

Now for the follow-through on political commitments



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In the lead-up period to a state election it is incumbent upon representative bodies to seek commitments from any political parties which might form government. I made and expanded on this point in *Members' issues on the decision-makers' tables* (February 2010).

The Police Association sought and won commitments for members from the Labor, Liberal and Family First parties. We engaged robustly but also strategically in the political process so that the decision-makers knew, understood and would consider the specific working needs of police officers.

Accordingly, the policies of all three political parties came to address the core issues of police resourcing, information technology and equipment.

Now that the election result is clear, and the Rann Labor Government has

begun its third term, one might consider the commitments made.

Resources

The Government (and Opposition) pledged to recruit 300 police officers over and above natural attrition over the next four years. In light of the extra police the community needs to meet the heavy demands of current law-and-order policies, and associated amendments to the law, that commitment was vital.

Information technology

In February, the Government announced the implementation of stage one of a total overhaul of SAPOL's ageing information management system, at a cost of \$13 million.

Stage one will include a new system which supports the enforcement of the

Serious and Organised Crime (Control) Act – and other legislation which targets organized crime – and a system to replace the out-of-date Police Custody Management system.

For front-line police, the replacement of legacy systems for apprehension reports, incident reports, warrants, case management and so on, is the key to the alleviation of member frustration and administrative burdens. Stage two, which appears to be some years off, will encompass the replacement of those systems.

Equipment

Hand-held Computers and Fingerprint scanners

A number of portable data retrieval devices and fingerprint scanners will be provided to front-line police. The scanners will allow fingerprints to be captured in

the field and compared with the national database.

The devices are designed to allow police on the street to capture and process fingerprints taken from arrested suspects and receive details of any of the criminal history of those suspects in little more than a minute.

The hand-held computers are similar to the mobile data terminals in police fleets and will assist motorcycle, bicycle and mounted police.

Star Chase – Pursuit Management System

This system – which police use in the US states of California and Arizona – is to be trialled in South Australia. From a police car, an officer can activate the Star Chase from which a GPS tracking device shoots out onto a car in which a suspect might be trying to flee.

Dispatchers can then track the suspect's vehicle via website mapping, allowing the pursuing police to back off to a safe distance.

Automated Number Plate Recognition cameras

The Government will purchase an additional 20 mobile ANPR cameras. The ANPR camera is a powerful crime-fighting tool. Law enforcers have lauded it as a technological device capable of playing a significant part in reducing the road toll and cutting road-related crime.

It can also serve to monitor vehicle activity in and around high-risk bushfire areas during days of extreme fire danger.

Legislative amendments

The Rann Government will, as announced at the Police Association annual delegates' conference last year, amend legislation to protect police officers and emergency workers driving at high speeds when carrying out their duties and acting in accordance with directions. This limited exemption does not mean that police or other emergency workers can drive without due care or in a manner which is dangerous.

The Government will also amend legislation so as to allow for the identification of suspects by way of

photographs or video in lieu of physical line-ups.

On serious crime, the Government has committed to amend the Evidence Act to codify and improve the law with regard to similar-fact evidence; longer incarceration for child sex offenders; and limiting the ability of courts to suspend sentences for serious, violent and repeat offenders.

Ancillary issues

The Government has also committed to:

- » Investigate ways of removing time-consuming legislative and administrative requirements of police.
- » Investigate transferring functions such as the care of prisoners in police custody to the Department for Correctional Services.

Ministerial portfolios

MPs Michael Wright and David Ridgeway have retained their portfolios of Minister for Police and Opposition spokesperson for police respectively.

Family First MLC Robert Brokenshire is his party's police spokesperson. Family First has pledged to pursue legislation which will bring about mandatory sentences for those guilty of serious assaults on police.

We look forward to working with these gentlemen, indeed all politicians in both the houses of parliament, to see that commitments are met and that the legislative agenda of the Police Association is progressed in a timely way.

The association has written to former attorney-general Michael Atkinson to acknowledge his commitment to law and order as both the attorney and Opposition member, when he was equally committed to the fight against serious and organized crime.

The association now looks forward to working with new attorney-general John Rau to progress law-and-order issues which are important to police officers and the community they serve.