in the situations that I've been put in. You know, it's like you've been at war for sixteen years. That's what I feel like. I am not in a position where I can walk out of the police force and wipe my hands. I've got two years of trials, at least, so if I chose to leave, I'd still be called as a witness in those trials anyway, and I'm not about to walk away from three years' work.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: Simon is a natural leader. It would be a loss for the Victoria Police to see him go. The issue is that he has a lot to offer.

DET SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: I have come to realise that I would prefer now to educate many rather than incarcerate a few. It's these small compromises all the way through, we need to prevent that. So that they're not falling into this trap of realising one day, hey, I'm a copper and I'm also a drug dealer.

NEIL O'SULLIVAN – RETIRED DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT: Simon's taking a huge gamble in telling his story. Again, it's a display of his openness and his commitment to the Victoria Police. It's more about the Victoria Police, about it cleansing itself and moving on, and he should be part of the process of moving on.

DET. SGT SIMON ILLINGWORTH: For myself, I have found someone who's just a wonderful person. My dream is to have a family, ultimately, and have a house that has a white picket fence and not something that is to keep people out - it's just to keep children in, you know. Ultimately, I'd like to live like everyone else does and not, you know, as a whistleblower. When people from my work have said to me, you know, don't let them win, don't let them win - well, the win is over for me. I think, ultimately, the win is people viewing this and either deciding to change or staying on the right side of the rails and doing the right thing. That would be a win for me. Things are on their way up, you know. I hope it's just inevitable now that there will be some sort of corruption commission and it will take the weight off people like me. Yeah, I've always thought that good will defeat evil and here we go.