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NEW VIC LAWS TARGET BIKIE
GANG DEFENCESMelissa Jenkins, AAP
Updated April 17, 2013, 6:16 pm

AAP ©

Enlarge photo

Clubhouses of bikie gangs the Hells Angels and the Bandidos will be the first targeted by Victorian police if they are granted new powers to remove fortified walls from criminal premises.

Under legislation introduced into state parliament on Wednesday, police will be able to apply for a court order to have fortifications, like walls and other defences, removed from bikie gang property.

Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner Graham Ashton said police have identified about half a dozen sites that are of interest in relation to fortification.

"The Bandidos and Hells Angels being at the top of that list," Mr Ashton said.

If enacted, the laws could stop criminals from destroying evidence while authorised police searches are delayed by heavily-fortified building entrances.

"That gives us the opportunity to get into these premises faster and avoid any destruction of evidence," Mr Ashton said.

The legislation applies to all criminal organisation premises, not just bikie clubhouses.

Officers will have to convince a magistrate that the buildings are being used for criminal activity before permission to remove the walls is granted.

Once an order is granted, the organisation will then have three months to comply.

Attorney-General Robert Clark said the cost of removing the fortification would be billed to the owner or occupier of the premises.

Mr Ashton said he hoped police would be able to use the laws within a couple of weeks if they are passed by parliament.

The government last year introduced laws to empower police to pre-emptively strike against criminal bikie gangs.

Under those laws, a court can make a control order banning members of that group from associating or participating in gang activities, including riding together and wearing their club colours and emblems.

Laws cracking down on criminal bikie groups in South Australia and NSW were struck down by the High Court after successful challenges by bikie gangs.

Mr Clark said he was confident both the control order and anti-fortification legislation would withstand legal challenge.

"We are very confident that these laws and our criminal organisation control act will not be subject to any successful challenge," he said.

There will be penalties of up to two years' jail for obstructing the removal of fortifications that have been ordered by the courts.

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