

The campaign for more police has intensified in Victoria, while Western Australian officers have threatened to quit policing for jobs in the resources sector.

Victoria's largest-ever petition – 70,000-plus signatures call for more police



Victorian MPs with copies of the petition



Police Association (Victoria) president Brian Rix (left) and secretary Greg Davies respond to media questions about the petition

association had had to collect the signatures. "We've promised the first 1,700," he told Greg Davies on the steps of Parliament.

Petitions carry no formal weight in our parliamentary system; and some may feel they appear quaint as a method of communication with our MPs in these days of twitter and e-mail. But this one was hugely symbolic of public sentiment about one of the prime responsibilities of government – keeping people safe.

The previous largest petition presented to the Victorian Parliament was signed by 65,588 people on petrol pricing in 1995. Another notable petition was the 1891 women's suffrage petition, signed by 30,000 women and delivered on a cloth 260 metres long.

Politicians will ignore Victoria's petition at their peril. A recent survey of members showed that they are willing to convert their feelings on this issue at the ballot box.

"I suspect it is a vote-changer in the general community too," Mr Davies said.

Independent research by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research showed that another 3,000 police were needed to provide adequate coverage.

This shortfall is confirmed by the Productivity Commission figures this year. They show that Victoria needs a little under 3,000 police to bring Victoria to the national average.

The Police Association (Victoria)

The Police Association (Victoria) has delivered its record-breaking petition demanding more police to State Parliament. Opposition politicians met association representatives to receive the petition and show their support for the call for more police. Unfortunately, the Government didn't send a representative.

"The Victorian public has spoken in record numbers on the need for 3,000 more police in our state," association secretary Greg Davies said. "It's time our decision-makers listened."

National Party leader Peter Ryan said it was "reprehensible" that the

Police Association of Tasmania

State election

The March 20 state election resulted in Labor and Liberal winning 10 seats each and the Greens winning five. Labor has retained government and David Bartlett remains Premier. His party came to an arrangement with the Greens, whose leader, Nick McCoy, has been given a ministry. MLC Lin Thorp has become Tasmania's first female police minister.

Living up to the promises

The political parties' commitments to police issues during the election campaign were reported to members by newsletter.

Now that the dust has settled and Parliament is set to fire up again, after a seven-month absence, the Police Association and its members are keen to get to work and progress the issues.

The Labor Party commitments

Salary nexus for police: the Labor party has indicated salary is subject to negotiation, but the commitment is to keep it at a comparable level.

Police numbers: plus 30 during the term of government.

Workers compensation step-down provisions: 95 per cent of salary after 26 weeks (an improvement on current legislation).

Radio dispatch services: supportive of new technology.

Mobile data terminals: an extra 50 terminals will be purchased.

In-car video technology:

supportive of new technology.

Police housing review: yes.

Police in courts: a commitment to remove police from courts (this only occurs in the north and northwest of the state – it is a major issue for members).

Current capital works at three major police stations (Bellerive, Devonport and Glenorchy): remaining committed and work in progress is continuing.

Unexplained wealth legislation: committed to introduce legislation.

Grievance disputes – external review: agreed to review.

Mandatory sentencing for serious assaults against police: no, but would create a new criminal code offence for assaults on emergency-service workers.

As 2010 is an EB year for Tasmania, we will soon begin negotiations. Labor will be held to account on its commitments, particularly on salary as it relates to EB.

Northern Territory Police Association

New commissioner

Commissioner John McRoberts has indicated a clear position on drink-driving offences by police officers. This was highlighted by the arbitrary termination of a member for a very low-range drink-driving offence.

Although the Police Association has always supported the view that the Commissioner has to maintain discipline in the police force, it has nonetheless lodged an appeal. The association position has always been that each case needs to be considered on its

merits. And the facts in this case do not, in the association's view, support the action taken by the Commissioner.

Police management restructure

Deputy Commissioner Bruce Wernham has resigned and his position has been advertised Australia-wide. It will be of significance to see who Mr McRoberts appoints to this important position.

Federal intervention

The phased withdrawal of AFP members and replacement by NT police has happened in four police stations staffed by permanent NT officers. These moves have created industrial challenges, with members of this organization working in the same community but accessing significantly different entitlements.

Decisions to give members relieving, as part of the intervention, seniority for higher duties as officer-in-charge of these stations, has also increased tensions with the nominal "second member" being overlooked.

These decisions have exacerbated the "them-and-us" attitude and highlighted a real challenge for the department and the association to manage.

Consent agreement 2011

The NT Government has begun negotiations with public-sector unions and already indicated that it is prepared to move ground on the previously stated wages policy. This is a promising sign for the upcoming negotiations in February.

Police Association of New South Wales Skye's Law a great outcome

The tragic death of a baby girl called Skye Sassine on New Year's Eve re-ignited the contentious debate on police pursuits. For a group of NSW highway patrol officers, however, the time for debate was long over. They wanted the law changed making it a criminal offence for motorists to flee police.

The Police Association's Flemington branch passed a motion on January 13 seeking the *Implementation of a criminal offence specifically tailored to police pursuits*.

Flemington police officers received enthusiastic support for this proposal and, as a result, around 80 police attended the January meeting, which received wide media publicity.

Now association president Scott Weber, who was at the meeting, said: "When police officers look at pursuits, they see that it's very important for repeat offenders to be incarcerated so that they're not behind the wheel of a car where they can continue to be a danger to the community."

Front-line police clearly understood that the existing summary offence with a maximum one-year jail term or fine for motorists, who refused to stop upon police direction, was not tough enough. They wanted mandatory or minimum sentencing that would be a serious deterrent to criminals.

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To achieve this, the association lobbied government departments and both sides of parliament. The NSW Opposition was extremely supportive of the proposed legislation that would be named Skye's Law, after Sky Sassine.

NSW Premier Kristina Keneally also agreed that tougher penalties were required and adopted a bi-partisan approach.

On March 19, the *Crimes Act* was amended with a new indictable offence relating to police pursuits, carrying a maximum penalty of three years for a first offence and five years for repeat offenders.

Mr Weber said: "It's upsetting that the catalyst for it always has to be a martyr; someone has to die before the law changes."

Western Australia Police Union of Workers WA officers set to quit

Western Australia police officers in rural areas are threatening to quit and take up jobs in the resources sector after the Barnett/Grylls Government failed to honour its election promise to significantly increase police allowances.

Nationals leader Brendan Grylls revealed \$25 million has been set aside for incentives like the District Allowance and housing subsidies but, 19 months after the election, officers continue to get an allowance of just \$11 a day.

"Nearly 40 police officers left WA Police from the Pilbara, in the state's north-

west, during the last labour shortage," WA Police Union president Russell Armstrong said.

"I know of 10 officers who have currently applied for mining company jobs and they will be joined by many others unless the Government delivers on its election commitments.

"This will be bad news for policing services in a region which is rapidly growing again as a new boom builds."

The WA Police Union is continuing to pressure the Government into action, with an advertising campaign throughout the state focusing on Mr Grylls' broken promises.

Radio communications

Safety concerns have prompted WA Police to commit to improving radio communications in country areas.

Regional-based members have been concerned about the reliability of the network for some time, with officers regularly caught in "black spots".

The current radio communications failure rate in regional WA is reported as one every two-and-a-half days.

Millions of dollars were spent implementing the new digital radio network in the metropolitan area, which has been hailed a big success, but the radio network in country areas was neglected.

"After lengthy negotiations with WA Police, I have received assurances from Executive Director Greg Italiano that they will find the necessary money within the police budget to upgrade the country network,"

WA Police Union president Russell Armstrong said.

Police Federation of Australia

PFA to issue parties its own pre-election document

The Police Federation of Australia intends to issue a pre-election document to all political parties in the lead up to this year's federal election. *Creating a Safer Australia – Police Federation of Australia's Plan 2010-2013* follows a similar document sent out ahead of the 2007 poll, and will seek written commitments in response to the issues it outlines. The PFA expects to release the document publicly this month.

The plan argues that, like politicians, police want to make a difference in their communities. And the PFA, as the national voice of policing, brings an informed perspective to the issues that Australian communities face every day.

Its view is that crime is a national problem which needs local, state and nationally-focused solutions. Therefore, the PFA seeks a federal government which will support initiatives designed to maintain the safety and integrity of the Australian community.

Issues on which the PFA will seek commitments include:

- » An Australian crime-prevention programme.
- » National standards for young drivers.
- » Serious and organized crime and proceeds of crime.
- » National police workforce planning.
- » Collaborative purchasing

– police uniforms and equipment.

- » Advanced systems, technologies and information for policing.
- » A fair superannuation deal for police.
- » Fair Work Australia and its impact on police.
- » Workers' compensation.
- » Occupational health and safety.
- » Liquor licensing reforms to tackle alcohol abuse and violence.
- » National law enforcement staffing and financing issues.
- » Indigenous policing.
- » Capped FBT (salary packaging).
- » Major airport policing.
- » Support for police dealing with mental-health problems.
- » National policy on police use of Tasers.
- » Police parliamentary programme.
- » Overseas workers' compensation and rehabilitation.
- » Professionalization of policing/national police registration.
- » Childcare to meet the needs of police.
- » AFP tribunal.
- » Second-tier policing – powers, uniforms and vehicles.
- » Twenty-year police-officer disengagement scheme.
- » Recognition of Australia's police.

The PFA will make the document available to members once it is finalised and released.