

PFA Election Statement

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) represents the professional and industrial interests of more than 60,000 police officers across the country.

State, territory and federal governments are dependent on their respective police forces for the provision of community safety and security.

In some rural and remote areas, police are the only providers of 24-hour service and, indeed, the only government service.

Of course, state and territory governments are chiefly responsible for police services. But the federal government also bears responsibility for many aspects of law enforcement and these demand federal government's considered input.

The issues listed below are some of the most pressing. They require an appropriate federal government response in order to extend the capacity of police to track and monitor serious crime.

And, naturally, our members would take such a response as an invaluable show of government support for their commitment to the Australian community.

PRIORITY 1: Superannuation

The PFA seeks your party's commitment to recognize the special needs of police officers and legislate a preservation age that allows for police officers – who have dedicated their working lives to community service – to retire with dignity.

The PFA has for many years advocated for police in respect of the age at which they are able to access their accrued superannuation. Of great concern are those cases in which officers suffer physical or mental “burn-out” but appear free of any identified medical condition.

Continuing to raise the preservation age for access to superannuation (up from age 55 to 60) will come with consequences for both public and police safety. The danger in forcing officers to remain on the front line until the age of 60 is obvious.

The PFA is firmly of the view that a federal government must:

- Recognize the special needs of police officers.
- Legislate a preservation age which allows police – after dedicating their working lives to community service – to retire with dignity.

The superannuation preservation age is an issue of the highest importance to all Australian police officers. Each knows well that the physical and psychological demands of operational policing are, for most, unsuited to sexagenarian men and women.

And non-operational positions, which police officers might once have moved into in their senior years, are now considerably few – in light of the civilianization of noncore functions.

The federal government must provide a scheme which guarantees police a solid level of accrued superannuation benefits by the time they retire.

Clearly, superannuation laws apply a community-wide standard preservation age, which rose in 1993. The *Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993*, however, includes the power to exempt specified categories of people in order to provide a more flexible retirement regime.

Acknowledged at the time was that a one-size-fits-all approach was not necessarily suitable for the entire workforce.

The modern workplace provides flexibility for employees to retire at an age beyond 60 or 65 and to exit and re-enter the workforce according to their circumstances.

The PFA supports this flexibility for later retirement but insists that earlier retirement for police should also be part of any flexible arrangement.

Some current superannuation schemes still open to police officers provide the capacity for members to take their benefits from age 55.

However, in accordance with Commonwealth standards for superannuation schemes, only persons born before July 1, 1960 can, at age 55, access the funds as a retirement benefit subject to non-superannuation rates of taxation.

The Commonwealth policy which prevents workers from accessing their accrued superannuation benefits before age 60 is seriously problematic for police officers.

To deliver a just outcome, the government could allow police officers access to their accrued superannuation on a voluntary but special basis.

It would then be necessary for government to legislate a preservation age which would allow officers dignified exits from policing with their superannuation entitlements.

The PFA does not advocate for access to lump sums of superannuation. The arrangement would only permit a police officer to take his or her superannuation as an income stream for the period before he or she reaches preservation age or until age 60.

Clearly, to benefit from an income stream, a police officer would have to have contributed to the relevant scheme for a reasonable time. In that case, he or she would have accrued sufficient superannuation to provide a reasonable income stream on which to live.

On this issue, the PFA stands ready to participate in a two-way agreement with government:

- Government: commits to legislating a preservation age which allows police officers to retire.
- PFA: agrees to provisions which ensure that no one is eligible to access such an arrangement without having served for a minimum of 20 consecutive years immediately before retiring.

This agreement would:

- Remind police officers that they would have to have built up a reasonable lump sum before it was attractive enough to consider an income stream.
- Prevent police officers from using the option simply to access their accrued superannuation.

PRIORITY 2: The Police Profession

The PFA seeks your party's commitment to the development of a professional registration scheme for Australia's police.

The COAG reform agenda reads:

"Governments at all levels share responsibility for issues that could not have been foreseen at the time of Federation in 1901."

In 2008, COAG determined that a national scheme for health professions would deliver many benefits – such as supporting workforce responsiveness, flexibility, sustainability and innovation – to the Australian community.

According to COAG, national registration means no restrictions on doctors, nurses and other health professionals practising across state and territory borders.

This vastly improves workforce mobility, and allows health practitioners to move easily between jurisdictions in times of emergency, or when the need arises to provide locum services in different states.

In February 2011, COAG agreed to five themes of strategic importance. Theme 2 focused on "a national economy driven by our competitive advantages".

It sought to create a seamless national economy to improve the environment for Australian businesses to operate in while helping to meet the nation's productivity challenges.

A key component of theme 2 is professional registration and occupational licensing.

In line with theme 2 and the registration of health professionals, the PFA seeks a commitment from government for a national police professional registration scheme.

A national registration scheme for police would:

- Improve the status of the police profession.
- Facilitate inter-jurisdictional mobility.
- Protect the police professional domain.
- Provide and maintain, on behalf of the community:
 - Proper standards of police practice.
 - Police ethics.
 - A police code of conduct.
 - Professional membership.

Professional registration guarantees the provision of community protection by appropriately trained police officers who maintain the quality and standard of their services.

Inter-jurisdictional mobility of police already exists across Australian jurisdictions and between comparable nations. Police mobility has enabled all Australian police forces, particularly the AFP, to meet the needs of their communities, of modern policing, and of the police workforce.

Part of a national registration scheme would be a national data base of police skills and qualifications. This data base could be accessed at times when major deployments are undertaken within and outside Australia.

Australia's major political parties have been in support of a national police registration scheme since 2007.

The PFA and all Australian police commissioners are members of the Australia and New Zealand Council of Police Professionalization (ANZCoPP), formerly known as the Australasian Police Professional Standards Council (APPSC).

In 2011 APPSC approved a funding model and implementation plan for the Police Practice Standards Model (PPSM).

Four generic police practice levels within the PPSM won subsequent approval:

- Police officer.
- Police supervisor.
- Police manager.
- Police executive.

And undertaken over the past several years has been the development of 30 role-specific education and training guidelines.

Recent ANZCoPP reports indicate that 100 per cent of jurisdictions have subscribed to the guidelines for the practice level of Police Officer. Accordingly, that practice level should be implemented as the registration standard for a police officer.

The decision now rests with ANZCoPP as to whether the practice level of Police Officer should move from a guideline to a standard. The PFA will support the move as well as the development of an implementation plan for a professional registration/certification system.

The PFA calls on all political parties to continue to pledge their support for such a system.

PRIORITY 3: Collaborative policing

The PFA seeks a commitment toward collaborative and interoperable policing by establishing:

- Upgrading the Australian Criminal Intelligence database and the Australian Law Enforcement Intelligence Network via a new National Criminal Intelligence System (NCIS).
- A National Case Management System.
- The allocation of 20 MHz of 700MHz band spectrum to public safety agencies for 21st century communications.

The PFA launched its *Three Point Plan for Better National Security* on October 2, 2015. It came after the terrorist killing of Curtis Cheng outside NSW police headquarters in Parramatta.

At the heart of the issues raised in that PFA document is the concept of collaboration across all jurisdictions.

The plan proposes additional complementary measures designed to assist all police to deal collectively with the dangers posed by terrorism and other serious and organized crime.

National Criminal Intelligence System

The upgrade of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Database and the Australian Law Enforcement Intelligence Network via a new National Criminal Intelligence System (NCIS) is a pivotal step in the PFA plan.

In 2012, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement's Inquiry into the Gathering and Use of Criminal Intelligence recommended: "... the establishment of a national repository for criminal intelligence ..."

NCIS would replace the two existing 30-year-old systems with one pro-active, real-time national alerting system.

That system would provide monitoring, indicators and warnings, trend analyses, and metrics, giving a national intelligence picture for the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) and all of Australia's police forces.

The NCIS pilot program is currently progressing under the ACC. A consultative group of users – who represent 15 law enforcement and criminal intelligence organizations – is currently testing the first proof of concept from the program.

NCIS has received \$9.799 million in funding under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* to improve existing capabilities through 2015-16 and 2016-17.

At its full capability, the NCIS will connect to existing systems and help develop intelligence across the spectrum, from volume crime and domestic violence through to serious and organized crime and national security.

Of great benefit is that the states and territories will also be able to use the NCIS to improve community safety and crime prevention.

The PFA calls on the next federal government to commit to the continued funding and support for the NCIS after the pilot program concludes in 2017.

National case-management system

A national case-management system is the cornerstone of the *Three Point Plan for Better National Security*.

The federal parliament and others have undertaken many inquiries, with all major political parties pledging support for collaboration and a national approach to intelligence data and case-management systems.

This support was emphasized by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission's 2007 report into the future impact of serious and organized crime on Australian society.

And the 2008 Clarke Inquiry into Dr Mohamed Haneef called for a national case-management system for major police investigations as a matter of urgency.

There was also the Allen Consulting Group's 2009 report, *New Realities: National Policing in the 21st Century – Federal Audit of Police Capabilities* (the Beale Report) which called for an interoperable national case management system to be in place by 2015.

By 2010, CrimTrac had embarked upon a feasibility study into the development of a national case-management system, which the then National Counter Terrorism Committee endorsed.

The PFA calls on the next federal government to act on the recommendations of the many costly inquiries held so far.

Mobile broadband capability

Mobile communications for public protection and disaster relief have fared no better.

An interoperable public safety mobile broadband capability would clearly benefit our police forces and emergency services. They could move from their last-century radio-only communications to current-century mobile broadband communications across a secure national network.

This would allow them to communicate across state borders and agencies and share:

- Video.
- Data.
- Fingerprints.
- Firearms records.
- Geographic information.
- Weather forecasts.
- Other information necessary to deal with mission-critical incidents.

Examples of mission-critical incidents are the Martin Place siege, the Black Saturday bushfires (Victoria), the Queensland floods and in-building emergencies such as multi-storey fires.

The PFA and other emergency-service providers made submissions to the 2011 Senate Committee inquiry into emergency communications.

The committee unanimously recommended that the “Commonwealth Government allocate sufficient spectrum for dedicated broadband public protection and disaster relief (PPDR) radio-communications in Australia”.

Two years later, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Law Enforcement’s Inquiry into Spectrum for Public Safety Mobile Broadband recommended that:

“... an appropriate portion of the proceeds derived from the auction of spectrum to fund the allocation of 20MHz of spectrum in the 700MHz band for the purposes of a national public safety mobile broadband network.”

And, in the in the lead-up to the 2013 federal election, the Coalition committed to conducting:

“... a rigorous cost-benefit analysis into the question of emergency services wireless communications and consider the most cost effective means of upgrading Australia’s law enforcement and emergency services mobile broadband network.”

This led to the Productivity Commission (PC) Report into Public Safety Mobile Broadband, the final report of which was released in January 2016.

The PC report considered the cheapest way to deliver a system working on the assumption that the Public Safety Agencies (PSAs) would build an entirely new network.

This assumption is highly flawed and the PC report has ignored the benefits to public safety agencies and the Australian community.

The government has not yet responded to the report but the PFA intends to move on this issue in order to benefit public safety agencies and the Australian community. The model will make use of the substantial infrastructure the PSAs already have in place.

In regional and remote areas, the two big carriers have more extensive networks, enabling PSAs to leverage off existing carrier networks.

However, as recent outages of major carriers have demonstrated, sole reliance on these networks could put the police, emergency services and the public at risk.

So far, neither major party has articulated how it would deal with the 2012 decision of the Australian Communications and Media Authority to set aside 10MHz of spectrum from the 800MHz band.

The PFA calls on the next federal government to progress the public safety mobile broadband issue with an allocation of 20MHz of 700MHz band spectrum to public-safety agencies as a priority for 21st century communications.

Clearly, a shared spectrum arrangement, working closely with carrier networks, is the best option.

Ownership of the spectrum should be with the PSAs. They would be able to “expand” into other resource blocks within the carrier’s spectrum when needed.

Conversely, in cases in which the PSAs were not using the spectrum, the carrier would have access to it improving their services. This is particularly beneficial in regional areas where PSA use may be intermittent, and it meets ACMA’s requirement for “highest value use”.

Other advantages to this model are:

- The use of PSA infrastructure to provide greater regional coverage at lower cost.
- Possible use of the “blackspot” program to build out networks with the PSA’s chosen carrier to enhance emergency and regional coverage.
- Money that would be otherwise spent duplicating a network could be used to “harden” and expand an existing one.
- Carrier aggregation means other bands, such as 1800 MHz, could be used in cases of severe congestion.

However, a recent bid by Vodafone to buy the bulk of the 700MHz spectrum left unsold in the 2013 auction could jeopardize this strategy. Such a process taking place at this stage concerns the PFA, and we are aware that the other carriers have raised concerns with government.

Any decision on the Vodafone proposal should be delayed until the critical issue of the allocation of spectrum to states and territories for a national public safety mobile broadband (PSMB) capability is properly considered and resolved before consideration of any other commercial proposals.

Funding for the *Three Point Plan for Better National Security* is a matter of immediately adopting a national unexplained wealth regime, under which criminals would pay for these state-of-the-art policing technologies.

Intelligence, surveillance, good communications, collaboration, and the effective management of criminal investigations and prosecutions are essential to deal with terrorism and all other serious and organized crime.

To break through the deadlock on these vital measures of national security, Australia needs a united front led by the federal government.

In conclusion, the PFA has a long history of collaboration with governments and oppositions or advantage not only its members but also the communities they serve.

We believe that a federal government has no greater obligation to its citizens than to preserve the values which underpin our open, democratic society.

We would appreciate your responses to the issues raised so that we can inform our members, and the Australian community, of your party’s position on and commitment to their safety and security.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Carroll". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mark Carroll
President