

# Executive Summary

The 2025 federal election in Australia represents a critical opportunity to address systemic challenges facing the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and ensure its future as the nation's premier law enforcement agency. The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) has launched a robust advocacy campaign, underpinned by four key pillars, to secure better working conditions, enhanced resources, and greater recognition for AFP personnel. These pillars aim to address workplace fairness, operational effectiveness, and the overall well-being of AFP members.

## PILLAR 1: A Future for Good Faith Bargaining

The AFPA seeks to restore integrity to the enterprise agreement negotiation process, ensuring that employment agreements reflect the AFP's unique operational environment and challenges. Unlike other public service departments, the AFP operates in a high-pressure, high-stakes dynamic environment that demands flexibility and innovation in employment terms. The current restrictive framework under the Federal Government's Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy stifles these efforts.

The AFPA advocates for:

- **Independence from restrictive policies:** Enabling the AFP to negotiate enterprise agreements tailored to its specific needs and operational realities.
- **A Police Arbitral Tribunal:** Drawing inspiration from the Northern Territory Police Arbitral Tribunal, the AFPA proposes establishing an independent body to resolve disputes efficiently and fairly. This tribunal would reduce costs and streamline the resolution process compared to existing mechanisms involving the Fair Work Commission or Federal Court.

A failure to address these issues risks perpetuating inefficiencies, dissatisfaction among AFP personnel, and the erosion of the AFP's capacity to fulfill its mission effectively. The AFPA stresses that the workforce's operational readiness depends on genuine negotiations and the creation of agreements that align with contemporary law enforcement practices.

## PILLAR 2: More Support for AFP Appointees

The AFPA places a significant focus on addressing the physical and psychological toll experienced by AFP personnel. Law enforcement roles inherently involve exposure to traumatic incidents, often leading to long-term mental health challenges. Unfortunately, the current support systems and legislative frameworks fall short in addressing these critical issues.

Key advocacy points include:

- **Mandatory sentencing for assaults on officers:** Legislative amendments to the *Criminal Code 1995* are needed to ensure mandatory minimum sentences for individuals convicted of assaulting Commonwealth public officials. This measure aims to enhance deterrence and safeguard the welfare of AFP members.
- **Eliminating punitive reductions in incapacity payments:** The AFPA seeks to abolish the 25% reduction in incapacity payments after 45 weeks for injured AFP appointees, particularly for those with psychological injuries. Current policies often compel injured personnel to return to work prematurely, risking further harm.
- **The AFP Blue Card initiative:** Modelled on the Department of Veterans Affairs' White Card, the Blue Card would provide comprehensive government-funded psychological and medical care for current, future, and former AFP members.
- **Police Treatment Centres:** The AFPA proposes conducting a feasibility study to establish residential treatment centres based on successful examples in Canada and England. These centres would provide specialised care for AFP members recovering from physical and psychological injuries.
- **National Commissioner for First Responder Mental Health and Suicide:** Recognising the alarming rates of suicide among first responders, the AFPA calls for the creation of a dedicated Commissioner to develop and implement national strategies for mental health and suicide prevention within the law enforcement community.

These measures aim to provide holistic support for AFP personnel, ensuring they are not financially or emotionally disadvantaged due to their service. Addressing these challenges is an ethical imperative and critical for maintaining a resilient and capable workforce.

## PILLAR 3: Integrity Matters

Maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct within the AFP is essential for sustaining public trust and operational effectiveness. The AFPA highlights several shortcomings in the current professional standards framework and advocates for comprehensive reforms to address these issues.

Key recommendations include:

- **Clarifying definitions of “serious misconduct” and “corruption”:** Ambiguities in the *Australian Federal Police Act 1979* have led to inconsistent interpretations and enforcement. Clearer definitions are needed to ensure fairness and transparency in investigations.
- **Strengthening oversight mechanisms:** Expanding the jurisdiction of the Merit Protection Commissioner to include all AFP appointees, aligning their rights with those of Australian Public Service employees.
- **Timely resolution of professional standards investigations:** Prolonged investigations cause undue stress for AFP personnel and undermine trust in the process. Establishing reasonable timeframes for resolving cases is essential.
- **Addressing suspension and secondary employment decisions:** Decisions related to suspensions and employment restrictions often have far-reaching consequences for appointees and their families. Transparent and accountable processes are necessary to protect their rights.

A robust professional standards framework should balance accountability with the well-being of AFP members. The proposed reforms aim to foster a fair, supportive environment that upholds integrity while respecting the rights and dignity of AFP appointees.

## PILLAR 4: Restoring the AFP as Australia’s Premier Law Enforcement Agency

To meet growing national and international security demands, the AFP must be adequately resourced and empowered to operate at peak efficiency. The AFPA’s vision includes expanding the AFP’s workforce, modernising operations, and ensuring sustainable funding.

Key proposals include:

- **Expanding the workforce:** Increasing AFP personnel to a baseline of 10,000 appointees by 2028, with at least 60% of the workforce comprising sworn officers. This expansion, which includes increasing the AFP’s detective headcount, is essential for tackling modern law enforcement challenges such as cybercrime, terrorism, child exploitation, and organised crime.

### • Improved recruitment and retention strategies:

- Nationwide campaigns to attract a diverse and skilled workforce.
- Incentive programs, including competitive salaries and relocation assistance.
- Enhanced training programs and professional development opportunities.
- Flexible work arrangements and wellness initiatives to support work-life balance.

### • Modernising operations:

- Investing in advanced tools and technologies, including AI-driven analytics and enhanced communication systems.
- Expanding specialised units, such as cybercrime and confiscation of criminal assets task forces, to tackle emerging threats.

### • Independent reviews:

- Conducting an independent, comprehensive, and broad-ranging capability review to assess strengths and gaps in the AFP’s current operational environment.
- Evaluating the AFP’s executive structure to ensure efficiency and alignment with best practices in law enforcement.

These initiatives aim to position the AFP as a world-class law enforcement agency capable of safeguarding Australia’s security in an increasingly complex global environment. By investing in its workforce, infrastructure, and strategic planning, the AFP can continue to serve as a cornerstone of Australia’s security framework.

## Conclusion

The AFPA’s 2025 election manifesto outlines an achievable vision for the future of the Australian Federal Police. By addressing the pressing issues of workplace fairness, mental health, organisational integrity, and operational excellence, the manifesto provides a roadmap for meaningful reform. The proposed measures are not just about improving conditions for AFP appointees; they are about ensuring the safety and security of all Australians.

Restoring the AFP to its rightful place as Australia’s premier law enforcement agency requires a collaborative effort. The AFPA calls on all sitting politicians and candidates to prioritise the welfare and operational effectiveness of the AFP, committing to policies that support those who dedicate their lives to protecting the nation. By working together, we can build a safer, stronger Australia for generations to come.