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Heart2Heart
Charity Walk

National Police
Remembrance Day 2022

2022 at
a glance



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The Australian Federal Police Association acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the elders past, present and emerging.

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Magazine cover:

AFPA staff paying their respects on National Police Remembrance Day

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Vince Pannell
National Executive
Member (Canberra)

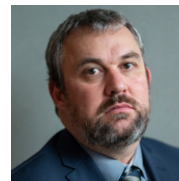


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Member (Canberra)

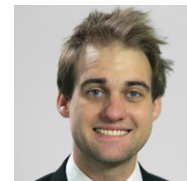
AFPA STAFF MEMBERS



Giles Snedker
Legal and
Industrial Manager



Troy Roberts
Media and Government
Relations Manager



Chris Chilcott
Advisor to the
President



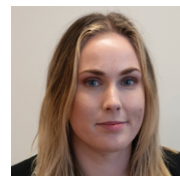
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Courtney Posantzis
Membership Services
Administrator

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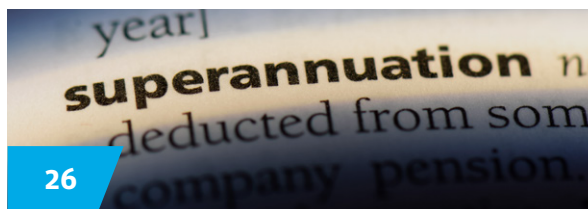
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Australian Federal
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National Police Remembrance Day 2022

AFPA delegates and staff pay their respects to fallen members



President
Alex Caruana

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Alex Caruana, President

▶ As 2022 draws to a close, I'm aware that it is easy to gloss over just what an eventful twelve months it has been. Australia has seen a change in government, unprecedented weather events, never-ending COVID mutations, a sharp rise in the cost of living, disruptive and violent protests all around the country, the passing of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, as well as significant national and transnational operations.

Many of these events have further burdened the AFP's already overworked members.

Your Association is continuing with its targeted campaigns to address those most imminent and important challenges to a fair and reasonable work environment.

EA

The AFPA has already met with quite a few members of the new government to discuss IR law changes and an exemption for the AFP from the bargaining policy for the upcoming EA negotiation. The new bargaining policy says that the employer has six months to negotiate a new Agreement upon the expiry of the existing Agreement, along with other changes favouring the employee.

I have also had numerous discussions with Attorney-General Dreyfus concerning the low wages of the AFP's rank and file and the comparatively high wages of the AFP Executive. Alongside these one on one meetings, I have also participated in joint meetings with AG Dreyfus and Industrial Relations Minister Tony Burke about federal-level presumptive legislation — something the Association has been lobbying for since 2018. These joint talks are progressing well, and we are optimistic.

NATIONAL COUNCIL 2023

Planning is well underway for the upcoming National Council in March.

We remind members that all Delegate and Convenor positions are elected immediately before National Council and hold the office for two years until the next Council.

Members of the National Executive, including the President, are elected at the same time, but serve for a four-year term (elections occurring every second National Council). The next National Executive elections will coincide with the 2025 National Council. The AFPA's election processes are governed by our Branch Rules, which are set by the membership.

Our elections are overseen and audited by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC).

I would like to thank our current Delegates and Convenors for their two years' service to the membership. If any of you would like to consider running for another two-year term, you have our unreserved support to do so.

For any members who may be considering putting their hand up and running as a Delegate or Convenor candidate, I would certainly encourage you to do this. The core strength of our network of Delegates and Convenors is that it is made up of hard-working AFPA members from diverse areas. They understand the intricacies and issues of whichever AFP stream they are representing and are best-placed to support you, as well as advise the AFPA National Office.

Further details about the upcoming National Council will be communicated via direct email to members.

MUSTERS

By the time you read this, our series of musters around the country would be well underway.

Our primary focus during the musters has been to discuss the upcoming EA negotiations, however we also took the time to address any general industrial questions you may have had on the day.

Thank you to the AFPA Industrial and Membership Officers who accompanied me on the musters.

AFPA LEGAL MANAGER

I would like to congratulate Giles Snedker on his appointment as the substantive Manager, Legal and Industrial.

Giles, who is originally from the UK, moved to Perth in 1993 where he raised a family. Originally a marine biologist, Giles switched careers and was admitted to the Supreme Court of WA as a lawyer in 2010. Giles worked for an Association and specialised in Industrial Relations and Employment Law before joining the AFPA in September 2020, initially as an Industrial Officer and then later being promoted to Senior Industrial Officer. Giles had been acting as Manager, Legal & Industrial for just over a year before successfully winning the substantive position.

Well done Giles!

IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue, we catch up with AFPA Executive member Vince Pannell and talk about the Heart2Heart Charity Walk, a new fundraising event comprising a team walk from Lambert, N.T to Canberra. Heart2Heart is focusing on raising urgently needed funds for mental health support, advocacy and research; the article starts on page 20.

Former AFPA member Jason Taylor joins us on page 26 with an update on his own mental health journey. Jason, having earlier retired from the AFP, has announced that he will be running as a candidate for the ACT Legislative Assembly as a member of the Belco Party.

We share some photos from National Police Remembrance Day on page 14.

And we are grateful to Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus KC MP and Shadow Minister for Home Affairs Karen Andrews MP for the end-of-year messages they have both written for the AFPA membership. These begin on page 30.

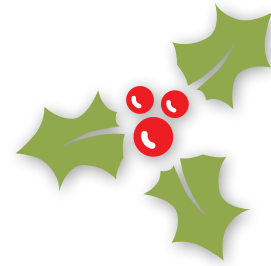
CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Well, we are at the end of another year. For those of you who are able to enjoy some time off, please stay safe while you relax with family and friends.

For those of you working through the Christmas period, thank you. I would especially urge you to read the Legal Report about your right to “disconnect”. Merry Christmas to all of you, and I hope that you are able to take some time off soon.

I would also like to acknowledge members attached to Operation AMMERSOYEN-ALSUNGA. My warmest thanks.

In unity,
Alex Caruana
President





Acting Manager,
Legal & Industrial
Giles Snedker

LEGAL AND INDUSTRIAL

Giles Snedker, Manager, Legal & Industrial

Your right to disconnect – work/life balance

► Most employees do not expect to be injured merely by performing the job that they have been employed to do. Likewise, most employees expect that they are entitled to switch off from work once they have finished for the day and can go about their personal lives with family in peace and quiet. Yet despite policing being undoubtedly a stressful vocation, those in policing are often not afforded the right to disconnect that many of the population enjoy.

To the AFPA, it could not be more obvious that those in policing need the right to switch off from the workplace far more so than the general population. This right needs to be a fundamental part of workplace culture and members must be given the time away from work to relax with family and friends, unwind and destress. In the words of the University of South Australia's Business School Economist and Professor Barbara Pocock:

It is well known that the rate of absenteeism for policing is high in comparison to many other sectors. A study in 2012 investigated the risk of work-related depression for Australian police officers and, unsurprisingly, found that the rates of major depression disorders were reported higher among police officers in comparison of the general public.

“High pressure occupations where work is very demanding and intense particularly need good recovery time: time free of work issues, time to regenerate by doing things that keep our attention off work, and time to keep our relationships in good order.”

The National Survey *Answering the Call: The Beyond Blue National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services* also painted a shocking picture of the mental health and wellbeing, namely:

- **one in three** employees experience high or very high psychological distress, compared with just over **one in eight** among all adults in Australia.
- **one in 2.5** employees report having been diagnosed with a mental health condition in their life compared to **one in five** of all adults in Australia.
- more than **half** of all employees indicated that they had experienced a traumatic event that had deeply affected them during the course of their work.
- poor workplace practices and culture were found to be as damaging to mental health as occupational trauma.

Given the fast-paced nature of the working environment, and the increasing reliance of e-mails, phone calls or text messages, the employee's work and personal life becomes blurred with the consequential detriment to an employee's mental health. Cultural change has meant that communication outside of working hours has become the societal norm and acceptable. This constant connection to the workplace carries significant risks for employees including depression, anxiety and fatigue, and without adequate boundaries and the right to disconnect can have long lasting impacts of the health and wellbeing.

Such a right to disconnect is now contained within the *Victoria Police (Police Officers, Protective Services Officers, Police Reservists and Police Recruits) Enterprise Agreement 2019* since its commencement on 1 April 2020. Importantly, it clearly stipulates the employee's right to recuperate and have time away from the job, including:

- *Supervisors and managers must respect employees' periods of leave and rest days;*
- *Other than in emergency situations or genuine welfare matters, employees must not be contacted outside of the employee's hours of work unless the employee is in receipt of an availability allowance; and*
- *Employees are not required to read or respond to emails or phone calls outside their effective working hours.*

In June 2022, the WA Police Union launched their own "Switch Off Duty" campaign, with the right to disconnect being a centrepiece of the WAPU's log of claims in the EA negotiations. As stated by President Mick Kelly:

"The right to disconnect can benefit both individual employees and organisations as a whole. Establishing an effective work/life balance for employees is likely to reduce staff burnout and overload, leading to a more productive workforce."

The reduced pressure may have further benefits such as higher staff retention rates and increased employee morale, as well as a feeling from employees their employer recognises and support their mental health.

Many other countries have already ensured their employees' rights to disconnect are not infringed. In 2016, the French Government passed a labour law that included the right to disconnect (le droit de la déconnexion). Following the French decision, on 21 January 2021, the European Parliament passed a resolution in favour of

the right to disconnect, and the resolution was accompanied by a legislative proposal that defines disconnecting as "not [engaging] in work-related activities or communications by means of digital tools, directly or indirectly, outside working time".

Italy, Ireland, and Spain have similarly followed France's lead and introduced legislation that grants employees the right not to respond to work-related communications outside their agreed working hours without the fear of penalty.

Australia appears to be lagging behind the rest of the world. The AFPA sees far too often the impact of excessive workloads and the inability to disconnect from the job when not at work.

We deal with members who are suffering from anxiety or depression induced by poor workplace practices, yet who have a sense of moral obligation to the AFP. We hear of supervisors who expect that level of commitment in their team, but who do not contemplate the ramifications of not allowing employees to have their own personal time uninterrupted. The right to disconnect should be a right for all employees and something all employers should adopt as part of their duty of care.

Our advice to members is simple: If you are not on-call and have not been recalled to duty, there is no obligation for you to utilise your assigned AFP mobile – simply leave it at work. Likewise, unless you are receiving the On-Call allowance, there is no obligation for you to read or respond to AFP emails or phone calls and/or text messages on your own personal phone. ◀

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MEMBER SERVICES

Courtney Posantzis, Member Support Administrator

Member Support
Administrator
Courtney Posantzis

Regular Items

► Welcome to the Membership Report for Christmas 2022! I am pleased to have completed a full calendar year with the AFPA. I am also incredibly proud to share a snapshot of some of the work that our team has been able to undertake.

Firstly, please join me in welcoming our 281 new members to the AFPA over the course of this year – and to also wish 114 loyal and longstanding AFPA members that retired in 2022 warm and heartfelt thanks for not only their outstanding service to the community but also their contribution and dedication to the Association.

We welcomed 194 recruits to the AFPA (86 are still completing their studies at the time of writing). We wish those remaining the very best with their studies, and for those that have successfully graduated and begun their career in the AFP, we look forward to supporting and advocating on your behalf for the duration of your working career with the AFP.

AFPA acknowledges that 2022 was a difficult year for many, and one of the things that we noticed was an uptake and need for welfare support and assistance as the year progressed.

Our team had 105 AFPA members reach out to request AFPA Membership Assistance – now, this was not always the member directly, but also wonderful AFP colleagues advocating on their behalf. It is of course worrying that our members find themselves in less-than-ideal situations, either financially or ill health (or both), but what we are proud of is that this has meant that amongst the various types of welfare provided, AFPA has facilitated approximately 200 meals delivered, 30 house cleans and 10 gardening services deployed to AFPA Members.

This number will only increase as, at the time of writing we still have a month left of the year, and the financial burden on many of our members shows no sign of easing.

If you think you or a fellow AFPA member may be eligible for support or assistance, please reach out to the AFPA directly. It's very simple – email us at afpa@afpa.org.au or phone (02) 6285 1677 and speak to one of our friendly team members to discuss your AFPA benefits or the eligibility criteria to access support.

The welfare that AUSPOL has provided has been met with overwhelming appreciation – we are proud that we have provided almost \$20,000 in the last 12 months alone. We are only able to do this thanks to your generous donation; if you would like to be part of the good work that we do, you can contribute either by a tax-deductible single donation or a fortnightly deduction out of your pay. Looking ahead towards 2023, I look forward to growing the welfare that we are able to deploy. To get this started this Christmas time, why not give the generous gift of support to a fellow AFPA member? Our website www.afpa.org.au/auspol/ holds details on how you can make such a thoughtful gift this festive season.

Shown on the opposite page are the types of welfare that our team has been instrumental in arranging. You will notice that the majority of this is through our charity, AUSPOL, which is why any donation you may consider is extremely gratefully received.

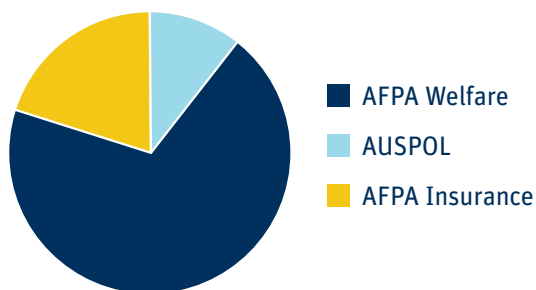
On a personal note, I am hopeful you took advantage of all the wonderful Black Friday Sales in anticipation of completing your Christmas shopping early (and in on budget!). As you explore your Member Advantage portal, you will also notice that we have acquired a few more AFPA exclusive discount partners – it's actually really easy to access this area in the Member Advantage Portal. After logging into your personal portal, simply navigate to the discount tab. Within the drop-down area, we house AFPA-exclusive deals. Keep an eye on this space as we have a few more almost ready to drop to the AFPA Membership!

If you don't want to brave the shops on Boxing Day but want easy and convenient savings, make sure you keep an eye out on your Member Advantage portal (afpa.memberadvantage.com.au) – there will be many savings to be had! Similarly, should you be travelling over the upcoming holiday season, make sure you check out the travel savings to be had in your portal.

The AFPA always welcomes feedback. If there is a member benefit that you would like to see and think your fellow AFPA members would like to as well, why not let us know? We warmly encourage you to give us your ideas – I would be happy to explore these avenues on the membership's behalf. This is another way you can make your AFPA Membership work for you.

Please let me finish off by wishing you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a safe and joyful New Year. ❄️

AFPA Membership Assistance (applications by type)



Australian Law Enforcement – Support us to support them



“Paying it forward”

It is only through donations that AUSPOL remains viable. AUSPOL assists members and members' families in times of need.

We need every AFPA member to contribute.

www.afpa.org.au/auspol/





POCKET CHANGE CONVOS

How to talk to your kids about money

Building a healthy relationship with money from an early age is important for financial empowerment in the future. Parents, no matter their financial situation, have the power to influence how their kids interact with money.

You don't have to be an expert, and you don't even need to dole out pocket money. It can be as simple as introducing them to the concepts of earning, spending, saving, and donating.

You can gently expose them to your financial habits and decisions and make a point of letting them handle some cash to watch it grow or diminish on a trip to the shops – something that is especially important in this age of digital payments like Tap & Go cards or through your phone.

HERE ARE SOME OTHER TOP TIPS TO GET KIDS STARTED ON THEIR MONEY JOURNEYS.

- Introduce them to the nature of your work, how you earn money, and why – to keep the household running, to pay for their school and sport, to save for holidays
- Get them involved in decisions – what do they think are the necessities, what are the needs of the family, and what are the wants
- Choose a charity cause that you donate to or fundraise for together to teach them about the concept of sharing and helping others
- Have a money date night at home where everyone picks something they want to save for
- If you can afford it, offer the chance to earn pocket money for chores, and make sure to withhold it if tasks are not complete – they can choose to spend, save, or donate

- Research an item they want together, and try to find the best price – have conversations with them about putting things off until sale times or a big milestone event like a birthday or Christmas.

Learning to save has never been so easy with Police Bank's Dynamo children's saving account, available up to 12 years of age.

With no monthly account keeping fees, depositing just \$5 a week will receive a bonus rate of interest to accelerate savings (T&Cs apply).

Police Bank is a community-based bank started by Police for Police and we are here for you and the broader policing family. If you have any questions or are interested in how we can help you, please don't hesitate to speak to one of our team members in the Contact Centre on 131 728 Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, or visit www.policebank.com.au.

Visit www.policebank.com.au, call **131 728** or head to your local Police Bank branch.

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We will remember



► Walking from the AFPA office in Barton to the National Police Memorial in Parkes allows me to detach from the everyday concerns of running the Association and reconnect with the great honour of being part of the AFP.

As I cross over Kings Avenue on a typically crisp and windy September day, my legs settle into a rhythm in sync with my breathing. My mind relaxes and starts to wander off towards the memories I hold close to my heart of the brave members I have met during my career.

My step falters as I think of those no longer with us.

I arrive at Memorial together with the other staff of the AFPA, and we recite the Police Ode. The touching words evoke feelings of gratitude and recognition, perhaps not done enough in today's society.

Afterwards, we quietly walk among the touchstones and read the names of the fallen. We walk quietly back to the office and reflect.

This private ceremony comprising just AFPA staff sat in between the dawn and evening services. All three affected me deeply on different levels. ◀

We will remember.

On behalf of myself, AFPA delegates and staff, I pay my respects to all fallen members.

Alex Caruana
President

them







Hearing Loss and Impairment Compensation



Sara McLean
(Senior Associate)

Hearing loss affects many people. Whilst there may be several reasons why a person loses their hearing, hearing loss can be caused by exposure to loud noise during the course of employment, otherwise known as 'industrial deafness'.

Exposure to noise of 85 decibels (dB) or higher has the potential to cause hearing loss, and the time allowed for exposure to the noise reduces the louder the noise is. For example, if you are exposed to noise of 85dB for more than 8 hours, this has the potential to cause hearing loss. The time of exposure to noise is cut in half for every increase of 3dB in the noise level, for example, if you are exposed to noise of 88dB for more than 4 hours, this has the potential to cause hearing loss and likewise if you are exposed to noise of 91dB for more than 2 hours. Any exposure to noise of 140dB or greater has the potential to cause nearly instantaneous hearing loss, such as shooting a firearm during the course of your employment (without hearing protection).

Therefore, exposure to noise from a firearm/s, a police siren, a large crowd, an airplane/other aircraft and a barking dog all have different dB ranges but all have the potential to cause hearing loss.

In addition to hearing loss, some people also develop tinnitus, which is ringing, whistling, a click or roar in the ears that no one else hears. Tinnitus varies in intensity from one person to another.

Eligible Australian Federal Police Association members who suffer hearing loss as a result of their AFP work duties, may have a potential Comcare claim.

Under the Comcare scheme and pursuant to the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988, a worker within an organisation agency covered by Comcare, such as the AFP, may have an entitlement to claim:

1. Reasonable and necessary medical treatment and rehabilitation expenses, including hearing aids;
2. Payment of weekly wages;

3. Payment of lump sum permanent impairment and non-economic loss – however your condition must have stabilised before any such assessment can take place;

In order to receive payment of lump sum impairment compensation for hearing loss, a worker needs to be assessed with a binaural hearing loss of at least 5% (any less than 5% is not compensable), if the hearing loss became permanent on or after 1 October 2001.

When assessing a claim, the Impairment Assessment Officer is likely to consider the number of years a worker was exposed to noise in Commonwealth employment and non-Commonwealth employment as at the date the hearing loss became permanent, ie the last day of exposure to noise in Commonwealth employment.

s27 of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* also allows a worker to receive compensation for non-economic loss (pain and suffering) as long as the worker's injury has resulted in permanent impairment and compensation being payable. s27(2) states:

"(2) The amount of compensation is an amount assessed by Comcare under the formula:

$$(\$15,000 \times A) + (\$15,000 \times B)$$

where:

***A** is the percentage finally determined by Comcare under section 24 to be the degree of permanent impairment of the employee; and*

***B** is the percentage determined by Comcare under the approved Guide to be the degree of non-economic loss suffering by the employee."*

B is calculated using Division 2 of the Guide to the Assessment of the Degree of Permanent Impairment published by Comcare and is calculated based on scores given for pain, suffering, loss of amenities/loss of enjoyment of life, other loss, and loss of expectation of life.

If you wish to make a claim or would like further advice regarding such a claim, please contact Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers on 1800 059 278.

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The Heart2Heart Walk:

A long-distance walk to raise awareness around first responders' mental health and wellbeing

The often-daily threats to the mental health and well-being of first responders are significant. The Heart2Heart Charity Walk aims to raise awareness of these issues and raise funds to undertake academic research into the causes, impacts and potential strategies to combat them.

THE WALK

▶ Detective Sergeant Vince Pannell, a stalwart of the AFPA Executive, has had a lengthy career in both community and international policing. Repeatedly seeing the effects of trauma on first responders' mental health, he began conceptualising an outlet that would allow members to take a break and reset, while at the same time raise valuable funds to enable research and support programs. He knew that for it to be truly effective, it would need to involve taking the participants away from their offices, stressors and daily grinds.

Walking allows people to narrow their field of awareness, avoid sensory over-stimulation and control their breathing and pulse. Simply, it helps you to slow down and zone out.

Phones off, and no emails. What better place to start than in the Red Centre of Australia?

Participants would (by virtue of walking at their own pace) really see, hear, smell and interact with Australia, its environs and its citizens – perhaps for the first time in a long time. Days would be spent walking, either alone (with an escort) or with colleagues. Donators would sponsor participants to walk from Lambert in the Northern Territory to Parliament House in Canberra, with the team of walkers covering forty kilometres per day.

Along the way, walkers would camp overnight in some truly iconic and beautiful locations in Central, Southern, and South-Eastern Australia (the route stretches through the Northern Territory, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and the A.C.T.)

BACKGROUND

Vince has always enjoyed walking and hiking and goes for a walk most days in Canberra with his mates. He especially loves Lake Burley Griffin and the surrounding areas, including the National Police Memorial in Parkes.

When Vince was deployed to the N.T, the replica of Parliament House located in Lambert planted the seed of an idea to link the "Heart of the Country" with the "Heart of the Nation." He soon realised that, for his idea to work, he would need to create an organising and administrative body to support the Walk.

The Heart2Heart Foundation was formed about six years ago, and has as its goals:

- advocacy
- research, and
- education

in the area of first responders' mental health. Vince was very adamant that the Foundation's role was to be collaborative and value-adding to existing support agencies.

The Foundation's attention soon moved to scoping a potential route.

At first, the plan was to follow the shortest route between Lambert and Canberra.

But after Vince, his dog Margie, and the rest of his team started their scout of the route, they realised that the sheer breadth of people and stories in remote Australia needed to be woven into the core of the Walk.

"When we first started to look at it, it was the shortest route from point A to point B. But when we did the route survey and met the first responders living in the smaller towns who'd come out of their way to see us (from places like Mt. Dare), we realised we were only scratching the surface in terms of people who needed to be a part of the Walk. I met one member in South Australia who was the sole police officer in his town, with the next nearest police support located in Birdsville, Queensland. He hadn't had a day off in 18 months."



AT A GLANCE

- The Heart2Heart Walk covers approximately **2600 kilometres**
- Walkers begin in Lambert, N.T (the geographical centre of Australia) and finish at Parliament House in Canberra, A.C.T
- The Walk will commence on **Saturday 1 July 2023** and will conclude prior to National Police Remembrance Day (29 September)
- **The aim of the Walk is to raise awareness around the risks to first responders' mental health** (including their families), as well as to seek commitment from the Federal Government to implement all 14 recommendations from the 2019 Australian Senate Inquiry: *The people behind 000: mental health of our first responders*.
- Implementing these recommendations would **directly address** the prevalence of first responder suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, and premature mortality.
- Walkers will **raise funds** to support academic research, as well as self-education opportunities for members



‘What other job requires you to be in a constant state of hypervigilance and alertness yet at the same time be a counsellor, a social worker, a lawyer, or a prison warden?

What other profession authorizes you to take a person’s liberty, or potentially use deadly force, but then mandates that you attempt to save the person’s life that has just tried to kill you? What job causes you to wonder whether you will come home to your loved ones after you bid them farewell each and every day as you head off to work?’

Commander Grant Edwards APM (Ret’ d)

in his submission to the Australian Senate Inquiry into First Responder Suicide, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Premature Mortality.

Psycho-social rehabilitation is a concrete science, with a gradual re-acclimatisation to normal social situations being universally accepted by medical researchers as beneficial to those recovering from a mental health injury.

Participants in the walk would be exposed to a range of different environments, in which they would be able to engage with others or withdraw as they wanted to.

Towards the end of the route, the kilometres walked per day start getting longer. Days 89 and 90 from Tumut will see stretches of around fifty kilometres, while Day 91 (the final day) will see an 11-kilometre “Family Walk” culminating in the last stretch from Government House to the National Police Memorial and the finish at Parliament House.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The bulk of the walkers will be serving Australian first responders; however, Heart2Heart is also calling on other key stakeholders in the mental health continuum to take part:

- Heads of all first responder organisations and agencies
- Heads of allied organisations
- Heads of kindred and support organisations, and
- Federal, state and territory politicians

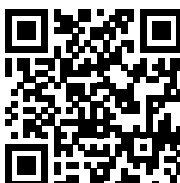
HOW CAN PEOPLE GET INVOLVED AND SUPPORT THE HEART2HEART WALK?

The Heart2Heart Board welcomes anyone who would like to join the team and walk, either for part of the journey or the full route from Lambert to Canberra. To register, simply go to heart2heartwalk.org

We will be keeping in close contact with Vince and the Heart2Heart Foundation in the months leading up to the Walk. Keep an eye out for updates in Blue Star and our social channels! ◀



Website:
heart2heartwalk.org



Facebook:
facebook.com/Heart-2-Heart-Walk-2023



Instagram:
instagram.com/heart2heartwalk2023

SOBERING FACTS:

- A ‘completed’ suicide in Australia **costs approximately \$1.6m**;
- For each suicide, there are approximately **18-20 ‘uncompleted’ suicides**;
- Approximately **17% of these end in total incapacitation**, each costing over \$2.7m;
- In excess of **115 persons are directly impacted** by a single suicide.

In relation to first responders’ mental health and wellbeing, some facts are especially concerning:

- First responders are **twice as likely** to report suicidal thoughts and **three times more likely** to have a plan.
- Information regarding AFP suicides and premature mortality (i.e. under 75) of serving and retired members over the past five years is **not readily available**;
- The median age at death in Australia is **78 for males and 84 for females**;
- The AFP Veterans' Association (AFPVA) quotes the **anecdotal average age at death (former member) at 62.17**;
- Safe Work Australia reports that Australian Defence Personnel and first responders (including police) are the **occupations most at risk of ‘mental health conditions’ claims**;

According to the most recent Safe Work Australia Report regarding first responders (2015-16):

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)/mental stress makes up **13% of all claims**;
- Serious claim rate is **4 time higher than for all occupations** (37.9 claims per 1000 employees)
- First responders (including police) are a **‘most at-risk occupation’** with repeated **‘work-related stressors’**, and **mental disorders**. This is also confirmed by the Beyond Blue ‘Answering the Call’ report;
- The **typical mental disorder claim payment is \$22,000**, including 13.3 weeks’ time off work; and,
- The costs are **human/emotional, financial and reputational**.

How much super is enough to set yourself up for retirement?

When was the last time you checked your super balance?
How many years will you contribute to your super before you retire?
And how much super will you need anyway?



"The earlier you start planning your retirement the better, but 45 is the age you really need to pay attention to super because there's probably only 15 years until retirement," said Mr Gee.

"Even if you're over 45 there are steps you can take. If you look at the gap between your super projections and your desired income in retirement there are ways to make it work."

START BY LOOKING AT YOUR CURRENT FINANCIAL PRIORITIES.

Getting a precise picture of how much money you'll need in retirement, and what actions you need to take to get there, should begin with looking at your current financial situation and spending habits.

"It's important to look at your income, spending and saving—and to do this honestly," said Mr Gee.

▶ These are critical questions every Australian needs to be asking themselves to ensure they're on track to achieve their retirement goals.

"How much super you'll need in retirement will vary from person to person, and will depend on what kind of retirement you want," said Martin Gee, Financial Planner at the **Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation** (CSC - www.csc.gov.au).

"When most people start work, they also start 'saving for retirement' with their super, but they often get to age 50 without having given it much thought," he said.

"That's because it's a bit like someone being asked to start playing a game of football, but not being told the rules of the game."

"In a game of footy, you need to know where the goalposts are—it's the same with superannuation. You need to think about what's important to you when it comes to your retirement. Do you have a retirement age in mind, or do you want to have a certain amount of money to live on each year?"

"Often people will come in with a figure for their current spending and when we compare it to their income we see a figure that should theoretically be going into savings, but it's not. When we dig down we find out where it went—children, mortgage, holidays—and get the actual spending figure."

"Once you understand exactly how much you spend, you can compare that to what you want to live on each year in retirement. You can then work out how your super balance is tracking to reach that."

SUPER IS PERSONAL, MAKE SURE IT'S WORKING FOR YOU

There are benchmarking figures that may give you an idea of the income you might need in retirement.

The Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia estimates that to have a 'comfortable' retirement, single people will need \$545,000 in retirement savings and couples will need \$640,001.

While these benchmarks may be useful, these are general estimates only. Super is personal and a 'comfortable' retirement will be different for everyone.

"One way of approaching this is to think of how much you personally need to replace your current lifestyle," said Mr Gee.

"This is sometimes called your income 'replacement ratio'. It's generally based on a retirement income of about 70 to 80 per cent of your current income and takes into account some of the savings that might come your way—for example, decreased taxes due to extra deductions and some tax-free amounts, and reductions in the costs associated with work clothing and commuting."

If you've done the maths and realise your financial picture for retirement is not looking so rosy, there are immediate steps you can take to get back on track.

"Regularly reviewing your super's investment options is one. Check on them at least annually to ensure they reflect factors like your risk appetite, your life stage, your lifestyle, and when you're likely to retire and access your super."

"If you're in a position to make additional super contributions it will go a long way in boosting your final balance," Mr Gee said. Thanks to the **power of compound interest**, the earlier you engage with your super and start making it work for you, the more it will pay off longer term.

Engaging with your super fund, having a plan, and sticking to it will put you in a better position for retirement—and also help reduce stress and worry right now.

"For most of us there are lots of competing requirements for your hard-earned money, but you mustn't lose sight of your long-term goals while still addressing the short-term ones," said Mr Gee.

"We live in an age where we expect things to happen quickly, but unfortunately super doesn't work that way. Imagine your retirement and superannuation like a ladder with your retirement goal at the top. You can't just jump to the top rung, you have to take it step-by-step. Look at the bottom rung, get there, then look to the next rung, and every now and then glance at the top and you'll see it getting closer."

"When you understand what you're doing and see the benefits you tend to be more committed to your plan and will see it through." ◀

CSC is a trusted partner to our customers, focused on guiding them every step of the way along their super journey towards their personal super and retirement goals.

Putting money into super can be an investment in your future self. No matter what kind of advice you need, **CSC's dedicated financial planners** are there to help you lay out a path to get there, step by step.

To find out more visit www.csc.gov.au





Message from Jason Taylor, Belco Party candidate for Yerrabi

My name is Jason Taylor. Many readers of this magazine will know me.

► I grew up in Melbourne. Upon finishing university, I applied for both Victoria Police and the AFP. The AFP got in first, and I joined as a recruit in 2007. At the time of accepting a position, I was informed that no new National courses were running and the only available sworn roles were with ACT Policing. As luck would have it, the recruit course that started a few weeks after mine was a National course full of recruits who had declined the offer of the ACT Policing roles! I've always said that this is one of the best decisions I've ever made (aside from marrying my wife), as I fell in love with Canberra and the role of a community policeman.

I spent nearly 14 years with the AFP; most of this time was spent with ACT Policing, reaching the rank of Detective Sergeant. I worked across a number of areas of ACT Policing, including General Duties, Criminal Investigations, Family Violence, and Legislation and Policy. Community policing truly is the best job in the world, so I never had much of an inclination to leave ACT Policing.

Many readers will be aware of my story. In January 2020, I was violently assaulted at work by a man who had no regard for me or what I was doing.

Had it not been for the swift actions of my colleagues, I have no doubt that I would have been killed during this incident.

The lack of formal recognition these members have received for their actions is something that I am extremely disappointed about. I can't think of many actions a police officer can do that are more worthy of recognition than saving the life of a colleague. I have raised this directly with the Commissioner on more than one occasion, and I will continue to do so.

Following this incident, I was diagnosed with PTSD and took a number of months

off work. I am honest with the fact that I had been on a downward spiral in relation to my mental health for a number of years, and I am the first to admit that many of my coping mechanisms in dealing with the trauma that my career exposed me to were extremely unhealthy. The assault I suffered was the last drop in my bucket.

Following my diagnosis, dealing with the stresses associated with the court case and navigating the Comcare system took me to some pretty dark places mentally. I don't wish to outline these in too much detail, as I've done this before in this magazine and elsewhere.

I will always be grateful for the support and assistance both myself and my family received from the AFPA during the worst of this period.

It has taken time and effort to put myself back together, but my experiences have given me much greater insight into myself as a person and, most importantly, how to properly manage my mental health.

Since resigning from the AFP in June of 2021, I have been involved in advocacy work in relation to legislative reform around the treatment of police and emergency service workers, their access to appropriate and timely mental health support through Comcare, and improving mental health facilities and programs for police and emergency service workers in the ACT.

In doing this advocacy, I have worked closely with Alex and the AFPA, and it has been great to maintain a connection with the AFPA given that I am no longer a member.

I am also the ACT representative for the first responder charity “Emerge & See”. It was founded by two former NSW police members who, like me, were both diagnosed with PTSD. Our aim is to support, connect, educate, and empower current and former police and emergency service workers (and their families) in NSW and the ACT. I would encourage any member who needs support to reach out through the website (www.emergeandsee.org.au) — you are never just a number, and you are never alone.

During my career with the AFP, I developed a real sense of community pride and passion for helping people. Despite my career ending prematurely, I have never lost my drive to make my community a better and safer place. So, I joined the Belco Party and have decided to run as a candidate in the upcoming 2024 ACT election for the electorate of Yerrabi.

I am regularly asked why I am doing this. The answer is simple; the standard of politicians currently sitting in the ACT Legislative Assembly is pretty poor.

I am seeking to change that. We have a government that has stopped listening to the community it is supposed to represent.

The recent passing of frankly dangerous drug decriminalisation legislation, as well as the proposal to lift the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14, is evidence of this. This government is more interested in passing laws that will boost its progressive image as opposed to actually investing in the infrastructure and programs required for this legislation to have any chance of meeting its intended purpose.

In short, they are doomed to fail, and the community will suffer as a result.

A government that places ideology above the best interests of the community is not a good government.

Canberrans are sensible people, and they deserve sensible people representing them in the Legislative Assembly. This mindset and focus are what I will bring to the Chamber if elected.

I am also often asked why I’ve joined the Belco Party. This is another simple answer. I have no intention of joining any of the major parties currently occupying the Assembly. Fresh people with fresh ideas are what is needed, and the Assembly needs more minor party or independent voices on the crossbench to ensure any legislation and budget spending is in the best interests of Canberrans. And the term “Belco” is quintessentially Canberran — which is what the Belco Party stands for, grassroots Canberra!

ACT Policing do not get looked after by this government.

You are the lowest-paid and most under-resourced police force in the country. This has to change. If I am elected, ACT Policing and the AFPA would have someone to ensure that ACT Policing has the resources and legislation to safely and effectively serve and protect the ACT community.



As well as policing and law and order matters, I am also passionate about mental health issues, addressing family violence, and resolving the perilous state of the ACT’s health and education systems. And of course, local issues like “good old rates, roads, and rubbish”.

I encourage those of you who are interested to join the party via the website (www.belcoparty.org). Anybody keen to volunteer or donate can do so via this link. Anybody interested in running as a candidate, let the party know — we are always on the lookout for quality people!

I’ll be out and about over the next two years, so if you see me come and say g’day and let me know your concerns. I can also be reached via Jason.Taylor@belcoparty.org, or on my Facebook page “Jason Taylor- Belco Party for Yerrabi”.

Let me protect you and your family as a member of the Assembly and help “Keep the Bastards Honest!”. ◀

Former ACT Policing member Jason Taylor is now running for the seat of Yerrabi in the next ACT elections.

“I was diagnosed with bowel cancer when I was 21. Because I was in the process of switching to a new policy with my previous fund, I wasn’t covered. After that experience, I changed to Police Health. It was the best decision of my life. Even later when I got breast cancer, during the 17 years I’ve been with Police Health, they’ve never let me down.”

Michelle Handbury, two-time cancer survivor

CONTENT WARNING: Michelle’s account of her journey with bowel cancer and breast cancer may be upsetting for some readers.

“Police Health restored my faith in the system. A lot of funds say they give back but when it came down to my situation, they didn’t. I’ve been with Police Health since 2004, during which I’ve had 19 recurring surgeries and have ended up on life support twice. Being with Police Health, the least of my concerns is my cover.”

“When I was diagnosed with breast cancer at 33, Police Health covered my surgeries and ongoing treatment, and went beyond their role to guarantee their level of care. For example, informing me about a Government subsidy because of my length of travel to the hospital, as well as claiming associated treatments such as acupuncture and physiotherapy that help make my body more resilient.”

“I can also access counselling to deal with the grief and resentment of my breast cancer diagnosis, which my husband was able to attend.



Before I was a Police Health member, I had to sell my beautiful horse to pay for a specialist who was able to promise I wouldn’t wear a colostomy bag for the rest of my life. I was 21 and fighting cancer.

Michelle has received more than \$240k in benefits from her Police Health policy.



“It’s these small things that Police Health do that make a big impact.”

“I was also taken into hospital every six to 10 months, it was a relief knowing there was no ‘out of pocket’. This alone has saved me thousands.”

“Breast cancer stripped everything away from me. I remember thinking, this can’t be my time; me and my husband have too much to do together. I can’t leave him. I know people don’t get to walk away from this kind of journey. I met some of the most amazing women during my treatment. At 33, I was considered young, and these women took me under their wing.”

“I found solace in my support network: the nurses and doctors, my family, Police Health, work, and my animals. These all form the puzzle of life that helped move me forward. I call them my healing team.”

“I believe in surrounding yourself with inspiring people you respect, and you can never go wrong.”

“But it’s okay to sit in the state of mourning for a little while, so you can stand up and fight, in the face of adversity. As the saying goes, God never gives you more than you can handle.”

“My Nan used to say, you can be anything you want to be. During my fight, my goal was to survive. It’s important to develop a positive mindset and pair it with sheer determination. This is the recipe to achieve anything in life. I’ve found life to be extremely grounding.”

“We all need to be our own advocates, especially women. Going with my gut has never led me astray. This is the message I impart to people when I do public speaking; that bowel and breast cancers don’t discriminate by age groups.”

“Maybe this happened to me so I could tell my story to the many women who will go on this journey – and be that person to tell them they can survive. A diagnosis hits you like a freight train, but how you deal with it is a testament to your character. **Cancer doesn’t have to define you.**”

“My battle scars aren’t something to be ashamed of. They remind me I won.”

To join more than 65,000 other members of Australia’s police community already enjoying peace-of-mind from Police Health’s gold-tier insurance, call **1800 603 603** or visit **policehealth.com.au**.

Please note: some information in this article has been compiled from material obtained externally. Although we make every effort to ensure information is correct at the time of publication, we accept no responsibility for its accuracy. Health-related articles are intended for general information only and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your doctor. The views expressed in articles are not necessarily those of Police Health.

Ph: 1800 603 603 | www.policehealth.com.au



COVER LIKE NO OTHER



Message from Attorney-General **Mark Dreyfus** KC MP

As Attorney-General I am delighted to once again be the Minister responsible for the Australian Federal Police. It is good to be partnering with you on the important work of protecting Australians and strengthening the rule of law.

► Whether on the front-line or online, each day you and your colleagues respond to threats and ensure the safety and security of the Australian community.

In the nine years since I was last Attorney-General the challenges our community faces have changed significantly. We face a number of increasingly complex threats, from State and non-State actors, both on and offshore.

In recent months, the professional and swift response of the AFP to the high profile cyber attacks on Medibank and Optus has demonstrated to the Australian community the great technical capacity of the AFP.

In November I was pleased to join the Minister for Cyber Security Clare O'Neil in formalising the standing joint operation between the AFP and the Australian Signals Directorate to investigate, target and disrupt cyber criminals.

I thank Commissioner Reece Kershaw for not only keeping Australians up to date on these operational matters, but also reassuring the public that authorities are ready and responding.

This is highly technical work and I appreciate the tremendous efforts of the AFP in responding to these events, including through Operation Guardian.

As the Minister also responsible for child safety I am keenly aware of how online exploitation of children is becoming increasingly prevalent, organised and extreme.

Keeping pace with the threat is one of the greatest challenges law enforcement face.

In September I visited the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation, which truly is at the forefront of combatting child exploitation not only in Australia but globally.

Through strong partnerships, the ACCCE and the AFP have achieved significant operational results.

Operation Arkstone is an example of the rigorous and proactive approach Australian law enforcement agencies are taking in tracking and prosecuting offenders. I commend those officers on the charges laid and the identification of victims. They do very difficult but very important work.

As a nation we must continue to find ways to work to counter this terrible crime. This is something the Albanese Government is focused on and we continue to implement the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030.

I also recognise that threats of counter-terrorism and foreign interference evolve and change, and your efforts to adapt to these changes is truly commendable. These are difficult, sensitive operations, and your work means Australians can live freely without fear.

In November, I was pleased to attend a celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the Criminal Assets Confiscation Taskforce. The Taskforce, led by the AFP and bringing together the expertise of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, Australian Taxation Office, AUSTRAC and the Australian Border Force, is critical to Australia's efforts to disrupt and deter organised crime.

By targeting criminals and their assets, the Taskforce stops proceeds of crime from being reinvested in illegal activities.

Through the confiscation of illegally obtained assets this money is directed into community-safety initiatives and crime prevention capabilities.

As people dedicated to upholding the law, I know how important integrity is to you. The Government shares this commitment

which is why we have made establishing a National Anti-Corruption Commission a priority in our first months in office.

The Commission will strengthen Australia's existing integrity framework by ensuring there is an agency with a dedicated focus on detecting and investigating serious or systemic corruption.

I am grateful to the AFPA for the support it has shown in these efforts.

AFP Members will be crucial to the success of the Commission. The dedication and expertise provided by AFP will enable the successful establishment of the Commission and will provide significant ongoing support to the Commission's investigations.

The AFP's skills are not just in demand across the country. There are 199 AFP members in 33 countries, working closely with international law enforcement agencies.

This work was highlighted in the 20th Anniversary of the Bali Bombings in a memorial at Parliament House, as well as other events across the country.

The AFP's presence in the Pacific is particularly important and longstanding. I was delighted to include in the first Albanese Government Budget in October funding for Pacific Security and Engagement Initiatives, including AFP deployment in Honiara through the Solomon Islands' International Assistance Force.

The common theme in all of these success stories is strong partnerships, which drive a collaborative national approach to keeping Australians and those in our region safe.

At the end of 2022, Australians are in no doubt that the skills, professionalism and integrity of the AFP means the community remains safe, and those who seek to do us harm are brought to justice.

Thank you for your continuing work this year. I wish you and your families a happy and safe New Year. 🍀

Message from Karen Andrews MP, Shadow Minister for Home Affairs

As we head into the holiday season after a busy year, I want to acknowledge the ongoing and tireless efforts of our law enforcement officers.

► You do incredible work for our community and perform an important function to protect Australians from harm.

As Minister for Home Affairs until late May this year, it was an enormous honour leading the men and women of Australian law enforcement - whose diligence keeps Australia prosperous, secure, and united.

I was proud to see the degree of professionalism from the AFP and I've pledged to continue fighting for appropriate funding levels and resources for the AFP to perform its crucial job.

So I was very pleased to retain portfolio responsibility for the Australian Federal Police in my capacity as the Shadow Minister for Home Affairs, Child Protection and the Prevention of Family Violence following the election.

One of my highlights as the former Minister was to achieve an increase in funding for the AFP - bringing the total annual budget to more than \$1.7 billion.

I was proud to deliver specific funding to further develop the capabilities of the AFP including to harden Australia's border against transnational, serious and organised crime, and boosting the AFP's specialist operational, surveillance and criminal asset confiscation capabilities to keep pace with the growing threat of outlaw motorcycle gangs, organised crime, cartels and other crime groups.

We also funded the Criminal Asset Confiscation Taskforce, enabling even greater targeting of the criminal business model and more confiscation of illicit wealth from organised crime - to be reinvested in the Australian community and our law enforcement.

The Taskforce was expanded into Adelaide, extending its reach to all mainland states.

I know how important this was to the various operational activities the AFP will continue to undertake to keep Australians

safe, particularly in the current environment where we are experiencing unprecedented numbers of cyber-attacks on our most personal and sensitive information.

I understand how important it is that government plays a leading role in ensuring not only the proper funding to tackle cyber criminals in Australia and abroad, but also to ensure the right policy levers are in place by providing clear distinctions for which agencies are responsible for specific responses to this crime.

There needs to be clarity on what support is provided to victims; be it state and territory police or federal, political or departmental, corporations or third-party organisations - such as IDCare.

Enabling clear ownership for cross-agency work will ensure greater clarity and faster response to Australians who may encounter a cyber-attack, as well as allowing law enforcement officers to concentrate on finding and bringing to justice perpetrators.

This increased cyber activity is on top of our borders reopening to international travellers, which will undoubtedly bring an increase in attempts at illegal activity like drug importation, from which we saw some change in type and scale during the pandemic.

I also understand the need to continuously update legislation and ensure it's fit for purpose, including workplace laws for frontline personnel who encounter particularly challenging environments and conditions as part of the job requirements.

Sufficient mental health care that takes into consideration what an AFP office may encounter in their day to day working life is something I will support - and that includes presumptive legislation as championed by the AFPA.


More needs to be done to ensure a swift recovery for officers suffering from PTSD or other mental health issues specifically relating to or exacerbated by the working conditions and requirements of the service.

In anecdotal cases, we have heard of officers returning to work sooner or prior to full recovery because of financial pressures, which does our community harm as well as to the individuals themselves – we need law enforcement employees at their best for the difficult jobs that they do, not feeling forced to rush back to work when they could take the appropriate time afforded for their recovery needs.

I will work with my Coalition colleagues and the government to ensure the necessary presumptive legislation changes occur to help improve the claims process.

I want to make the point very clearly that the Coalition will always back legislation that supports the work of our law enforcement agencies because we are committed to keeping Australians safe and secure.

I wish you all a joyful and relaxing break over the festive season, and a successful 2023.

Thank you for your service. 




One of my highlights as the former Minister was to achieve an increase in funding for the AFP – **bringing the total annual budget to more than \$1.7 billion.**



Message from Mick Gentleman MLA, ACT Police and Emergency Services Minister

As this year draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on all that ACT Policing has achieved in the past 12 months and the challenges its members have faced.

► I will never forget the exceptional effort of ACT Police during the pandemic. When the community was told to stay home to stay safe, ACT Police officers put on their uniform as usual and continued to keep Canberrans safe.

The extraordinary protest activity we've been seeing since last year is yet another example of how varied the role of community policing is, and the range of situations members are called upon to handle.

ACT Policing should be proud of the way it supported Australians to have their voices heard without compromising the safety of Canberrans.

We also can't let 2022 go by without addressing the tragedies that have occurred

on our roads. Despite the tireless work of ACT Policing members in preventing and deterring dangerous driving, we have had a horror road toll this year.

The impact of what is happening on our roads is felt all throughout our community. You, along with your first responder colleagues from ACT Emergency Services are continuously being asked to bear the burden of supporting victims, witnesses, families, and colleagues. You do this with

grace, but it does come at a cost, and one that can impact your own families. Please know the ACT Policing Welfare Officers and mental health clinicians in SHIELD are ready to assist. I encourage you to contact them if you need some support.

We have heard your call upon the ACT Government to provide you with improved tools to tackle the dangerous driving.

In November, we announced a range of legislative reforms to further crack down on excessive speeding and some of the driver behaviours that have contributed to the deaths and serious injuries we've seen on our roads this year.

These new laws will allow police to issue immediate licence suspensions if a driver is more than 45km/h over the speed limit or if they were engaging in dangerous, reckless or furious driving. This immediate licence suspension also applies to drivers who refuse to provide an oral fluid sample for drug testing.

There are also changes to the laws around street racing, including increasing the fine for repeat offenders to up to \$16,000, putting jail terms on the table and giving police a greater ability to seize the vehicles

of those who commit these crimes. The courts will also be able to order vehicles be forfeited.

These are important steps in saying 'enough is enough.' We know that there is more work to be done though, especially in terms of educating the community. The ACT Government, in partnership with ACT Policing is committed to doing it.

You, as ACT Policing members should be proud that because of your work we live in the safest city in the country, if not the world.

This is a result of the endless hard yards members put in day in, day out. It's also a result of how nimble and responsive ACT Policing is.

Operation TORIC is an excellent example of this. Since Operation TORIC kicked off in August this year, the taskforce has made more than 150 apprehensions and laid more than 350 charges for a range of offences.

For my part, I have been working with the Chief Police Officer and his team, as well as the AFPA, to ensure your voices are being heard in Government. I am committed to delivering the resources you need and making the legislative change

that will enable ACT Policing to adapt and respond effectively to changes in community behaviour and expectations. I know by making smart legal changes and building on the record investments made by the ACT Government in the past few years, we can support you better.

The targeted, intelligence-led interventions delivered by TORIC have been enabled by investments made into the Police Services Model (PSM). This is an example of how we can help you work smarter not harder. As we head into 2023, work on PSM2 is well underway.

I will continue my efforts to deliver additional funding to ACT Policing and put more boots on the ground so you can get on with the job of keeping our community safe.

I know you're focused on doing your job and doing it well, but I think it's important our community recognises the personal sacrifice police officers make in the line of duty, especially over the holiday season. The Christmas-New Year period is one of the busiest times of the year for ACT Policing, so I do hope each of you find a moment to celebrate with friends or family, and have some proper downtime planned in 2023. ◀

Contribute to



BLUESTAR

Please feel free to forward any ideas for stories or articles to brian.mciver@afpa.org.au



Message from **Jeremy Hanson, CSC, MLA, ACT Shadow Minister for Police**

Laws recently passed by the ACT Greens and Labor in the ACT Assembly to decriminalise heroin, methamphetamines and other hard drugs are deeply flawed. They will not reduce harm but will likely lead to increased drug use, increased crime, and increased road trauma in the ACT.

► In the words of the AFP Commissioner, these laws will make for “a far more dangerous environment” for police and lead to “a more dangerous society.”

Decriminalisation will put even more strain on already stretched drug treatment services and police by making drugs more available, exploitation easier and policing more difficult.

As the Federal Police Association says of these laws, “the government may as well write a cheque for organised crime and roll out the welcome mat.”

The proposed laws will not stop addicts being prosecuted and jailed just for drug use, which is one of the arguments for this law to change, because that is not actually happening now.

Police already divert users to drug treatment where possible, which has proved very successful.

The ACT Law Society has pointed out that “the Bill will have minimal effect on driving drug users from the criminal justice system.”

The impact on road safety has also been highlighted by the Federal Police

Association as more people affected by drugs will be driving on our roads. This will further stretch our police and cause harm through increased road trauma.

People on the frontline of health services have also raised their objections to decriminalising hard drugs and suggested instead the ACT Government focus on the current treatment and harm minimisation programs and increase focus on early intervention and education programs.

Instead of this naive grandstanding exercise, the ACT Government should properly resource ACT Policing, which is chronically short-staffed, and properly invest in underfunded drug treatment services.

I am running a petition to stop these laws which can be signed here by visiting: jeremyhanson.net/dont-decriminalise-drugs

In October this year I also led a debate in the ACT Legislative Assembly that called on the MLAs to thank and commend ACT Policing members for the vital work they do for the ACT community. This debate acknowledged that ACT Policing has faced a particularly challenging few years with bushfires, COVID-19, and protests.

In the debate I made the point that our police undertake difficult and often dangerous work, and they do so day and night, week after week, year after year. It is remarkable just how much our police have had to deal with in the last few years. There were the bushfires, which shocked many of us and strained every resource available. We then rolled straight into an unprecedented pandemic, with police on the front line. It is safe to say that, for some years, the ACT's thin blue line has been stretched very thin indeed.

That was exposed even more when we looked at the ACT Police annual report that showed that, in the last decade, police numbers have actually declined in the ACT whilst the population has gone up by 70,000! According to the latest Report on government services from the Productivity Commission, the number of operational police in the ACT is proportionately the lowest in the country on every measure. In 2020-21, total recurrent spending was the lowest in the country.

That is why the police have been calling out for some years for more support.

As the AFPA said: It's almost an embarrassment that we spend the least amount of money in Australia on policing in this jurisdiction and also have the lowest number of police officers per capita.

The Canberra Liberals have called for an increase in ACT policing numbers to at least meet those in NSW, and we will continue to call for more support for our police.

I would like to thank the AFPA for their tireless advocacy for their members for many years—in particular, Alex Caruana and Troy Roberts.

Finally, my deep respect and sincere thanks go to all ACT Policing members, sworn and unsworn, and the volunteers, for the vital work they do for our ACT community.

I know many will be working during this period, and to those I offer special acknowledgement, but I and wish all members of ACT Police and their families a safe and happy holiday season. ◀



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AFP Plaque (Glass)	\$70		
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AFP Coaster Set	\$40		
AFP Cuff Links	\$25		
AFP Gloss Mug	\$15		
AFP Pen	\$20		
AFP Key Ring	\$18		
AFP Stubby Holder	\$10		
AFP Tie Tac (coloured, silver, gold)	\$10		
PWF Plaque (Glass)	\$85		
AFPA Tie	\$25		
AFPA Tie Bar	\$12		
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Merchandise order form

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