

Two jurisdictions are moving forward on uniforms, while the Police Association (Victoria) wants political leaders to “get serious” about “investing in more police resources”.

Least money spent on Victorian Police

The Police Association (Victoria)

Victoria has spent less on policing than has any other state or territory in Australia for the sixth year in a row, according to the latest Productivity Commission report on Government services.

For years members have been telling the Police Association that they are over-worked and under-resourced. They have complained about the lack of *corro* days, the fact that they rarely get weekends off unless they are on days off after a seven-night night shift. Foot patrols are rare and proactive operations are at a minimum.

In 2009-10, state spending on policing services per person in Victoria was just \$317 – \$38 per head less than the national average of \$355. This is the sixth consecutive year that the Victorian Government has spent the least on police services.

Victoria also has the lowest number of police staff per 100,000 of the population with only 259 compared with the national average of 297.

Things are no better when it comes to the number of operational police per 100,000 people in Australia – just 206 compared with the national average of 250.

While Victoria isn't the only state in which spending is below the average, it is by far the worst on every level assessed by the Productivity Commission.

“This is now the sixth year in a row that Victoria holds the dubious ‘honour’ as the national wooden-spooner when it comes to police numbers and dollars spent on policing per head of

population,” Police Association secretary Greg Davies says.

“It’s no wonder our members struggle to put a patrol van on the road. We can never hope to arrest the growing tide of street violence tarnishing our state’s reputation unless there is a substantially greater police presence on our streets.

“This can’t happen unless this state’s political leaders get serious and start investing in more police resources – now.”

Northern Territory Police Association

New commissioner

Commissioner John McRoberts, who took up his new role last December, has already committed to a long overdue review of the NT police uniform. This is to ensure that members are provided with modern uniform options which meet operational health and safety needs.

Commissioner McRoberts has advocated a modern, professional approach to managing performance in the workplace.

As part of that process, he has committed to jointly review the disciplinary and inability provisions of the *Police Administration Act* and to introduce an open, transparent managerial approach to workplace issues as they arise.

Commissioner McRoberts has also changed the NT Police leadership structure. The changes included placing the Human Resource Management Branch under the direction of the executive director of

Corporate Services.

The Police Association has raised a number of issues in relation to the new structure with the Commissioner but has nonetheless provided an undertaking to work within the proposed structure.

Mr McRoberts has made a positive start in his role but, like all of us, he will ultimately be judged on achievements not statements.

Federal Intervention

The Federal Government’s Northern Territory response, or intervention, as it is more commonly known, continues. The Government has committed to the phased withdrawal of AFP members and will fund their replacement by Northern Territory Police officers in the remote localities. This step is in line with policy positions adopted by the Police Federation of Australia and the Northern Territory Police Association.

The intervention continues to present industrial and operational challenges for association members with “intervention” or “Themis” stations. The perception, if not the reality, is that Themis stations are accessing funding not available in remote police stations established before the intervention. This is creating a them-and-us culture which is one of the most difficult challenges that Commissioner McRoberts will need to address.

Consent agreement 2011

The association has begun preparations for its next round of wage negotiations

in February 2011. Like the majority of jurisdictions, the NT Government has adopted a wages policy that defies the notion of a negotiated outcome.

While we must consider the economic forces that exist in the marketplace, a non-negotiable wages policy 12 months out shows a lack of understanding of the dynamic market place in which police employers are competing.

Western Australia Police Union of Workers

Union support for stop/search legislation

The WA Police Union has made clear to the Legislative Council’s legislation committee its very strong support for the proposed stop/search legislation now before Parliament in the Criminal Investigation Amendment Bill 2009.

The committee invited the union to provide a submission after concerns were raised about the legislation and it was referred to the committee following its passage late last year through the Legislative Assembly.

Union president Russell Armstrong said that, while acknowledging that the bill ventured into “new territory” in removing requirements for consent and the holding of “reasonable suspicion”, the union considered these provisions a necessary response to escalating serious anti-social and violent behaviour, particularly within

popular entertainment areas.

"The wider community should be able to safely enjoy such areas," Mr Armstrong said.

"The proposed legislation will enable our members to more 'pro-actively' police trouble spots and other locations where troublemakers tend to gather.

"It will enable our members to detect and reduce the numbers of dangerous weapons and articles being brought into such areas whether on the bodies of persons and/or in their vehicles.

"While the proposed powers would only be applicable in public places within specified or declared areas, in all other situations, our members would be able to seek recourse to present provisions contained in the *Criminal Investigation Act 2006*.

"Civil liberty groups and others opposed to the bill have made much about purported intrusions into privacy through searches, but only a 'basic search' can be performed under these proposed provisions.

"Such searches would be limited to 'pat-downs', removal of outer clothing and hats, jackets and shoes and the use of metal detectors.

"This type of basic search will be no more intrusive than that which people have become accustomed to when flying domestic and international air routes."

Mr Armstrong said the union considered the scope, purpose and structure of the bill to be sound in its present format and had no concerns about its likely interpretation.

Police Association of Tasmania

Uniform review

The new-look Tasmania Police uniform has been approved and funding provided to roll it out in the next 12 months. The Police Association has long advocated for change and believes the new items are a step in the right direction. Nonetheless, the association will continue to address member concerns as they arise.

Among the new uniform items is a baseball-style cap for everyday use in general uniform positions. Other items include:

- » A new uniform shirt with an embroidered badge (in lieu of the current metal breast badge) and ordinary buttons on the pockets (in lieu of the current gold buttons).
- » New wash-and-wear trousers.
- » A new 100 per cent wool jumper (lighter and warmer than the current issue).
- » A new multi-purpose jacket which will replace the current-issue leather jacket.
- » Reflective vest and raincoat.

A new supplementary uniform for special tasks/incidents (bushfires, forest protests, taskforce ops) will also be issued to all operational members. This uniform consists of navy blue trousers and shirts, which have increased safety considerations such as UV protection and fire-resistant material.

District management will have the authority to determine when the supplementary uniform is worn.

The current white peaked cap and tunic will remain as



The new Tasmania Police supplementary uniform (left) and the new uniform for general uniform positions (photo courtesy the Hobart Mercury)

uniform items to be worn on formal occasions and for court appearances.

Extended carers' leave

The Police Association has drafted a memorandum of understanding for consideration by Tasmania

Police management. The MOU will provide for extended paid leave in circumstances in which members are required to provide care and support to their spouse or child who is seriously ill.

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Police Association of New South Wales

Trading restrictions reduce assaults on police

Alcohol-fuelled violence in the community has risen to such appallingly high levels that the Police Association is campaigning to have trading restrictions introduced in NSW hotels and pubs. The restrictions, when carried out in Newcastle, north of Sydney, resulted in assaults after dark falling by a massive 29 per cent.

For many years Newcastle was one of the hotspots for alcohol-related violence. The Newcastle CBD was home to five of the state's 50 worst licensed premises. Assaults and violence were linked to these premises; the after-midnight hours were absolute mayhem.

Following a complaint by the NSW Police Force, in March 2008 significant restrictions were imposed on 14 licensed premises in Newcastle by the NSW Liquor Administration Board.

Closing times were brought

forward to 3am for 11 premises – which could previously trade until 5am – and 2:30am for three premises. Party-goers had to be in nightclubs by 1am or they were refused entry.

Additionally, after 10pm it was prohibited to sell shots, mixed drinks with more than 30ml of alcohol and more than four drinks per person at one time. Licensees stopped selling alcohol half an hour before closing time and there were free water stations on every bar.

When the NSW Bureau of Crimes Statistics evaluated the measures, it was found that assaults after dark in the Newcastle CBD fell by 133 – a 29 per cent drop – between April 2008 and March 2009. In nearby Hamilton, where no restrictions had been introduced, assaults continued apace. Hamilton has now adopted these measures.

The best news for Newcastle police was almost 30 per cent less assaults on front-line officers.

Alcohol-related crime costs the nation a massive \$1.7 billion. Each year, about 1,500 NSW police are assaulted and about 70 per cent of assaults are alcohol-related.

Police Federation of Australia

PFA backs stand-alone compensation scheme

The Police Federation of Australia appeared before the Review of Military Compensation Arrangements called by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs in February.

One of the terms of reference of the review sought that the committee: "Consider the suitability of access to military compensation schemes for members of the Australian Federal Police who have been deployed overseas." (This includes state and territory police seconded to the IDG.)

The committee had been given three options to consider – place the police in either:

- » The Safety Rehabilitation Compensation Act (Comcare).
- » The Military Rehabilitation Compensation Act (MRCA).
- » A stand-alone compensation scheme.

The PFA has, since the full stopping of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act* and the establishment of the MRCA in 2004, maintained a consistent argument: police officers serving in high-risk overseas operations should be covered by a stand-alone scheme with benefits commensurate with those of defence force personnel serving in like missions.

The PFA was acutely aware that Defence did not want police placed in the MRCA and Comcare, which had been developed primarily for Commonwealth public servants, not for high-risk offshore missions.

The previous federal

government had agreed to continue to provide the same level of compensation for police suffering injuries and fatalities – as did the VEA using ex-gratia arrangements on a case-by-case basis – until new legislation could be introduced. The current government has continued that arrangement.

The PFA's concern is that officers suffering injury or illness will be dealt with in an ad hoc way, potentially creating unacceptable anomalies.

In its arguments for a stand-alone scheme, the PFA put forward that Australia's police serving overseas were often working in dangerous, hostile environments, providing law and order in sometimes failing states, without the very best in effective workers' safety, rehabilitation and compensation arrangements.

Many of the deployments these personnel are engaged in are high-risk operations, comparable with those in which ADF personnel are engaged. In some cases, the ADF and AFP personnel are operating side-by-side in the same hostile environments and sustaining similar work-related injuries and illnesses.

AFP commander Col Speedie, who recently commanded Australian police in Afghanistan, appeared with the PFA and gave evidence, as did Norm Webber of the United Nations Police Association and Dave Turner of the AFP.

The PFA now awaits a decision from the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Go to www.pfa.org.au for a full copy of the PFA submission.



Police Association of NSW vice-president Scott Weber in front of an anti-binge drinking poster