

## **Police swoop on Comanchero bikie strongholds across Victoria**

### **Jamie First, Samantha Landy, Mark Buttler**

Police have carried out dozens of dramatic raids on Comanchero strongholds across Victoria.

A total of 62 properties including clubhouses, private homes, gymnasiums and tattoo parlours were targeted by police early this morning.

A Victoria Police spokeswoman said there had been a number of arrests.

Among the properties being raided is the Comanchero clubhouse Thistlethwaite St, South Melbourne.

Police have also reportedly swooped on locations in Kilsyth, Frankston and Dandenong North.

Some of the eastern suburbs properties raided are believed to be connected to Comanchero state president Mick Murray.

The homes of key members of the gang have been targeted as part of the massive operation.

Officers congregated before dawn at a number of rendezvous points around Melbourne.

The elite special operations group was used for what were deemed to be some high-risk entries to properties.

It is believed police are searching for weapons and drugs, and any other evidence of criminal activity.

Echo Taskforce and Public Order Response officers police were at the scene in South Melbourne early this morning.

Thistlethwaite St was briefly blocked off as detectives carried out paper bags and boxes of evidence.

Public Order Response officers stood guard around the roadblock before leaving just after 7.30am.

There were about a dozen police on scene, in addition to plain clothes Echo Taskforce members.

People who work nearby the nondescript clubhouse said large gatherings were often held there.

One worker, who did not wish to give his name, said it was common for at least 40 bikies to meet there on Thursdays and Saturday afternoons.

“Sometimes they have barbecues,” he said.

“We don’t have any trouble with them. They make a lot of noise when they all gather — motorcycle noise.

“Apart from that, we don’t really see them.”

The worker said he often saw undercover police in the area monitoring the clubhouse.

Tim Giles, who works across the street from the clubhouse, said he had heard from a colleague that “every now and then” about 50 club members turned up on their motorbikes, parking them all over Thistlethwaite St, for meetings.

But his workmate, Peter Stoll, said he had never seen them.

“I didn’t even know (the clubhouse) was there,” he said. “It’s just a black building.”

The warrants are part of ongoing Victoria Police raids in relation to criminal bikie gang activity.

Victoria Police tweeted about 6.45am that there was a “big operation underway this morning” involving outlaw motorcycle clubs.

Last year, police conducted widespread raids on Hells Angel clubhouses as part of an ongoing investigation into criminal bikie gang activity.