



Drummoynes PI Warren Mallard.
Photo: Sean Masterson

Private eyes in dark

Good private investigators want the bad ones weeded out but the State Government is not helping, the industry claims. **Report** KIM SHAW

The State Government has announced a major crackdown on private investigators with increased fines for unscrupulous operators and a register of licensed agents.

But the problem is a lack of law enforcement, not legal loopholes, according to the industry.

Police Minister John Watkins said an overhaul of the 41-year-old laws governing the industry would usher in tougher penalties and jail terms for harassment, deceptive conduct and other "rogue" activity.

Yet Drummoynes private investigator of 23 years Warren Mallard said the announcement was "spin".

"We've been begging the government for seven years to introduce legislation, legislation that we have consulted them on and made submissions about," he said.

"We would like the police to take an interest in our industry."

A former industry body president, Mr Mallard said he feared the Government had

"glossed over" the recommendations of the private investigator industry.

He said the review was long overdue, yet flawed in that it relied on police enforcement which has traditionally ignored the industry.

"I've been here 23 years and no police have ever called upon my office to inspect my records or licence. The courts are just as inept. They are issuing licences on a regular basis, contrary to the legislation," Mr Mallard said.

Mr Mallard said the law required a private investigator to train at TAFE, yet Vocational Training Accreditation Board course graduates were obtaining licences.

He said there were many unscrupulous operators conducting business without police interference.

The industry had called for several changes including tightening licence requirements and access to police records.

"We are like carpenters without saws," Mr Mallard said.