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Police chief goes on the offensive

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AFTER months of flak from the Crime and Misconduct Commission, Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson yesterday returned fire.

In a decisive show of leadership that had been criticised by new CMC chairman Martin Moynihan, Mr Atkinson laid down the law to his officers.

While many reforms related specifically to the Glitter Strip, where a handful of police had allegedly gone "off the rails", others had statewide ramifications.

They included a review of

police recruitment standards which Mr Atkinson admitted had slipped and allowed law-breakers into the service.

The announcement of what Mr Atkinson described as "an unprecedented raft of measures" designed to stamp out misconduct and corruption came in the wake of the most turbulent period in his 11-year tenure as commissioner.

He was told to "step up" by the CMC in its scathing report on the police investigation into the Palm Island death in custody scandal.

He has also had to deal with serious allegations against Gold Coast police, including

claims some were associating with criminals, taking drugs, misusing confidential information and receiving free drinks at nightclubs.

There have also been other scandals and more than 20 officers charged with drink-driving over the past two years.

The police union, which has also been at loggerheads with Mr Atkinson and the State Government over a new pay claim, yesterday said his reforms showed "total contempt" for undermanned Gold Coast police.

But at least he found an unlikely friend in the CMC, which welcomed the reforms.