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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.

#### Executive Editor

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#### Magazine cover

Recruit Excellence  
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**Alex Caruana**, President, Australian Federal Police Association

**“Together, we can build an AFP that meets the challenges of today and tomorrow, an agency that embodies integrity, resilience, and excellence.”**

#### OPINION PIECE

### Australia faces a defining moment as we stand on the cusp of the 2025 federal election.

The decisions made in this election will reverberate through our nation’s political, social, and security landscape for generations to come. Issues such as national security, economic stability, social justice, and the well-being of our communities are at the forefront of public discourse.

Yet, amidst these challenges, one institution remains steadfast in its duty to protect and serve: the Australian Federal Police (AFP).

It is the cornerstone of our nation’s security framework, a bulwark against domestic and global threats, and a testament to the resilience and dedication of our members, and all who work for the AFP.

As President of the Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA), I am proud to present our federal election manifesto—a blueprint for a stronger, fairer, and more capable AFP—because the safety of our nation depends on it. A full copy of our manifesto can be found on page 14.

The AFP is more than a law enforcement agency; it is a lifeline for Australia. Every day, its appointees—

police officers, protective service officers, and unsworn staff—confront the complexities of modern crime: cyber-attacks that threaten our digital infrastructure, terrorism that tests our resolve, and transnational networks that exploit our borders.

They stand guard at our airports, protect our critical infrastructure, and work tirelessly to ensure justice prevails.

Yet, for too long, these men and women have been asked to do more with less. Underfunded, undervalued, and overstretched, the government’s refusal to address systemic issues, such as the AFP’s status as the lowest base-paid police service in Australia, has eroded morale and compromised operational effectiveness. This cannot continue.

The 2025 election is our opportunity to demand change, to restore the AFP to its rightful place as Australia’s premier law enforcement agency, and to secure a future where its people are supported as fiercely as they support us.

This manifesto is built on four key pillars, each addressing a critical aspect of the AFP’s challenges and potential. Together, they form a transformative agenda that we, the AFPA, will champion throughout this election campaign.



“

The AFP is more than a law enforcement agency; it is a lifeline for Australia.

”

### First

**A Future for Good Faith Bargaining**, seeks to unshackle the AFP from the restrictive Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy 2023, enabling independent, flexible enterprise agreements that reflect the unique demands of law enforcement.

The current system, which treats the AFP as just another public service entity, has failed its workforce. We propose a bold alternative: the establishment of an AFP Arbitral Tribunal, inspired by models like the Northern Territory Police Arbitral Tribunal, to ensure disputes are resolved fairly and swiftly, without the delays and limitations of the Fair Work Commission, and wage negotiations can be undertaken appropriate to the workplace environment our members operate in.

As Dr. Giuseppe Carabetta references in his article in this edition, the Fair Work regime is ill-suited to the AFP's needs, leaving disputes unresolved and appointees without recourse. It's time for a system that respects the AFP's operational realities and delivers the outcomes its people deserve.

### Second

**More Support for AFP Appointees** addresses the human cost of service.

The physical and psychological toll on our members is undeniable. The violent assault on three AFP officers at Perth Airport on January 13, 2025, underscored this reality—one officer stabbed multiple times, just doing his job. Such incidents are not anomalies; they are warnings.

As a priority, we call for the AFP Blue Card, a lifeline offering government-funded medical and psychological care, and removing punitive reductions in incapacity payments under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*. No AFP appointee should face financial ruin because of a service-related injury, yet too many do.

Additionally, a National Commissioner for First Responder Mental Health and Suicide, and the scoping of Police Treatment Centres, further reflect our commitment to our people's well-being. These are not luxuries; they are necessities.

We demand mandatory sentencing for those who harm Commonwealth public officials under Division 147 of the Criminal Code 1995, a deterrent to protect those who protect us. They deserve nothing less.

### Third

**Integrity Matters**, is about ensuring the AFP operates with the highest ethical standards while safeguarding its appointees' rights. The current Professional Standards framework, unchanged since 2006, is outdated and punitive. Investigation timelines become the punishment—293 days for category three cases in 2024, 454 days for corruption probes—leaving appointees in limbo, unsupported and ostracised.

We call for an independent review of this framework, amendments to the AFP Act 1979 to clarify “serious misconduct” and “corruption,” and stronger oversight through a Review Panel and the Merit Protection Commissioner. Integrity is the AFP’s bedrock, but it must not come at the expense of fairness or mental health. Our appointees deserve a system that upholds justice, where the process does not become the punishment.

### Finally

**Restoring the AFP as Australia’s Premier Law Enforcement Agency** is our vision for the future.

We propose expanding the AFP to 10,000 appointees by 2028, with a 60/40 sworn-to-unsworn ratio, backed by increased funding, modern technology, and a comprehensive independent broad-ranging Capability Review.

The AFP must grow to meet escalating threats—cybercrime, domestic extremism such as the Adass Israel Synagogue arson, and regional instability. Our recruitment, retention, and training strategies will build a diverse, skilled workforce, while modern tools like AI-driven analytics, will enhance operational efficiency. This is not just about numbers; it’s about capacity, readiness, and pride in an institution that leads the nation in law enforcement excellence. This is about capability to protect our nation.

The AFPA’s achievements in recent years—in securing the National Firearms Register, presumptive PTSD legislation, and additional funding for wage increases—demonstrate what’s possible when we collectively fight for all of our members, unsworn and sworn.



Yet, these successful outcomes are only the beginning. The underfunding, under-resourcing, and under-recognition of the work of our members persists, and the 2025 federal election is an opportunity to turn the tide. We will hold every candidate accountable, asking them to articulate their commitments to these key pillars, and sharing their responses with our 4,300 plus members, their families, and the broader community. This is an opportunity for current and potential candidates to demonstrate their commitment to a safer Australia.

The AFP's role extends beyond our borders. Through partnerships with Interpol, the United Nations, and regional initiatives such as the AU\$400 million Pacific policing plan, it fosters stability in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. At home, it tackles crimes that prey on the vulnerable—child exploitation, human trafficking, domestic violence—upholding Australia's commitment to human rights. But this work demands resources, respect, and a government that matches the AFP's dedication with tangible support. A stronger AFP is not just an institutional goal; it is a national imperative, fostering a safer, fairer Australia where trust in the rule of law prevails.

As I write this, I am acutely aware of the stakes. The AFP is not invincible; it is made of people—people who risk their lives, who carry the weight of trauma, who deserve better than they've been given. This campaign is their voice, amplified by the AFPA, demanding recognition, equity, and the tools to succeed.

To the Australian public, I say: your safety depends on the AFP's strength.

To our members, I say: we will not rest until you are heard.

And to our political leaders, I say: the time for promises is over—act now, or step aside, our members deserve your commitment.

Together, we can build an AFP that meets the challenges of today and tomorrow, an agency that embodies integrity, resilience, and excellence.

The 2025 election is our moment to secure that future. Let us seize it—for our members, for our communities, and for the nation we swore to protect.

**Alex Caruana**

***President,  
Australian Federal Police Association***

## **To the Australian public**

**I say: your safety depends  
on the AFP's strength.**

## **To our members**

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## **To our political leaders**

**I say: the time for promises is over—  
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deserve your commitment.**





# Your AFPA Membership

## More Than Just Workplace Support

**As we move into the heart of 2025, we understand the unique challenges you face each and every day. I want to ensure you are fully aware of the additional support your Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) membership can provide.**

Your AFPA membership offers so much more than just standard legal and industrial advice related to your employment, government and industry advocacy, and typical member benefits usually associated with retaining a union membership.

We are here to support you in every aspect of your life, both professionally and personally. Whether you're navigating tough times at work or dealing with personal challenges, we have resources and services designed to help you through.

You can seek out this welfare support during many of these challenging moments in life during the course of your AFPA Membership, and it's important to note that support isn't limited to your professional life; we've been there for many members, their loved ones and colleagues when they have needed it the most.

Whether you're dealing with serious health issues such as cancer, or recovering from a serious injury, we're here to wrap support around you.

From the initial welfare support during critical moments, to support options such as providing meals, or arranging cleaning services to lighten your load, we aim to make your life a little easier.

We understand that a helping hand can come in many forms. Sometimes, it's as straightforward as ensuring that you have the funds to feed your pets, who bring you comfort every day, or putting new tires on your car so you can get to your appointments safely.

Remember, we're here to support you in every way possible, ensuring you and your loved ones have what you need to get through tough times.

I want to assure you that while there may be some paperwork involved, depending on the type of welfare you are seeking, we are here to guide you every step of



**We're here to support you in every way possible.**

the way. From the very beginning of your inquiry, you will receive clear and detailed instructions on what is needed. There may be eligibility criteria to consider, but we will take the time to explain everything thoroughly.

If at any point this process feels overwhelming, please know that you are not alone. We have a wealth of experience working with advocates of your choice, ensuring you have the support you need. Our goal is to make this journey as smooth and stress-free as possible for you. We're here to help, and we genuinely care about your well-being.

You or your support person, colleague, or loved one can reach out to one of our wonderful AFPA representatives through our Delegate network or directly to dedicated AFPA staff members. Whether it's through a call, email, or an in-person conversation, we're here to start providing the care and support you need. Our team is dedicated to ensuring you feel valued, heard, and supported every step of the way. Don't hesitate to connect with us – we're ready to help you navigate through this with compassion and understanding.

# The Australian Federal Police Enterprise Agreement 2024 – 2027

## COMMON ISSUES

**The Australian Federal Police Enterprise Agreement 2024 – 2027 (EA) was narrowly voted up on 15 November 2024, and following approval by the Fair Work Commission came into operation on 9 December 2024.**

Notwithstanding the new EA, the AFPA repeatedly sees the same issues arising regardless of what Workplace Instrument is in force. In this article I will discuss some of the more common issues affecting members and your rights in relation to these issues.

### **1. If it isn't in the EA it is not enforceable.**

Throughout bargaining for the EA, the AFPA made a point of arguing against terms and conditions of employment being incorporated via policy. Despite this, there is a plethora of governance contained in policy that is concerned with your conditions of employment.

It should be remembered that unless a policy is given force, either by being incorporated into the EA, as a contractual requirement, or under legislation (such as Commissioner's Orders), then conditions and entitlements in policy are not enforceable where they undermine or conflict with entitlements in the EA. Further, amendments to policy can be made at any time and strictly speaking without any consultation, whereas changes to the EA can only be made by either a formal variation or the approval of a new enterprise agreement.

We have frequently found that terms and conditions sitting within policy are the most problematic, as the AFP often does not follow its own policy, or unfairly applies policy to the detriment of members' entitlements. If you believe that any policy conflicts with your entitlements under the EA we encourage you to reach out as soon as possible.

### **2. Roster changes must be as per the EA.**

We consistently see members being told of changes to their normal pattern of attendance or rostered shift by means not in accordance with the EA. For those members on the Operations or Rostered Operations Working patterns, notification of shift changes must be by direct communication in the form of face to face notification or by telephone conversation, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed. If this is not adhered to, and you have not genuinely agreed to an alternative method of communication, then safety net provisions will apply, such as in the case of Rostered Operations, where members are entitled to an additional payment at the Base Salary Hourly Rate for all hours worked outside the previously rostered shift.



**Our message is clear – if there is an expectation for a member to be contactable after hours, the member must be paid the on-call allowance.**

### **3. If you are not paid or are on-call do not have to answer your UOC.**

Following on from the above point, other than in emergency situations or genuine welfare matters, a member must not be contacted outside of the member's hours of work unless the member is in receipt of an on-call allowance, or is remunerated appropriately. Unless this is the case members are not required to read or respond to emails or phone calls outside their working hours. Members cannot face adverse action if they reasonably refuse such contact outside of their regular working hours.

Our message is clear – if there is an expectation for a member to be contactable after hours, the member must be paid the on-call allowance.

### **4. Overpayments cannot be deducted without your consent, and underpayments must be repaid as soon as practicable and, where possible, in accordance with the member's request.**

We continue to see instances of money being deducted from a member's wages to satisfy an overpayment without the member's consent. Such a deduction is a contravention of section 324 of the *Fair Work Act 2009*, which requires the deduction to be authorised

in writing and principally for the member's benefit. Further, the National Guideline on Debt Management requires a written agreement detailing the reason for the overpayment, a calculation and total value of the overpayment and a method of repayment.

Underpayments are also a reoccurring issue in our engagement with the AFP. Underpayments need to be paid to a member as soon as practicable after the underpayment is identified. The AFPA's view is that repayment should not be merely on the next pay run, but as soon as feasibly possible. The *Fair Work Act 2009* provides that, as a minimum, employees must be paid at least monthly in full.

If you find yourself with an overpayment or underpayment we encourage you to reach out to us as soon as possible.

### **5. Higher Duties Allowance should be paid on day 1**

Clause 39(6) of the EA provides that "The Commissioner may shorten the qualifying period for higher duties allowance on a case-by-case basis". However, the intent, as agreed to in bargaining, is that members should if possible receive HDA from day 1. The BPG of Higher Duties provides:

5.3.6. The Delegate may shorten the qualifying period for Higher Duties Allowance on a case-by-case basis. Delegates are strongly encouraged to consider approving payment of higher duties from day one for an Employee who is seeking to undertake a higher duties arrangement.

It is apparent that the intent is to provide HDA from day 1 as the norm, rather than the exception. With this in mind, members should be aware that the delegation for approval of HDA from day 1 rests with the Coordinator/ Superintendent and above, and we encourage members to discuss this with their Coordinator/ Superintendent prior to agreeing to undertake Higher Duties to ensure payment from day 1, or if not request an explanation as to why not.

## **6. Use your MRDs or you will lose them.**

All members other than Executive level employees are entitled to receive four MRDs which are credited on 1 March each year and must be used prior to the end of the following February. Where a member has used 304 hours or more of Annual leave in a financial year, they will also be granted an additional MRD on 1 September following the financial year.

We have frequently seen members having MRDs taken away due to the member not taking them, whether this is because they are too busy, or they simply forget. Our message is simple – under the EA supervisors must ensure Employees are granted reasonable opportunity to utilise MRDs, and members should negotiate time to take their MRDs. If the area cannot afford to allow a member to take an MRD, which given staffing issues is becoming more and more likely, then the member should request they are credited with the unused MRD on that basis.

## **7. Flexible Work Arrangements – If Not, Why not.**

A Flexible Work Arrangement is an agreement between the AFP and an Employee to vary how, when, and/ or where, work is conducted by Employees to better accommodate their commitments outside of work because of certain circumstances. An employee can request a FWA in writing, setting out details of the change sought and reasons for the change. Changes to working arrangements can be requested due to any of the following circumstances:

- the employee is pregnant
- the employee is the parent, or has responsibility for the care, of a child who is of school age or younger
- the employee is a carer (within the meaning of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* )
- the employee has a disability
- the employee is 55 or older
- the employee is experiencing family and domestic violence
- the employee provides care or support to a member of the employee's immediate family, or a member of the employee's household, who requires care or support because the member is experiencing family and domestic violence



Within 21 days of a request, the AFP must respond granting the request, or following discussions with the employee, mutually agree to a different FWA, or refusing the request.

Where a request is refused, the AFP must provide details of the reasons for refusal, set out the business grounds for the refusal and set out any changes the AFP would accommodate. Further, the AFP must inform the employee that a decision to refuse, or a failure to respond in 21 days is subject to the Dispute Resolution provisions of the EA.

Importantly, supervisors should adopt an ‘if not why not’ approach to assessing FWA requests, and ensure Employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities around flexible work. Unfortunately, members often have FWAs refused without reasons being provided, or a decision is not made within 21 days, in breach of not only the EA, but the provisions of the *Fair Work Act 2009*. In any application for a FWA, individual circumstances need to be taken into consideration and it is unlawful to issue a blanket ban or terminate/postpone a FWA without complying with the EA and the Fair Work Act.

## 8. Leave – Unreasonable Refusal.

We are hearing reports of the AFP imposing blanket bans on leave, especially with the federal election looming on the horizon. Our position is clear, the AFP cannot unreasonably refuse a leave application. This position is clearly stated in both the Fair Work Act and the BPG for Leave and Related Entitlements.

The Fair Work Act makes this position clear and provides, at section 88(2), “The employer must not unreasonably refuse to agree to a request by the employee to take paid annual leave.”

The BGP mirrors this and states: “Requests for leave should be considered in a timely, fair and reasonable manner - having consideration to the Employee’s personal circumstances and Operational Requirements.” and “A leave application cannot be unreasonably refused, or revoked (if the leave had previously been approved). Generally, leave applications can only be refused on reasonable business grounds.”

We therefore encourage members to discuss any requests for leave with their supervisor, and where leave is refused that they ensure the reason(s) for refusal are clearly articulated by the AFP.


## 9. If you are hurt at work or feel unsafe always put in a workplace incident report.

Under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRC Act), Comcare can potentially avoid liability for an injury where the member has not provided notice of the injury in writing “as soon as practicable” after the injury was sustained. As such it is vital that members provide notice to avoid any claim, that would otherwise satisfy the criteria in the SRC Act, being denied simply due to not providing notification in a timely manner. This is particularly relevant for minor injuries that do not initially require time off work but may worsen over time.

The best way to protect your entitlements is to submit a workplace incident report to the AFP, detailing both the incident that caused the injury, and the injury itself, along with any supporting medical evidence.

Further, workplace incident reports are not confined to reporting injuries, but can also be used to highlight problems within the work area, including staffing issues. We are aware that there is significant pressure on supervisors to reduce overtime, while at the same time coping with a reduced workforce.

**The AFPA’s position is simple, where team numbers are below what would be regarded as sufficient for any given shift all affected members should submit a workplace incident report documenting their safety concerns and the increased risks associated with understaffing.**



# 2025

## AFPA National Council update

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) is a vital representative body advocating for the interests of Australian Federal Police (AFP) appointees, including Police Officers, Protective Service Officers, and unsworn staff. At the heart of its governance structure is the National Council, a key decision-making assembly that shapes the association's policies, strategies, and future direction.

The National Council comprises elected representatives from various AFP regions and portfolios, ensuring an inclusive workforce representation. This body convenes regularly to discuss critical issues, develop policies, and set the strategic agenda for the AFPA. Decisions made by the Council influence a wide range of matters, including industrial relations, member welfare, and overarching law enforcement policies, reinforcing the AFPA's role as a staunch advocate for its members.

With the highly anticipated AFPA Biennial National Council scheduled for 26-27 March 2025, this event will serve as a pivotal forum for shaping the future of the association and safeguarding the interests of all AFP appointees. Planning for this significant gathering began over eight months ago, underscoring the commitment to ensuring a well-organised and impactful event.



One of our major sponsors, BankVic, will also serve as a key partner for the event, reinforcing our shared commitment to supporting all AFP appointees.

**The theme for the 2025 National Council is:**

**“Be Heard,  
Be Protected,  
Stronger Together.”**

This theme encapsulates the AFPA’s mission to amplify members’ voices, enhance their protections, and foster unity within the association and the broader law enforcement community.

In adherence to Rule 77(1) of the AFPA Rules, a call for agenda items was made in late January 2025. National Council members had until Wednesday, 19 February 2025, to submit their proposed items. We were pleased to receive numerous submissions indicating a strong level of engagement from our members. These agenda items will spark important discussions around the National Council tables, potentially driving change and policy development.

By the time this article is read, all Executive members, Convenors, and Delegates should have received a copy of the final agenda. If you are attending the National Council and have not yet received your copy, please contact the AFPA office immediately to ensure you are fully prepared for the discussions ahead.

With a federal election looming, the timing of the National Council is particularly significant. At the time of writing, speculation suggests that the election will be held within two or three weeks of our event.

Given the potential for the government to be in or approaching the ‘caretaker’ period, some invited politicians have been unable to commit to attending. Nonetheless, we hope leaders and key spokespeople from both major parties will recognise the importance of engaging with the AFPA and the National Council and seize this opportunity to outline their law enforcement policies as part of their election campaigns.

The 2025 AFPA Biennial National Council promises to be an essential event for shaping our association’s future and ensuring our members’ voices are heard. We look forward to productive discussions, meaningful engagements, and continued progress in advancing the interests of all AFP appointees, both here in Australia, and abroad.



# Home loan help for your stage of life

**It's long been considered the 'Great Australian Dream', but home ownership feels increasingly difficult to achieve for many. And even when you do own a home, knowing how to make your loan work for you is something not everyone feels confident to do.**

**In this issue of Bluestar, we wanted to share some suggestions and tips that no matter what stage of life or mortgage you might be, there is something you can implement to move things forward for you.**

## **Buying your first home sooner with BankVic**

### **Lower deposit requirements**

Moving from 'saving for a deposit' to 'ready to buy' may seem far away, but it could be closer than you think. BankVic's lending policies allow police members to purchase with less up-front hassle, whether you're a first-time homebuyer or looking to upgrade. By lowering the deposit requirement, BankVic helps ease the path to owning a home.

### **Borrow up to 90% LVR (Loan to Value Ratio) and pay no LMI**

While many lenders require a 20% house deposit to avoid paying Lenders Mortgage Insurance (LMI), as a police member with BankVic, you only need a 10% deposit to get into an established home in prescribed Australian metro areas. This lower deposit requirement makes home ownership more accessible and may help reduce the financial burden on police members.

### **We recognise 100% of your overtime pay**

As the bank for police, we understand police pay streams and can help you get the most out of your home loan, from loan application to settlement. For police members earning regular overtime, it's essential for this extra income to be fully considered in loan assessments.

Lenders without an intricate understanding of police pay streams may only consider a portion of your overtime. But at BankVic, we consider up to 100% of police overtime and penalty rates, which means your borrowing capacity can be viewed more favourably.

### **Super boost your deposit**

Salary sacrificing into your superannuation can be a smart tax effective way to pay for certain things in some circumstances from your pre-tax income<sup>#</sup>. You may also contribute to your super fund through salary sacrificing, and potentially withdraw your money to help buy your first home.

This withdrawal may be tax exempt, but you will need to consult with your superannuation provider. If you have been diligently contributing some of your overtime pay into your superannuation fund you could have enough excess to make this possible.



For police, emergency  
and health workers

## Lower your costs and unlock equity

### Refinance your home loan through BankVic

Refinancing can be a powerful tool, potentially saving you money or unlocking any available equity in your property. In short, refinancing involves moving from one loan agreement to another with different terms and often different rates.

When you refinance, you pay out your current loan with a new one—this means you may be able to access available equity, change interest rates, and consolidate debts.

You may choose to refinance from a variable rate to a fixed rate or from one bank to another. The opportunities are limitless, so don't ignore the possibility of refinancing.

Depending on your individual circumstances, refinancing may help you save money over the life of your loan and potentially reduce your monthly payments.

### Investing in property

Many homeowners have untapped potential sitting beneath their feet. While you may not have thought about buying an investment property, the equity you have in your home might make it possible.

If the value of your home has increased compared to the amount owing on your mortgage, there may be equity you can access. Depending on your financial circumstances, you could achieve your financial goals by borrowing from this equity to pay the deposit on an investment property.

Qualifying for additional lending does have its own barriers. But if your income has recently seen a rise or you weren't too ambitious when you borrowed your home loan, our home lending specialists could help you secure a new home loan to help you take advantage of this new-found equity.

### Pay off your home loan sooner

This might mean more of a sacrifice right now, but it may also mean more freedom and less financial pressure in the future. Here are some easy practical ways you can save and pay your home loan off quicker.

### Change your repayment frequency

An easy way to pay off your loan faster is to switch from monthly to fortnightly or weekly repayments, which has two benefits:

1. Because we calculate interest daily, you will reduce total interest paid over the life of the loan, and
2. If you pay your repayment every fortnight, rather than every month, you'll make 26 repayments per year instead of 12 payments, which may mean you end up paying more off your loan over the course of the year, potentially reducing your interest.

### Increase your repayment amount

You can also increase the amount you repay each period instead of just paying the minimum required. A handy way to do this is to maintain your payments at their current level even if your home loan's interest rate drops, if possible.

Having a good grasp on your household budget can also help you work out how much extra you could pay off. And you can always make one-off payments (like when you get a tax refund) depending on your loan type.

## Our team can help you

As the bank for police, emergency and health workers, we understand the unique circumstances you may have, and are experts at finding the right loans for you.



### Rebecca Attard, your AFPA relationship manager

We want to make banking easier and more accessible for those who protect and serve our community.

That's why we specialise in banking products for police. Whether you're a first home buyer, an aspiring or seasoned investor, looking to refinance or save for something special, we're here for you.



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**rattard@bankvic.com.au**



**We're also here to video chat - just let us know a time that works for you.**

**Visit our dedicated AFPA webpage to see how we can help you.**



# 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.



# President Foreword

**The 2025 federal election in Australia marks a critical juncture in the nation's political and social landscape. As the election approaches, it brings into focus significant issues, including national security, immigration policy, climate change, economic recovery, and social equity.**

The outcomes of this election will profoundly influence Australia's future, shaping the policies and priorities of the government in addressing these pressing challenges. Political parties are already ramping up their campaigns, striving to capture the attention and trust of voters who are preparing to make vital decisions about the country's governance.

Against this backdrop, the Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) is advocating for a transformative agenda that addresses the systemic challenges faced by the Australian Federal Police (AFP). The AFPA is committed to ensuring that the AFP, as a cornerstone of Australia's security framework, is equipped to meet the demands of modern law enforcement. This commitment involves not only enhancing the resources and operational capabilities of the AFP but also ensuring that its members—police officers, protective service officers, and unsworn appointees—receive the recognition, support, and remuneration they deserve.

The AFPA has outlined four key pillars that form the foundation of its advocacy during the 2025 election campaign:

## 1. A Future for Good Faith Bargaining

The AFPA seeks to restore integrity and fairness to the enterprise agreement bargaining process. This involves ensuring that the government engages in genuine negotiations and delivers outcomes that respect the contributions of AFP members, particularly in terms of fair wages and working conditions.

## 2. More Support for AFP Appointees

A significant focus is on addressing the mental and physical toll that AFP roles impose on its most important asset: its people. The AFPA calls for greater support systems, including enhanced access to mental health resources and initiatives to combat the long-term impacts of service-related trauma.

## 3. Integrity Matters

The AFPA emphasises the need for robust ethical standards and practices within the AFP, ensuring that its operations and personnel maintain the highest levels of professionalism and public trust.

## 4. Restoring the AFP as Australia's Premier Law Enforcement Agency

Central to the AFPA's agenda is re-establishing the AFP as a leading law enforcement body in Australia, with resources, capabilities, and compensation that reflect its critical role in safeguarding national security and protecting Australia and its many communities.

The government's refusal to raise the wages of AFP police officers to a level comparable with other policing services across Australia has entrenched the AFP as the lowest base paid police service in the country, and this must change in the future. This outcome has demoralised AFP appointees and highlighted the government's lack of understanding or appreciation for the vital work performed by the AFP.

The ongoing underfunding and lack of support have compounded the challenges faced by AFP appointees, who are consistently asked to do more with fewer resources. This strain has significantly affected their mental and physical well-being and ability to operate effectively in their roles.

*Despite many challenges, the AFPA has delivered significant outcomes in recent years, demonstrating its commitment to advancing the interests of AFP members.*

Despite many challenges, the AFPA has delivered significant outcomes in recent years, demonstrating its commitment to advancing the interests of AFP members. Notable achievements include:

**National Firearms Register:** Facilitating a centralised database to enhance firearm control and public safety.

**Presumptive PTSD Legislation:** Securing recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder as a workplace-related condition, ensuring affected personnel receive adequate support.

**Critical Illness Leave Registry:** Providing AFP appointees with the possibility of additional leave if they are diagnosed with a terminal illness and have exhausted their personal leave provisions.

**Additional funding for Enterprise Agreement wage increase:** AFP appointees' industrial action, led by the AFPA, resulted in an additional \$40 million in the funding envelope, which saw allowances increased and introduced to the benefit of AFP appointees.

**Retention of Protective Service Officers:** Preserving the presence of these officers at critical national security sites such as Exmouth and Geraldton.

Looking ahead, the AFPA aims to build on these successes by advocating for policies that strengthen the AFP and its ability to combat crime effectively. To this end, the AFPA is calling on all political candidates to clearly articulate their positions and commitments regarding the key issues outlined in its campaign. The AFPA will then share this information with its 4,300 members, their families, and the wider community, ensuring that voters are well-informed about each party's stance on matters affecting the AFP.

For too long, AFP appointees have been expected to shoulder increasing responsibilities without corresponding support or resources. The AFPA calls on all parties' candidates to take decisive action to address these inequities. Restoring the AFP to its rightful place as Australia's premier law enforcement agency requires a commitment to fair wages, improved resources, and greater recognition of the challenges faced by its members.

This is not just a matter of supporting a vital institution—it is about protecting those who protect Australia. Every day, AFP officers work tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of the nation. It is time for the government to match their dedication with meaningful action.

The AFPA urges all candidates to prioritise the welfare and operational effectiveness of the AFP. By addressing the issues outlined in this campaign, candidates can help secure a safer, stronger Australia for generations to come. The AFPA stands ready to work with all politicians committed to supporting the men and women who dedicate their lives to protecting the nation.

The AFPA's vision for 2025 is achievable. By addressing the pressing issues of workplace fairness, mental health, organisational integrity, and operational excellence, we can ensure the AFP continues to serve as Australia's premier law enforcement agency. Together, we will advocate for meaningful change to support our members and safeguard Australia's future.



**Alex Caruana**  
President

# AFPA Key Pillars of Advocacy

## 01

### A Future for Good Faith Bargaining

#### VISION

Remove the AFP from the constraints of the *Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy 2023*.

#### OBJECTIVE

- Enable independent and flexible enterprise agreements tailored to the unique needs of the AFP.
- Introduction of a tribunal system that can adjudicate on points without being referred to the Fair Work Commission for hearing.

## 02

### More Support for AFP Appointees

#### VISION

Enhance support mechanisms for AFP appointees facing psychological and physical challenges.

#### OBJECTIVE

- Introduce mandatory sentencing for offenders convicted of harming a Commonwealth public official as per *Division 147 of the Criminal Code 1995*.
- Amend the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* to remove punitive reductions in incapacity payments.
- Introduce the AFP Blue Card, akin to the Department of Veterans Affairs White Card.
- Establish a National Commissioner for First Responder Mental Health and Suicide.
- Ensure no member is financially disadvantaged due to rehabilitation costs.
- Explore the establishment of Police Treatment Centres.

## 03

### Integrity Matters

#### VISION

Foster accountability and fairness in the AFP's professional standards and employment decisions.

#### OBJECTIVE

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the AFP's Professional Standards framework.
- Establish a Review Panel for employment decisions under the *AFP Regulations 2018*.
- Expand the jurisdiction of the Merit Protection Commissioner.
- Clarify definitions of "corruption" and "serious misconduct" within the *AFP Act 1979*.

## 04

### Return the AFP to Australia's Premier Law Enforcement Agency

#### VISION

Empower the AFP to meet growing national and international demands with excellence.

#### OBJECTIVE

- Increase AFP personnel to a baseline of 10,000 appointees by 2028.
- Ensure a sworn officer ratio of at least 60% of the total workforce.
- Secure appropriate funding and remove efficiency dividends.
- Conduct an independent, comprehensive, and broad-ranging capability review of the AFP incorporating insights from previous reviews such as the *Fuller* and *Lawler Reviews*.
- Conduct an independent review of the AFP's Executive structure.



## KEY PILLAR 01

# A Future of Good Faith Bargaining

The AFP operates in a unique and high-pressure environment, distinct from the broader public service. Its workforce requires policies and agreements that reflect these differences, enabling flexibility, operational readiness, and alignment with contemporary law enforcement practices. Maintaining the current policy—or reverting to an even stricter one—risks perpetuating inefficiencies and dissatisfaction among AFP appointees, ultimately compromising the organisation’s ability to fulfill its critical mission effectively.

By securing independence from the Federal Government’s *Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy*, the AFP would be empowered to craft employment agreements that truly reflect its operational context, fostering a more resilient and capable workforce.

The existing policy framework has significantly undermined the bargaining process. While the current Australian Labor Party (ALP) government may have shown greater flexibility compared to the previous Liberal-National Party (LNP) government, the policy still limits the necessary opportunities and flexibilities essential for managing a complex and unique organisation like the AFP.

Despite this ongoing erosion, insufficient efforts have been made to ensure that enterprise agreements are contemporary and aligned with the AFP’s specific employment practices. Both major political parties continue to view and treat the AFP workforce through the lens of a traditional public service department, applying a generic approach that fails to account for the distinct operational and organisational demands of law enforcement and the AFP.

By removing the AFP from the policy, the organisation, AFPA, and independent negotiators would gain the autonomy to engage in sensible and unconstrained bargaining. This would enable the development of an enterprise agreement specifically tailored to the needs of a modern law enforcement organisation. Such an agreement would reflect the AFP’s unique challenges and operational realities, fostering a more adaptive and fit-for-purpose employment framework.

Under a ALP government, the existing policy would remain unchanged, perpetuating the treatment of the AFP and its workforce as if they were a traditional public service department. This approach would lock the AFP into the restrictive and unsatisfactory “whole of government” bargaining processes, resulting in enterprise agreements that fail to address the specific needs of the AFP.

Under an LNP government, there is the added risk of reverting to their previous workplace relations policy. This earlier framework was even more restrictive and draconian than the current ALP policy. If re-implemented, it could severely constrain negotiations for the **2027–2030 AFP Enterprise Agreement**, further undermining the AFP’s operational effectiveness and workforce morale.

As a result, the AFPA requests that any future government remove the AFP from the *Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy* and allow the organisation, AFPA and independent bargainers to engage in sensible and unconstrained bargaining.

## Introduction of an AFP Arbitral Tribunal

The idea of an AFP Arbitral Tribunal (AFPAT) would follow the success of the Northern Territory Police Arbitral Tribunal (NTPAT), a specialised body established to address industrial disputes and employment-related matters within the Northern Territory Police Force.

Its primary role is to provide a fair and efficient forum for resolving conflicts between the organisation and its members, particularly in relation to employment conditions, wages, and workplace disputes.

The NTPAT was established under the *Police Administration Act 1978* and functions independently to ensure impartiality in its decision-making. It is envisaged that changes would have to occur to the *Australian Federal Police Act 1979* and would operate within a framework that upholds both the operational needs of the organisation and the rights and welfare of its members.

The tribunal would also play a crucial role in maintaining harmonious labour relations and ensuring that the unique working conditions of AFP appointees are adequately addressed.

### CURRENT SYSTEM



### NEW SYSTEM



While the introduction of a AFPAT would seem to be an additional element to the current process, the AFPA believes that this introduction would reduce costs and be timelier when dealing with disputes that require an independent arbiter.

## KEY PILLAR 02

# More Support for AFP Appointees

The AFPA is advocating for the introduction of mandatory sentencing for individuals convicted of harming Commonwealth public officers under *Division 147* of the *Criminal Code 1995*. Currently, the maximum penalty for this offence is 13 years imprisonment. However, sentencing practices across Australia have created an environment where maximum penalties are seldom applied, undermining the deterrent effect of these provisions.

To address this issue, the AFPA is calling for legislative amendments to ensure a minimum mandatory sentence for offenders convicted of assaulting Commonwealth public officials. Such a measure would establish a true deterrent and enhance the safety of those serving the public in these critical roles. The AFPA urges future governments to amend *Division 147* of the *Criminal Code 1995* accordingly.

## How is a 25% pay cut fair for long-term mental health injuries?

The AFPA seeks to eliminate the 45-week step-down provision under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRC Act)*, which reduces incapacity payments by 25 percent for injured AFP appointees after 45 weeks. This reduction applies irrespective of whether the injury is physical or psychological.

Evidence suggests that this punitive measure forces some AFP appointees to return to work prematurely, risking further harm, as they feel financially compelled rather than medically ready. The AFPA advocates for a future government to amend the SRC Act to remove the 25 percent reduction in incapacity payments after 45 weeks for AFP appointees with psychological injuries and establish an appeal process for decisions related to incapacity payment reductions under the Act.




## Introduction of an AFP Blue Card

Since 2019, the AFPA has championed the introduction of an 'AFP Blue Card' for current, future, and former operational AFP appointees. This initiative, modelled on the Department of Veterans Affairs 'White Card,' aims to provide government-funded psychological and medical treatment to AFP appointees.

### Proposed Benefits of the AFP Blue Card:

- Psychological treatment
- Hospital and day procedure facility treatment
- Services by allied health professionals, GPs, specialists, dental and optical professionals
- Subsidised medicines at concession rates
- Community nursing, pathology, and medical imaging
- Counselling, home help, aids, appliances, and modifications
- Travel assistance for medical appointments
- Comprehensive care services



*There is nothing more important than the mental health and wellbeing of the people who serve and protect our communities every day.*

— Ken Lay, Chair of the Police Emergency Services Study Group (2023)

The AFPA urges future governments to commit to implementing the AFP Blue Card for all AFP appointees who have worked in operational capacities.

### **Addressing Financial Disadvantage in Workplace Injury Rehabilitation**

Recovering AFP appointees face financial burdens due to the disparity between Comcare's use of the Australian Medical Association (AMA) fee list and the actual costs of medical services. This gap forces injured personnel to cover out-of-pocket expenses, compounding their financial stress.

For example, an AFP appointee incurred \$1,616.86 in out-of-pocket expenses despite having an approved Comcare claim. Research by the AFPA revealed that the cost of initial physiotherapy consultations in the ACT is, on average, 31.5 percent higher than the AMA fee list's upper limit.

To ensure no AFP appointee is financially disadvantaged due to rehabilitation costs for workplace injuries the AFPA urges the government to revise compensation mechanisms to fully cover treatment costs.

### **National Commissioner for First Responder Mental Health and Suicide**

First responder mental health and suicide are critical issues that demand urgent attention. Recent statistics show that a first responder takes their own life every six weeks, with six AFP serving members committing suicide in recent years. However, data on suicide among former and retired officers is sadly lacking.

The AFPA proposes the establishment of a National Commissioner for First Responder Mental Health and Suicide, modelled on the National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide (NCDVS). Alternatively, the remit of the NCDVS could be expanded to include first responders. This role would investigate deaths by suicide among first responders and develop national strategies to address mental health and suicide prevention in the first responder environment.

### **Scoping Study for Police Treatment Centres**

The AFPA advocates for the introduction of Police Treatment Centres (PTCs) in Australia, modelled on successful examples in Canada and England. These centres provide residential physiotherapy and psychological support for serving and retired police officers recovering from injuries, illnesses, or health conditions.

#### **Key Features of PTCs:**

- State-of-the-art facilities with multidisciplinary teams, including physiotherapists, fitness instructors, nurses, and counsellors
- Specialised programs for women's health and job-related fitness tests
- Online support and resources

The AFPA is asking for a future government, in partnership with state and territory governments to commit to conducting a scoping study to explore the feasibility of establishing PTCs in Australia to enhance the health and well-being of the policing workforce.

## KEY PILLAR 03

# Integrity Matters

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) strongly advocates for a comprehensive and independent review of the Australian Federal Police's (AFP) Professional Standards framework, encompassing its legislation, policies, and work practices. This review should prioritise the well-being of AFP appointees involved in professional standards investigations, ensuring a fair and supportive environment throughout the process.

## Current Challenges in the Professional Standards Framework

Under the existing framework, AFP appointees often experience ostracism, exclusion, and a denial of natural justice during investigations. While a robust professional standards regime is essential, it should not come at the expense of the mental health and well-being of its appointees. Appointees report feeling vulnerable, unsupported, and disillusioned, facing limited access to support mechanisms and a pervasive fear of retribution.

## Key Issues to Address in the Review

### 1. Suspension and Secondary Employment Decisions

Appointees have raised significant concerns about the decision-making processes surrounding suspensions and restrictions on secondary employment. These decisions have far-reaching consequences, not only for the appointees but also for their families, highlighting the urgent need for a transparent and accountable system.

### 2. Timeliness of Investigations

Professional standards investigations often exceed reasonable timeframes, causing prolonged stress and uncertainty for those involved. Currently, the benchmark for resolving category three investigations is 256 days, yet the average duration in 2024 was 293 days. Corruption-related (category four) investigations lack a benchmark altogether and averaged 454 days in 2024. Such delays would be unacceptable in other judicial or administrative contexts and undermine trust in the process.

### 3. Human Rights Concerns

The review must assess whether any breaches of human rights have occurred during investigations. There is widespread agreement that if AFP appointees treated members of the public or suspects similarly, they would face criticism and formal investigation.

## Legislative and Oversight Recommendations

AFP appointees operate under unique employment conditions that curtail freedoms and rights enjoyed by most Australian employees. For instance, *Section 40K* allows the Commissioner to declare "serious misconduct," precluding employees from accessing remedies under the *Fair Work Act 2009*. An example is *Section 69B* which limits the application of the *Fair Work Act 2009* in certain decisions, creating a



disparity with Australian Public Service (APS) employees. These constraints necessitate additional safeguards and oversight to ensure fairness and transparency in employment and disciplinary matters.

## 1. Amendments to the Australian Federal Police Act 1979

### • Clarify Definitions of “Serious Misconduct” and “Corruption”

Section 4OK of the Act defines “serious misconduct” in a way that predates the introduction of Part V, causing confusion during investigations of Category 3 conduct. A clearer, contemporary definition aligned with operational realities is essential.

Similarly, the broad interpretation of “corruption” disadvantages AFP appointees compared to state and territory police officers. Instances such as accepting unsolicited discounts or benefits, like free public transport (offered by some states to police officers), should not be construed as corruption unless explicitly solicited or misused.

### • Address Unchecked Disciplinary Powers

The Commissioner’s authority to reduce an employee’s salary without recourse must be re-evaluated. Such measures may lead to excessive salary reductions without adequate safeguards for affected employees.

## 2. Strengthening Oversight and Review Mechanisms

### • Establish a Review Panel

Under *Regulation 61* of the *Australian Federal Police Regulations 2018*, a review panel should be established to examine employment decisions on their merits. This would include decisions regarding roles, transfers, promotions, and recruitment.

### • Extend Jurisdiction of the Merit Protection Commissioner

Unlike Australian Public Service (APS) employees, AFP appointees lack access to the Merit Protection Commissioner for review of workplace and promotion decisions. Expanding the Commissioner’s jurisdiction to cover all AFP appointees would introduce parity and strengthen accountability.

## 3. Review of Professional Standards Framework

Since its inception in 2006, the current Professional Standards framework remains largely unchanged. The AFPA recommends the Federal Government commission a review through the Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee to examine *Part V* of the *AFP Act 1979*. This review should ensure the framework aligns with modern practices, eliminates punitive measures outside statutory oversight, and harmonises with the National Anti-Corruption Commission to prevent duplication or oversight gaps.

The AFPA urges a future Federal Government to:

- Commission an independent review of the AFP Professional Standards framework.
- Amend the *Australian Federal Police Act 1979* to clarify definitions of “serious misconduct” and “corruption.”
- Strengthen oversight mechanisms by extending the Merit Protection Commissioner’s jurisdiction and establishing a review panel under Regulation 61.

These measures are critical to fostering a professional standards regime that upholds integrity while safeguarding the well-being, rights, and dignity of AFP appointees.

## KEY PILLAR 04

# Return the AFP to Australia's Premier Law Enforcement Agency



Expanding the Australian Federal Police to 10,000 members is crucial for enhancing Australia's ability to address contemporary law enforcement challenges. Prioritising recruitment, retention, training, operational modernisation, and strategic evaluation will enable the AFP to strengthen its capacity to safeguard the nation effectively. A thorough Capability Review will further support these efforts, ensuring the AFP's continued growth and preparedness to meet future demands, reinforcing its status as a world-class law enforcement agency.

This ambitious yet necessary goal reflects the increasing demands of both national and international law enforcement, as well as national security. Achieving it will require a holistic approach, including strategies for recruitment, retention, training, resource allocation, and operational enhancements.

The AFP's "Blue Paper To 2030 and Beyond" emphasises the need to adapt to emerging challenges, including cybercrime, terrorism, and transnational organised crime.

**By expanding its capabilities, the AFP can effectively respond to these complex threats and safeguard Australia's national interests.**

With crime increasingly transcending borders, the AFP's international presence is vital. The establishment of liaison offices, such as the one in Paris, demonstrates the AFP's commitment to collaborating with global partners to combat transnational crime.

**Expanding the AFP enables more robust international partnerships and information sharing.**

Australia's investment in regional policing initiatives, like the AU\$400 million plan to enhance police training and create a mobile regional police unit in the Pacific Islands, underscores the AFP's role in promoting stability and security in neighbouring regions.

**An expanded AFP can provide essential support to these initiatives, addressing issues such as drug trafficking, human trafficking and child exploitation.**

Recent incidents, including the arson attack on the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne, highlight the rise of domestic extremism and hate crimes. The AFP's launch of Special Operation Avalite to tackle antisemitism demonstrates the need for expanded resources to effectively address and prevent such threats.

*Focus on developing managers and leaders within the organisation will improve the wellbeing of all members!*

(Police sector)

Reports of police shortages, particularly in New South Wales, where approximately 4,000 vacancies exist, indicate a strain on law enforcement resources.

**Expanding the AFP can alleviate some of this pressure by providing additional personnel and support to ensure community safety.**

In summary, expanding the AFP is essential to effectively address evolving security challenges, enhance international and regional cooperation, combat domestic extremism, and mitigate resource constraints within Australia's law enforcement agencies.

## Recruitment Strategies

Attracting new members to the AFP necessitates innovative and targeted recruitment efforts to ensure a diverse, skilled, and motivated workforce:

- **Nationwide Campaigns:** Launch comprehensive awareness campaigns to highlight the AFP's pivotal role in safeguarding national security and public safety. These campaigns should leverage traditional and digital media to reach a broad audience.
- **Diverse Recruitment Pools:** Actively recruit individuals from underrepresented groups, including women, Indigenous Australians, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, to reflect the diversity of Australian society.
- **Youth Engagement:** Collaborate with schools, universities, and community organisations to introduce young Australians to careers in law enforcement, showcasing the opportunities and impact of joining the AFP.
- **Incentive Programs:** Offer competitive salaries, relocation assistance, housing allowances, and other benefits to attract top talent from across the country.

## Workforce Development

Maintaining a highly skilled workforce is critical to the AFP's effectiveness and capacity for growth. Key initiatives include:

- **Enhanced Training Programs:** Develop and implement comprehensive training modules focused on emerging challenges such as cybercrime, terrorism, organised crime, and human trafficking.
- **Leadership Development:** Establish robust leadership programs to prepare officers for senior roles, ensuring a strong leadership pipeline within the organisation.
- **Continuous Education:** Provide opportunities for ongoing education, specialisation, and professional development to keep members at the forefront of evolving law enforcement practices.
- **Mentorship Initiatives:** Pair new recruits with experienced officers to promote knowledge sharing, skill development, and professional growth.

## Retention Strategies

Retaining skilled officers is as critical as recruiting new ones. The AFP can enhance retention by:

- **Work-Life Balance:** Introduce flexible working arrangements, comprehensive mental health support programs, and wellness initiatives to address the unique challenges of law enforcement careers.
- **Career Progression:** Offer clear and transparent pathways for career advancement, enabling members to envision a long-term future within the AFP.
- **Recognition and Rewards:** Implement performance-based recognition programs to celebrate exceptional service and dedication.
- **Engagement Surveys:** Conduct regular feedback surveys to identify areas for improvement and address member concerns promptly.

## Modernising Operations

Modernisation efforts will enhance operational efficiency and appeal to tech-savvy recruits:

- **Advanced Tools:** Equip officers with cutting-edge technologies such as AI-driven analytics, mobile applications, and enhanced communication systems to streamline operations and improve decision-making.
- **Online Recruitment Portals:** Develop user-friendly online platforms for job applications, career resources, and virtual job fairs.
- **Cybercrime Units:** Expand specialised units dedicated to tackling the growing prevalence of digital crimes, reinforcing the AFP's leadership in this critical area.

## Community Engagement

Building trust and collaboration with the community is vital for recruitment success and operational effectiveness:

- **Community Policing:** Strengthen programs that foster positive relationships between officers and the communities they serve.
- **Outreach Programs:** Organise workshops, seminars, and public events to educate Australians about the AFP's role and the benefits of a career in law enforcement.
- **Youth Programs:** Support initiatives that inspire young Australians to consider careers in the AFP, such as internships, cadetships, and mentorship opportunities.

## Resource Allocation and Strategic Planning

Achieving the goal of 10,000 appointees requires robust resource allocation and long-term strategic planning:

- **Increased Budgets:** Advocate for enhanced funding to support recruitment, training, and operational requirements.
- **Policy Alignment:** Collaborate with policymakers to align national security objectives with the AFP's growth goals.
- **Strategic Planning:** Develop a forward-looking strategy that balances immediate operational needs with sustainable growth initiatives.



## Capability Review for Long-Term Development

The AFP's growth strategy would benefit from an independent, comprehensive and broad-ranging Capability Review. This review would:

- **Assess Strengths and Gaps:** Evaluate the AFP's current capabilities and readiness to meet medium-term critical needs.
- **Incorporate Stakeholder Feedback:** Include input from internal and external stakeholders such as AFP appointees, government agencies, non-government organisations, and industry representatives.
- **Conduct Site Visits:** Gain insights into frontline services and operations through visits beyond Canberra.
- **Analyse Surveys:** Review recent AFP Staff Surveys and AFPA Member Surveys to identify trends and areas for improvement.

The AFPA is asking for a future government to commit to the AFP and its hardworking workforce and support its growth and expansion.

By expanding the AFP to 10,000 appointees, with a 60/40 ratio of sworn to unsworn appointees, and increasing the AFP's detective headcount is crucial for enhancing Australia's ability to address contemporary law enforcement challenges and protect Australia and its many communities.

Retention and recruitment of AFP appointees should be at the forefront of any future government and we are asking the future Government to commit to these processes. We have seen past governments commit to the Australian Defence Force in relation to recruitment and retention, and we believe that same commitment should be applied to the AFP and its workforce.

# Conclusion

In a world marked by rapid globalisation, technological evolution, and complex threats, the role of law enforcement has become more critical than ever. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) stands as a pillar of security, justice, and public confidence, safeguarding Australia from threats that transcend borders, undermine democracy, and jeopardise our way of life.

The AFP operates at the intersection of local and global challenges, addressing crime and security concerns that extend beyond the scope of state and territory police forces. Its unique mandate includes countering terrorism, cybercrime, human trafficking, drug smuggling, and transnational organised crime. In an interconnected world, where a cyber-attack from one continent can cripple another's infrastructure, the AFP's expertise ensures that Australia is protected from these global threats.

The AFP embodies the principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability that underpin Australia's democracy. By enforcing federal laws, the AFP not only upholds the rule of law but also ensures that individuals, corporations, and even governments are held accountable for their actions. Its presence strengthens public trust in Australia's legal system, demonstrating that no one is above the law.

The AFP's ability to adapt to emerging threats is a testament to its necessity:

- **Counterterrorism:** As extremist ideologies and terrorism evolve, the AFP works tirelessly to prevent attacks, disrupt networks, and ensure the safety of Australians both at home and abroad.
- **Cybercrime:** In an era where data breaches, ransomware, and online fraud are on the rise, the AFP protects Australia's digital infrastructure and safeguards citizens' personal information.
- **Transnational Crime:** With operations spanning continents, the AFP collaborates with international agencies to dismantle criminal syndicates involved in drug trafficking, human smuggling, and financial crimes.

Australia's security is intrinsically linked to the stability of the Indo-Pacific region and the broader global community. Through partnerships with Interpol, the United Nations, and regional law enforcement agencies, the AFP contributes to peacekeeping, disaster response, and capacity-building initiatives. This not only strengthens Australia's diplomatic ties but also fosters regional security.

The AFP plays a vital role in addressing crimes that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, such as child exploitation, domestic violence, and human trafficking. By prioritising victim-centered approaches, the AFP ensures that justice serves those who need it most, reinforcing Australia's commitment to human rights and social equity.

The Australian Federal Police and its most valuable asset, its people, is not just a law enforcement agency; it is a cornerstone of Australia's national integrity, security, and resilience. Its unwavering commitment to justice, its adaptability to emerging challenges, and its dedication to protecting Australians at home and abroad make it an indispensable institution.

In a world where security cannot be taken for granted, the AFP serves as a reminder that the safety of a nation depends on the strength, integrity, and vigilance of those sworn to protect it. As Australians, we must continue to support and invest in the AFP, recognising its role in shaping a safer, fairer, and more secure future for all.

# Fair Work Challenges for AFP Officers: Barriers to Wage Determination and Industrial Action

**Dr Giuseppe Carabetta**

*Associate Professor of Workplace Law,  
University of Technology Sydney*

## Position Paper for Re-establishment of AFP Tribunal



As a specialist in employment law, I have an in-depth understanding of Australia's current Fair Work regime. One of the research fields I focus on is public sector employment law, particularly police employment matters. My work in this field has been cited in Supreme Court and Court of Appeal decisions in Australia, and I have been called as an expert witness before Parliamentary Inquiries. I have also consulted with the Police Federation of Australia, the Australian Federal Police Association and federal Workplace Relations Ministers on issues relating to police employment. My research into Australia's Fair Work system highlights several problems for Australian Federal Police (AFP) workers. Essentially, a shift towards a market-

based collective bargaining model – and away from arbitration – leaves the AFP without an effective wage determination process.

First, the Fair Work system emphasises bargaining in which the parties are encouraged to make agreements via robust industrial negotiation. However, AFP officers are subject to considerable restraints—if not total bans—on any entitlement to participate in industrial action in support of bargaining. The problem is that with limited access to arbitration, and a limited right to industrial action, complex disputes continuing indefinitely, with ongoing negative consequences for both police and the community.

## Where police do have limited capacity to engage in industrial action under Fair Work, their industrial action comes into conflict with both legal and moral obligations. *These are:*

The AFP Commissioner's powers over the administration and control of the operations of the AFP

AFP officers' oath of office

AFP officers' obligations under the AFP Act and the good order, discipline and morale of the AFP

essential services laws

Almost any industrial action by members of the AFP would threaten public safety/welfare and so lead to a suspension or termination of the protected industrial action by the Fair Work Commission (per the Fair Work Act, s 424). In other jurisdictions police instead have access to binding arbitration. This reflects a widespread understanding that industrial action is not appropriate for police, and that restrictions on industrial action by police must be offset by effective arbitration procedures.

Yet, a critical flaw in the Fair Work Act is its requirement for bargaining disputes to reach “crisis” levels before turning to arbitration to resolve the dispute. Unless industrial action is causing serious harm or there have been major good faith bargaining breaches, the Fair Work Commission does not have the power to resolve disputes through binding arbitration where the parties are unable, or unwilling, to come to an agreement. Deadlocks like these occurred during the last two AFP bargaining rounds, partly because of delays under the relevant Bargaining Policy.

In addition, Australia is highly unusual in not having any specific provisions for arbitration in place under Fair Work or elsewhere for the resolution of police bargaining disputes. In other common law jurisdictions where police have a right to bargain, specialist arbitral provisions are used for managing police bargaining disputes. Even where other public and essential employees operate under standard strike-based systems in these regimes, police are the only sector with access to arbitration.

In an attempt to address the problem of long-running disputes under Fair Work, the Albanese Government has now given the Fair Work Commission powers to arbitrate “intractable” disputes. However, these powers

are subject to a range of strict requirements. In a recent decision concerning members of the Victoria Police (Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police v Police Federation of Australia [2025] FWC 1), there was an extensive bargaining period (16 months), 117 bargaining meetings, independent mediation, industrial action, an unsuccessful vote on a proposed agreement, and an unsuccessful s 240 conference.

Despite this dispute meeting to all intents and purposes the very definition of “intractable”—and despite the context—the Commission refused to grant an intractable bargaining order.

I suggest a different approach in my recent book *Collective Bargaining for Police and Other Essential Services*, an empirical study into “mature” police bargaining models in international jurisdictions. In it I argue that a clear case exists for an alternative model for police in Australia, particularly in an AFP context given the implications for the AFP Commissioner, AFP members, and the community.



**Based on my findings, I propose a specialist North-American style interest arbitration model for police, *consisting of three phases.***



If no agreement is reached by the end of informal negotiations, or mediation is unsuccessful or an incomplete agreement is the result, then the dispute moves to binding arbitration. The arbitration procedure is invoked if negotiations have reached an impasse and the relevant mediator-arbitrator considers it necessary to settle the dispute. Arbitration can also take place if the parties consent, where the parties have bargained reasonably and in good faith, or the dispute will likely harm the parties' long-term relationship.

**There are several advantages to such a model in an AFP context:**

1. it offers a guaranteed closure mechanism for AFP bargaining disputes;
2. it decouples access to arbitration from the need to show a serious good-faith bargaining breach or a serious health and safety risk to the community;
3. it offers a pathway to timely resolution of bargaining disputes, rather than escalation of a dispute through increasingly engaging in industrial action/other industrial pressure tactics.
4. it focuses the parties on the need to resolve disputes, without impeding on collective bargaining.

My findings show that in other jurisdictions where a similar model operates, a well-calibrated model not only provides a guaranteed closure mechanism for disputes but can also promote bargaining. That is, under a well-designed model the mere threat of arbitration focuses negotiations.

**Several policy questions would need to be addressed in adopting such a model for AFP.**

1. **When:** Set realistic timeframes for negotiation and other phases.
2. **Who:** Decide if a Fair Work Commission member or another mediator-arbitrator should be on the panel.
3. **What:** Define clear criteria for police arbitral decisions.
4. **Whether:** final-offer arbitration (FOA) should be used as an alternative arbitration method to conventional arbitration and if so, to what extent.

The Northern Territory Police Tribunal, a long-standing Australian police tribunal, follows the North American model, combining arbitration with best-practice features designed to encourage agreement, including a tripartite panel. Discussions with the AFPA Executive and Mr. Chris Hayes indicate it is based on the former AFP Tribunal.

The need to address defects in the Fair Work Act concerning the AFP was acknowledged by the Senate Committee of Inquiry into the original Fair Work Bill, where I was invited to share my research. Additionally, the previous Australian Labor Government recognized the unique employment conditions of police and provided in-principle support for research into future industrial relations arrangements.

It is in everyone's interest to find the most effective approach to resolving police industrial disputes. I have presented research-backed solutions that I hope will contribute to a constructive discussion on how to improve the system.

A photograph of a woman in a dark blue police uniform with a light blue shirt and tie, smiling and hugging a man from behind. The man is also in a dark blue police uniform. They are both wearing white gloves. In the background, other police officers in uniform are visible, some wearing white gloves. The scene appears to be outdoors during a ceremony.

# Introducing the AFPA Recruit Excellence Award

The Australian Federal Police Association is proud to introduce a new award at the Australian Federal Police recruit graduation ceremonies, **recognising outstanding recruits** within the Constable and Protective Service Officer squads.

The AFPA Recruit Excellence Award, sponsored and presented by the AFPA President, will honour one recruit from each squad who has demonstrated exceptional dedication, leadership, and commitment throughout their training.

The concept was formally endorsed by the AFPA National Executive in November 2023 and follows a tradition seen in other police forces. The award not only serves as recognition for recruits achievements but also reinforces the strong partnership between the AFP and AFPA in supporting officers from the very beginning of their journey.



This award is presented to the recruit who has demonstrated commitment to the AFP College Community through exemplifying the AFP values:

Integrity

Commitment

Excellence

Accountability

Fairness

Trust

Respect

*AFPA President **Alex Caruana** emphasised the significance of this initiative, stating:*

**Recruits entering the AFP are stepping into a challenging but rewarding career. We want to ensure they know that the AFPA is with them from day one—celebrating their achievements and supporting them throughout their service.**

The Association looks forward to celebrating the first recipients in 2025, starting a long standing tradition that cements the working relationship between the AFP and AFPA, and continuing to support those who serve and protect our communities.

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\*conditions apply

# How to Avoid Your Comcare Claim Being Denied:

## *A Guide for AFP Officers*



As an Australian Federal Police (AFP) officer, you put yourself on the line every day in the course of your duties. If you sustain a work-related injury or illness, Comcare provides a pathway to access the compensation and support you need. However, not

all claims are approved, and a denial can be both frustrating and stressful. Understanding the common reasons for rejected claims can help you navigate the process effectively and improve your chances of success.

## Key reasons for Comcare Claim denials

### 1. Lack of sufficient or consistent evidence

A strong Comcare claim requires solid documentation that clearly links your injury or illness to your role in the AFP. Insufficient medical evidence, conflicting statements, or missing documentation can weaken your case. Ensuring your medical reports are detailed and consistent is crucial to supporting your claim.

### 2. Not Meeting eligibility criteria

Comcare only provides compensation for injuries or illnesses that are directly related to your duties as an AFP officer. If the evidence does not establish a clear connection between your condition and your work, your claim may be denied. Providing a thorough account of the incident, including statements from colleagues or supervisors, can strengthen your case.

### 3. Delayed reporting

Timely reporting of an injury is essential. Under Comcare regulations, you must notify your employer within 30 days of the incident. Failing to report on time can lead to claim rejection. To avoid complications, report the injury as soon as possible and ensure it is officially documented.

### 4. Pre-existing conditions

If you have a pre-existing condition, Comcare will assess whether your work significantly contributed to its aggravation. If they determine that the condition is unrelated to your duties, the claim may be denied. However, if your work has worsened the condition, medical evidence demonstrating this link can support your claim.

### 5. Disputed causation

There are instances where medical opinions differ regarding whether your injury or illness was caused by your work. If Comcare finds the evidence inconclusive, your claim may be rejected. Seeking independent medical assessments can help establish a clearer connection between your condition and your duties as an AFP officer.

### 6. Not following required procedures

Strict adherence to Comcare's procedures is vital. Missing deadlines, failing to provide requested information, or not attending medical assessments can all result in your claim being denied. Keeping track of required documentation and meeting all deadlines is crucial.

### 7. Non-compliance with Rehabilitation or Return-to-Work Programs

Comcare expects injured officers to actively engage in rehabilitation and return-to-work programs where appropriate. Failing to participate without a valid reason may result in a claim being denied. Engaging in recommended treatments and rehabilitation programs can demonstrate your commitment to recovery and support your claim.

## What to do if your Claim is denied

A rejected claim does not mean the end of the road. If your claim is denied, you have the right to appeal the decision. Seeking legal advice can help you understand your options and build a stronger case for reconsideration.

## Get expert guidance

TGB Lawyers has a specialist team of lawyers with extensive experience assisting Commonwealth employees, including AFP officers, with their Comcare claims. Whether you need help lodging a claim or challenging a denial, expert advice can make all the difference.

For assistance with your Comcare claim, contact our Comcare Claims team on 1800 730 842 or you can fill out this brief form and we will get back to you promptly. You can also find more information on our Comcare claims expertise [here](#).

TGB Lawyers offers 30 minutes of free initial advice to all Police Association members, their families and retired members – as well as a discount on fees.





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