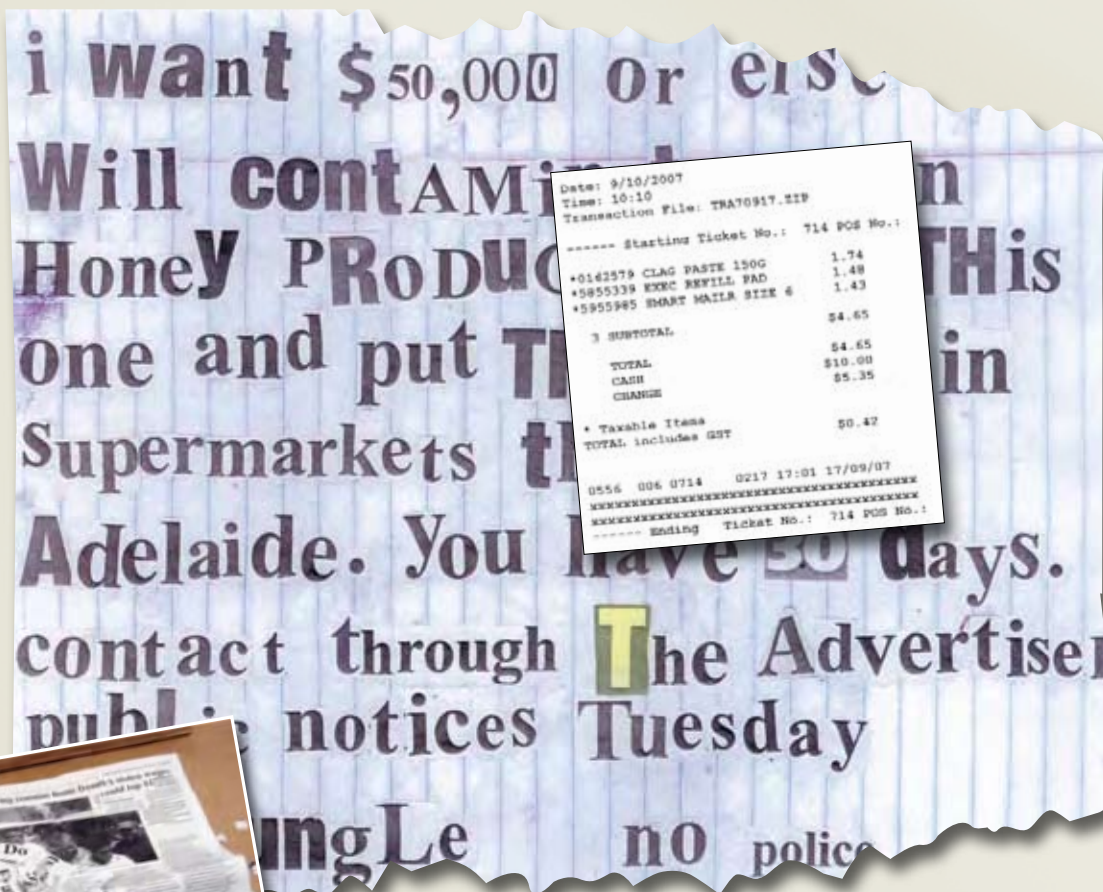


Solving the sticky cases

The bitterness of an extortion threat was in stark contrast to the sweetness of one Queensland honey maker's popular product.

When staff at the company's Brisbane headquarters opened a bulky package they found a note composed from letters cut out of newspapers. Signed 'Mr Bungle', it gave the manufacturer 30 days to pay \$50,000. Failure to do so would see jars of contaminated honey on the shelves of Adelaide retailers. The threat was accompanied by a tainted jar of honey.

The company contacted police who launched a major crisis management response led by the Queensland Police Service in partnership with law



Investigators from the Organised Crime Group found a receipt for glue, a writing pad and an envelope in the extortionist's possession, along with cut up sections of a newspaper, all used in the package sent to the honey manufacturer.



enforcement and health authorities in Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales.

The team met daily to assess the situation and were responsible for deciding that, on the basis of the known facts and a comprehensive risk assessment, there was no justification for a recall.

They were completely assured of consumer safety and believed that a recall on all honey products Australia-wide could have devastating consequences for a number of companies in the Australian grocery industry and also prejudice the outcome of the investigation.

The police response was headed up by the Organised Crime Investigation Unit (OCIU) who deal with some of the state's most complex crimes including major and organised crime, extortion, terrorism, money laundering, firearm trafficking and product contamination.

The Unit has, undoubtedly, the most diverse charter of those falling under the auspices of the State Crime Operations Command. They also deal with armed robberies that involve repeat offenders or a certain level of complexity. This includes all attacks on what the OCIU calls 'hard targets'—banks, TABs, post offices and taverns.

OCIU's Officer in Charge Detective Inspector Rob Weir said the Unit took a strategic approach,

working closely with police officers across the state in pan-regional investigations and supplying their expertise where required.

"The Unit is highly reactive and extremely mobile," Detective Inspector Weir said.

"In fact we've just had officers return from an investigation in Central Queensland. We often coordinate with other Units and police regions throughout Queensland.

"For instance, when we were investigating the arson attack on the clubhouse of outlaw motorcycle gang the Rebels in 2007, we brought in arson investigators. Motorcycle gangs are definitely within our scope, however in this case we needed to draw on the Arson Unit's specific expertise."

Another example relates to the investigation of car rebirthing—the

illegal practice of buying stolen cars, refitting them and then selling them on as legitimate vehicles.

"Most car rebirthing operations are multi-phased. They involve a range of people and sometimes even external agencies," Detective Inspector Weir said.

"To combat crimes like this we work closely with vehicle inspection agencies and Queensland Transport. We also foster close ties with the heavy vehicle industry. These cases can often move interstate and it is important to have strong intelligence relationships with our interstate counterparts."

Detectives in the OCIU are drawn from all over Queensland and are highly capable, able to deal with protracted investigations, and often come with their own individual interests and expertise.