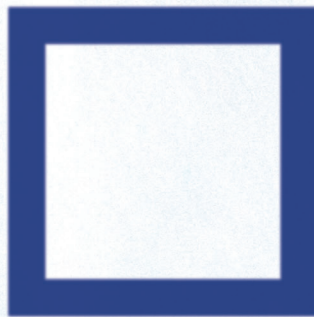


**PANSW**

POLICE ASSOCIATION OF NSW

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# Election issues

28 recommendations



# Police in the right place at the right time

Police officers have guided the state of NSW through ever increasing and diversifying challenges: from the worst global pandemic in history, to unprecedented fires and floods, all the while continuing to serve communities and tackle crimes like domestic violence, sexual assault, organised crime and drugs.

Police officers have done an extraordinary job and will continue to do so.

But new challenges now face the NSWPF: police officers are being injured at alarming rates, and a failure to support injured officers back to work is ending careers in numbers not seen in a decade.

At the same time, there is a drastic shortage of new police recruits, both in NSW, around Australia and the world.

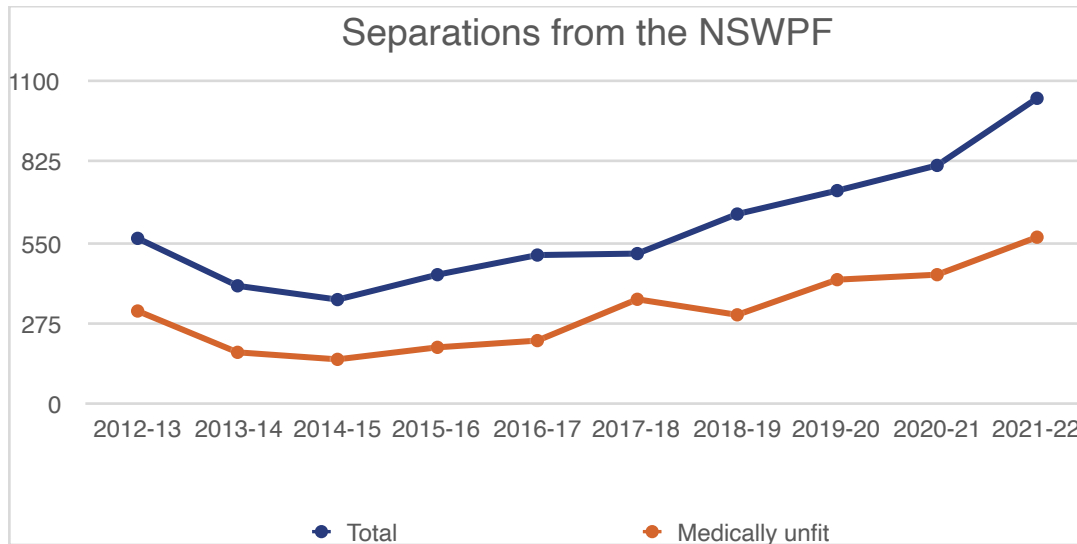
Police officer wellbeing and workforce capacity are therefore two major challenges that need to be planned for and addressed over the next term of Government.

The solutions to these challenges will be interrelated:

1. Workforce planning needs to ensure we have the right officers in the right place at the right time.
2. Keep police officers safe, healthy and at work, to retain experienced police, protect the wellbeing and financial security of police officers and their families, and reduce insurance cost for the NSW Budget.
3. Maintain the current safety net for officers who are injured, while designing a scheme that rewards years of service to retain experienced police and provides long serving officers with options through financial security and career planning to leave the NSWPF before injury risks affect their lives and the claims cost to the NSWPF.
4. Pay and entitlements need to be competitive and flexible to retain the police of today and attract the police of tomorrow.
5. Ensure quality affordable homes are available to police in regional and metropolitan areas of NSW, to enable police to live within the communities they work, and the NSWPF to attract officers to locations that need more police.

Police officers want to see candidates with clear policies to ensure police officers' safety, financial security, and the capacity to serve the people of NSW.

The police of today are exiting the NSWPF at higher and higher rates each year, largely driven by the failure to protect officers from injury and health risks. In the 2012-13 financial year, 565 police left the NSWPF. Last financial year, that figure grew to 1,043, with 569 of those in the category “Medically Unfit”.



At the same time, recruitment of the police of tomorrow is becoming more and more challenging. Only a few years ago, applicants to join the NSWPF far exceeded the available intake. Now there are not enough potential recruits attracted to join the police.

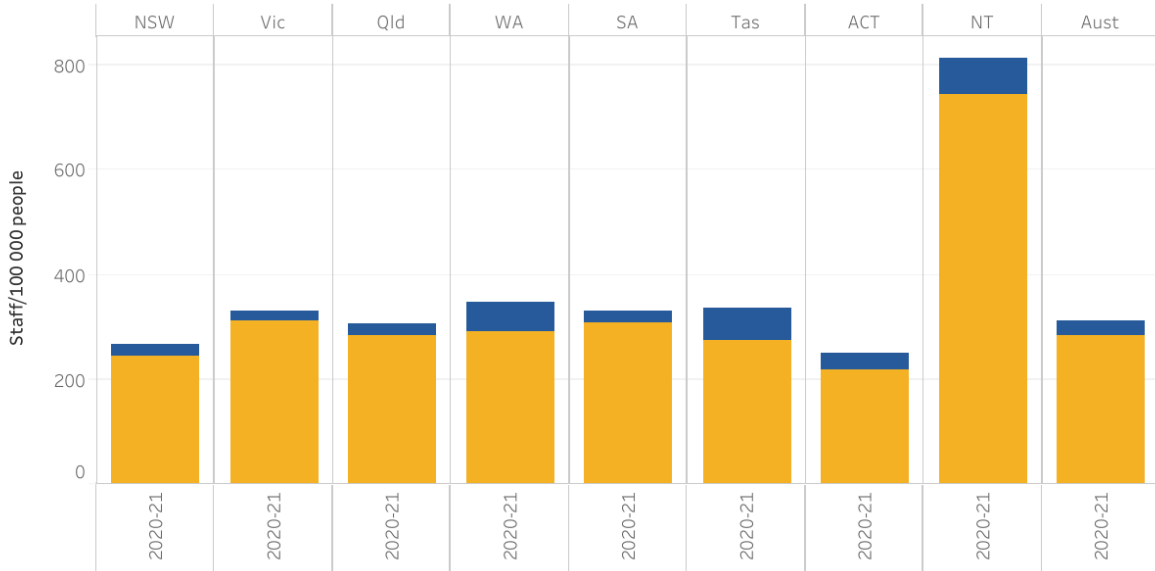
This creates a significant challenge to the NSW Police Force to ensure NSW has enough police on the frontline in the future.

New South Wales already had the lowest police to population ratio of any State/ Territory in Australia, other than the unique circumstances of the ACT.

Select year(s):  
2020-21

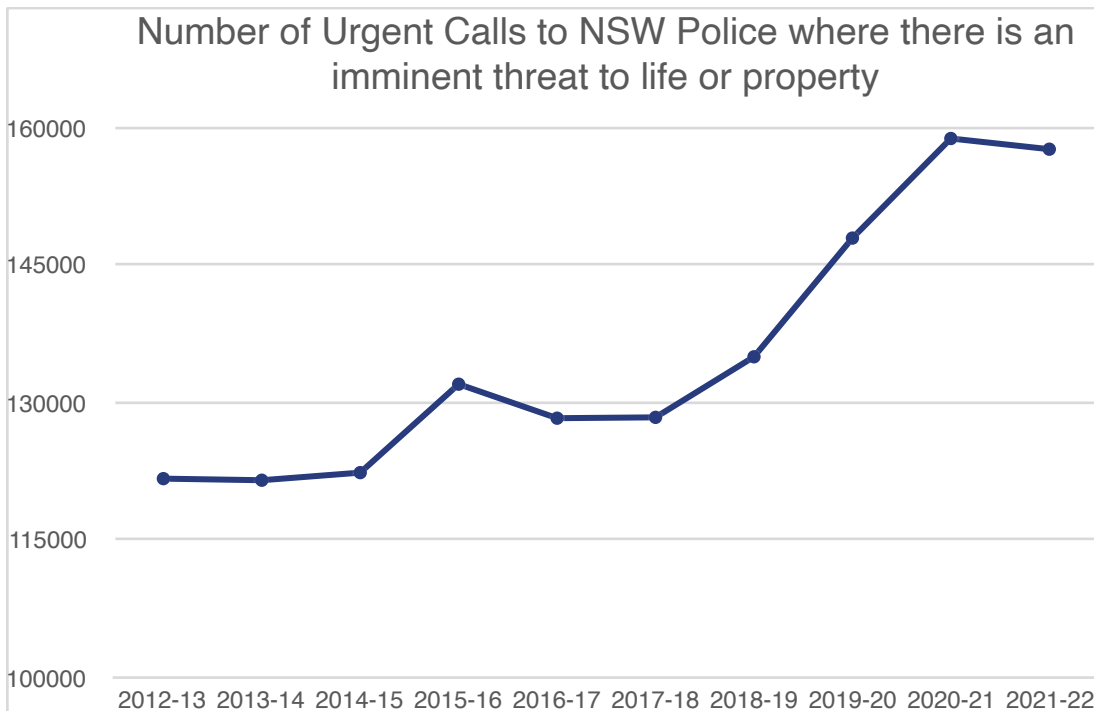
■ Non-operational staff per 100 000 people  
■ Operational staff per 100 000 people

Figure 6.1 Police staff per 100 000 people by jurisdiction, by year



Source: Table 6A.2 - Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2022, PART C, Section 6: Police Services, Released January 2022.

This capacity challenge risks compromising response times. The number of urgent calls to the NSWPF has increased significantly in the last 10 years:



The NSWPF aims to respond to 80% of urgent calls within a target time. Five years ago it responded within that target time to 78.7% of urgent calls. Last year that fell to 75% due to these challenges.

If capacity issues are not addressed, it will be incredibly difficult for police officers to improve this trend.

To ensure NSWPF has the capacity to serve the people of NSW, the PANSW calls on all candidates to the 2023 Election to:

Commitment	Recommendations
Optimise workforce capacity of existing police resources.	Chapter 1
Reduce the loss of police due to injury	Chapter 2
Create retention and separation pathways that give officers rewarding careers, financial security, and exit options before they are injured and claim costs escalate.	Chapter 3
Provide incentives to retain the police of today and attract the police of tomorrow.	Chapter 4
Ensure quality affordable homes are available to police in regional and metropolitan areas of NSW, to enable police to live within the communities they work, and the NSWPF to attract officers to locations that need more police.	Chapter 5

## Chapter 1. Optimise workforce capacity of existing police resources.

### Western Sydney needs more police

Western Sydney is one of NSW's most important communities. It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest economy in Australia, and is an important part of further economic growth, with a large proportion of NSW's working age people calling Western Sydney home, and major infrastructure projects like the Badgerys Creek Airport and new employment areas reliant on Western Sydney. It is a vibrant and diverse community, with people of many cultures, backgrounds, languages and ages.

Western Sydney deserves services to match this importance and growth.

However, in NSW, the State with the lowest police to population ratios in Australia, Western Sydney has the lowest police to population ratios in NSW:

Police Region	Police per 100,000 population
Western Region	237
Central Metropolitan	190
Southern Region	152
Northern Region	135
South West Metropolitan	133
North West Metropolitan	113

Western Sydney is covered by the Police Regions "South West Metropolitan" and "North West Metropolitan"

Already from the lowest police to population resourcing in NSW, this challenge will exacerbate as Western Sydney continues to be one of the highest population growth areas in NSW. The Department of Planning and Environment recorded the population of Western Sydney as 2.45 million in 2021. By 2031 it is projected to be 2.92 million.

This creates a challenge to improve police response times that are already suffering from delays. The Table below shows the number of Police Area Commands and Police Districts within each Region that have either improved their response times to urgent calls, or gotten worse, over the past three years.

Almost all of the Commands in Western Sydney (North West Metro and South West Metro) have gotten worse:

Region	Commands/ Districts that improved Response Times	Commands/ Districts whose Response Times got worse	% of Commands/ Districts that worsened
<b>Total</b>	23	34	60%
<b>Western</b>	6	1	14%
<b>Northern</b>	7	4	36%
<b>Central Metro</b>	5	5	50%
<b>Southern</b>	3	5	63%
<b>South West Metro</b>	1	8	89%
<b>North West Metro</b>	1	11	92%

Each Police Area Command or Police District has a target response time set according to the conditions in that area/community. The NSWPF aims for police to respond to 80% of urgent calls within that target time (urgent calls are where there is an imminent threat to life or property).

Western Sydney (North West Metro and South West Metro) has the highest number of Commands that could not meet that objective.

Region	Number of Commands/ Districts that did not meet response times objective	Number of Commands/ Districts that succeeded on response times objective	% of Commands/ Districts that Failed to meet target
<b>Total</b>	33	24	58%
<b>Western Region</b>	1	6	14%
<b>Northern Region</b>	3	8	27%
<b>Central Metro</b>	6	4	60%
<b>Southern Region</b>	5	3	63%
<b>North West Metro</b>	10	2	83%
<b>South West Metro</b>	8	1	89%

## Commitments sought from candidates to 2023 Election

### *Recommendation 1*

Immediately fund an additional 250 police for Western Sydney to address current staffing challenges.

### *Recommendation 2*

The NSW Government, PANSW and NSWPF develop an agreed workforce capacity strategy to plan, recruit and resource Commands in Western Sydney according to need, rather than playing catch up in election years.

## NSW Police lead emergency management

Whenever there is an emergency in NSW, everyone looks to the NSW Police Force for leadership.

Time and time again, police officers have seen this state through the greatest challenges, whatever form they take.

Nothing exemplifies this more than the events of the previous 3 years, where the leadership and emergency management skills of the NSWPF has led us through unprecedented floods, fires and pandemics.

As a result, the 2022 NSW Flood Inquiry made the following recommendation:

### **3. Recommendation – permanent SEOCON**

[T]o improve NSW's ability to prepare for and respond to floods and other disasters, Government establish a new Deputy Commissioner of NSW Police Force to take on permanently the SEOCON role. This role, in addition to current SEOCON functions, would be responsible for:

- chairing the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC)
- facilitating collaborative risk management and compliance activities working with local and regional emergency management committees, communities, local government, state government agencies, particularly the proposed NSWRA, and the Australian Government
- working with relevant state government agencies to improve their operational readiness and preparedness for emergencies including, but not limited to, training, education, and ensuring proactive understanding of the location and condition of assets available to the combat agency in the event of an emergency, rather than this information being sought during an emergency, with agencies being required to report on implementation and progress through the SEMC
- ownership of a state capability framework to ensure combat agencies can resource a catastrophic event (so, for example, that during a flood emergency SES deploys all available assets, not just assets owned by SES)



- leading training standards across combat agencies, local government, NGOs and essential service providers
- establishing funded permanent emergency management police positions (at sergeant or senior sergeant level) focussed on local emergency management service delivery for the SEOCON across all 27 police districts in regional NSW, and the 3 police metropolitan regions in Sydney, with priority given to identified high risk-catchments
- supporting existing interstate connectivity
- State Emergency Recovery Controller (SERCON) responsibilities, which could be delegated to a recovery coordinator/s as deemed appropriate
- leading the proposed new agency, Recovery NSW.
- That, to support the Deputy Police Commissioner, SEOCON, a full-time secretariat office led by a Deputy Secretary for Emergency Management be established within, though functionally separate from, NSW Police to drive policy development and implementation. This office should be well-trained to ensure the effective chairing of, and secretariat support for, the SEMC

The NSW Government's response supports the recommendation to establish a full time Deputy Commissioner of Police to permanently take on the State Emergency Operations Controller (SEOCON) responsibilities.

The Government further stated:

"The structural arrangements and functions of the role will be determined in consultation with operational agencies, including the NSWPF, to ensure disaster response and recovery is streamlined."

This formally enables the NSW Police Force to lead emergency management and ensure the safety of the people of NSW.

The PANSW strongly supports this Recommendation – it is the right thing to do for NSW.

To properly implement the recommendation and ensure the safety of people during emergencies, the NSW Government needs to provide the NSWPF with the resources needed to perform the role.

### *Recommendation 3*

The NSW Government fully fund the additional Deputy Commissioner position, and new additional police positions to staff the emergency management structure reporting to that Deputy Commissioner. These new positions must be in addition to current police numbers, and be allocated entirely to those emergency management duties, not performed alongside additional duties from existing positions in the NSWPF.

All new positions and required resourcing and support must be filled and in place before NSWPF take over the emergency management responsibilities.

### Police in technical positions

The NSW Government has invested to provide police with new technology to assist them combat crime, including serious and organised crime.

Use of this technology requires police officers to service those on the frontline with their technical needs.

The demand from the frontline for officers in these technical positions far outweighs the number of officers available to perform this work, meaning the full benefit of technological capabilities is not leveraged.

#### *Recommendation 4*

Review staffing numbers in Commands like State Technical Investigation Unit & Cybercrime to ensure the benefits of new technological capabilities are delivered to investigators across the state.

### Prisoner Transport

Police officers are frequently required to transport prisoners to and from police facilities, custody facilities or a court, sometimes hundreds of kilometres. This means they are away from their Command for hours at a time, making them unavailable to perform their core duties like responding to emergency calls or conducting patrols.

In some locations, the demand on already stretched police resources is so great, multiple officers are away at the same time. When police officers are tied up transporting prisoners, they are not available to respond to urgent calls. The PANSW have been informed of examples where so many police were busy transporting prisoners that police stations were closed to the public, and no one was available to respond to calls for assistance.

This places the community at risk, as their local police are unavailable, so response to calls for assistance will be significantly delayed.

The NSW Government must minimise as much as possible, the time police are required to spend transporting prisoners.

#### *Recommendation 5*

Prisoner escort duties to and from court be removed as a duty of the New South Wales Police Force and be taken over by Corrective Services NSW and Juvenile Justice NSW.

#### *Recommendation 6*

Amend s33 of the Mental Health (Forensic Procedures) Act to provide a person subject to a s33 order will remain in the custody of Corrective Services NSW, not the NSW Police Force.

#### *Recommendation 7*

Ensure all police custody facilities have suitable equipment to enable prisoners to make appearances via audio-visual link.

### Police stations must be fit for purpose

Police Stations are an important link between police officers and the community they serve. They are the workplaces for police officers, and one of the primary points of interactions between police and members of the community.

The PANSW acknowledges the capital expenditure that has been invested in police stations over this term of Government.

However there are still police stations that remain in a state of disrepair that is completely unacceptable for police officers to work in, and members of the public to access police services.

Stations in both Metropolitan and Regional Commands suffer from defects that subject police to conditions most people would be shocked to learn of; problems like mould, rats, running water and general disrepair.

Across the State, many police stations are also lacking air conditioning to protect police from the extreme heat and cold that can occur in different sections of NSW, so police can be safe and effective during their work hours.

### *Recommendation 8*

Immediately fund the following new works or completion of existing projects that have stalled:

Station/Property	Work Needed
Bathurst Police Station	Major upgrade, rectify defects
Bega Police Station	New station
Bourke Police Station	Major Upgrade
Broken Hill Police Station	New station
Byron Bay Police Station	New station
Coleambally Police Station	New station
Condobolin Police Station	Complete major works
Coonabarabran Police Station	New station
Coonamble Police Station	Extensive work to refurb charge room
Cootamundra Police Station	New station
Coraki	Upgrade residence
Dubbo Regional Education and Training Centre	Complete new build
Eastwood Police Station	Immediately rectify fire safety issues

Eastwood Police Station	New station
Goulburn Police Station	New station
Grafton Police Station	New station
Hurstville Police Station	Complete redevelopment works
Jindabyne Police Station	Complete redevelopment works
Leichhardt Police Station	New station
Lismore Police Station	Complete remediation works
Maitland Police Station	Complete current upgrades
Manila Police Station	Significant works on charge room
Menai Police Dog Unit	Further funding for redevelopment (fencing and kennels)
Moama Police Station	Complete current works
Narrabri Police Station	New station
Newcastle Police Station	Major works
NSW Police Academy	Complete major upgrade works including Tower refresh, new accommodation, wi-fi
Parramatta Police Station	Complete major works
Perisher Police Station	New station
Police Headquarters	Refurbishments
Port Kembla Police Station	Complete major works
Port Macquarie Police Station	New station
Quirindi Police Station	Significant works on charge room
Ryde Police Station	Charge room upgrades
Singleton Police Station	New station
Thredbo Police Station	New station
Tullamore Police Station	Complete major works
Waverley Police Station	New station
Woodburn	Upgrade residence
Young Police Station	New station

### Recommendation 9

Audit all NSWPF workplaces to ensure effective air conditioning is installed.

### Productivity reforms to optimise available resources

The NSWPF has identified the need to “Facilitate flexible workforce allocation and deployment to meet demand and community need.” (NSWPF Corporate Plan: “OUR FOCUS OUR FUTURE”).

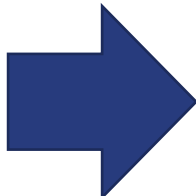
Important reforms to achieve this include:

- Move to a Full Time Equivalent (FTE) model of staffing, removing the restrictions of the Authorised Strength model.
- Create vacancy relief pools, to fill vacancies in police workplaces when officers are absent (eg through injury, parental leave, etc).

### Full Time Equivalent staffing model

Currently, the number of NSWPF employees is measured by the number of SAP positions filled via the Authorised Strength Model. The number of people working in a Command is measured rather than the number of hours worked. This model makes it difficult to measure productivity, as it assumes all officers are working the same hours when this is not the case.

Many organisations have shifted to a Full-time Equivalent (FTE) model, reflecting the overall number of hours worked more accurately. The PANSW asserts that the FTE model will benefit officers and the NSWPF. This model is calculated by the number of hours an employee has worked - divided by the number of hours a full-time employee is allocated over the same time period. To illustrate the difference, compare the FTE amount and Headcount amount in the below table:

<p><b>Officer 1</b> 76 hours/fortnight (full time) 1.0 FTE vs 1 SAP position</p>		Total combined hours actually worked <b>129.2</b>
<p><b>Officer 2</b> 38 hours/fortnight (part time) 0.5 FTE vs 1 SAP position</p>		Total hours available for three positions <b>228</b>
<p><b>Officer 3</b> 15.2 hours/fortnight (part time) 0.2 FTE vs 1 SAP position</p>		SAP positions filled <b>3</b>
		FTE positions filled <b>1.7</b>

Under the FTE model, all allocated hours are available to have an officer present in the workplace. This enables police workplaces to better accommodate flexible work arrangements, while still maintaining their operational capacity requirements.

This would also allow officers to perform multiple roles within the Command, providing the NSWPF with more flexibility to meet the needs of the community. For example, an officer could work part time as a Domestic Violence Liaison Officer, and part time in General Duties.

### *Recommendation 10*

Move to an FTE model of staffing, removing the restrictions of the Authorised Strength model.

### *Vacancy relief pools*

When police officers are absent from their workplace the Command in which that officer works has to carry that vacancy.

This affects various forms of absences from the workplace, including officers that take parental leave, seek flexible work arrangements, temporary secondments, or are off work due to injury.

Carrying that vacancy can create challenges in meeting operational needs, especially when the Command has a large number of officers absent.

This adversely affects all officers in the Command. Operational needs may make Commanders reluctant to approve losing an officer, creating a barrier to access forms of flexible work, leave or secondment opportunities. Those officers that are still working in the Command have to pick up the additional workload from the vacant position. The officer that is absent feels negative about letting the team down.

This has the unintended consequence of discouraging officers from seeking flexible work arrangements, taking parental leave, adding to their skills through secondments, or recovering from injuries. These are things that NSW wants its police officers to pursue, but current work arrangements prevent them from doing so.

Vacancy relief pools are one strategy that would provide the NSWPF with the flexibility to fill those vacancies, and therefore remove impediments to optimal capability and working conditions.

### *Recommendation 11*

Create vacancy relief pools to fill vacancies in police workplaces when officers are absent (eg through injury, parental leave, etc).

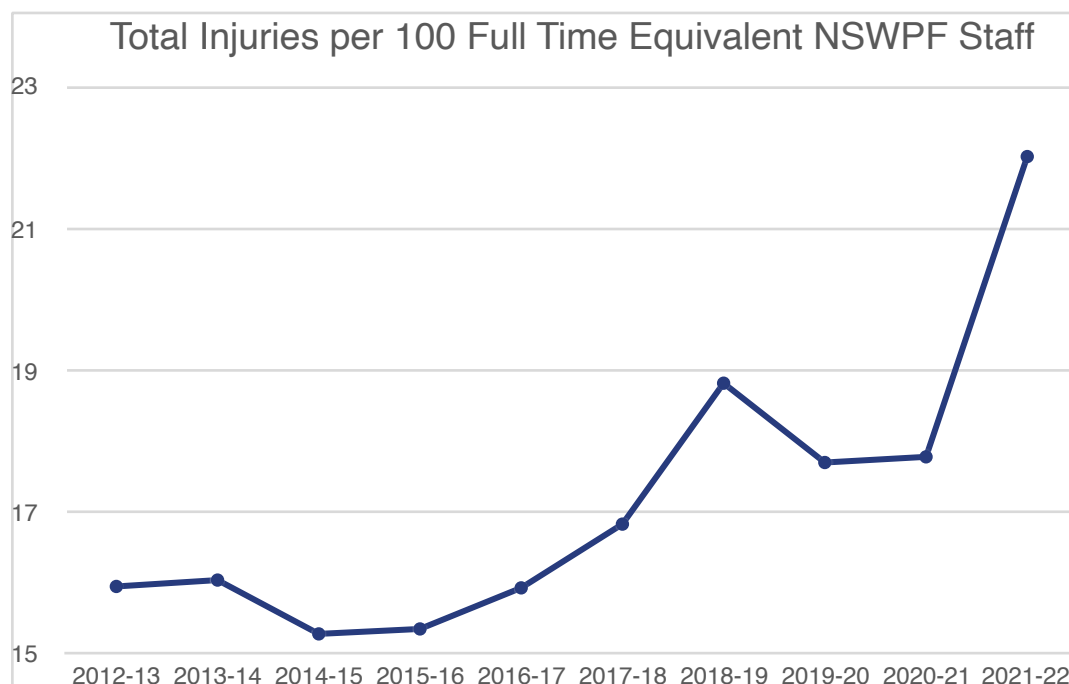
## Chapter 2: Keeping police officers safe, healthy and at work

One of the PANSW's top priorities is to work with the NSWPF to protect police officers and their families from the risks and dangers in policing.

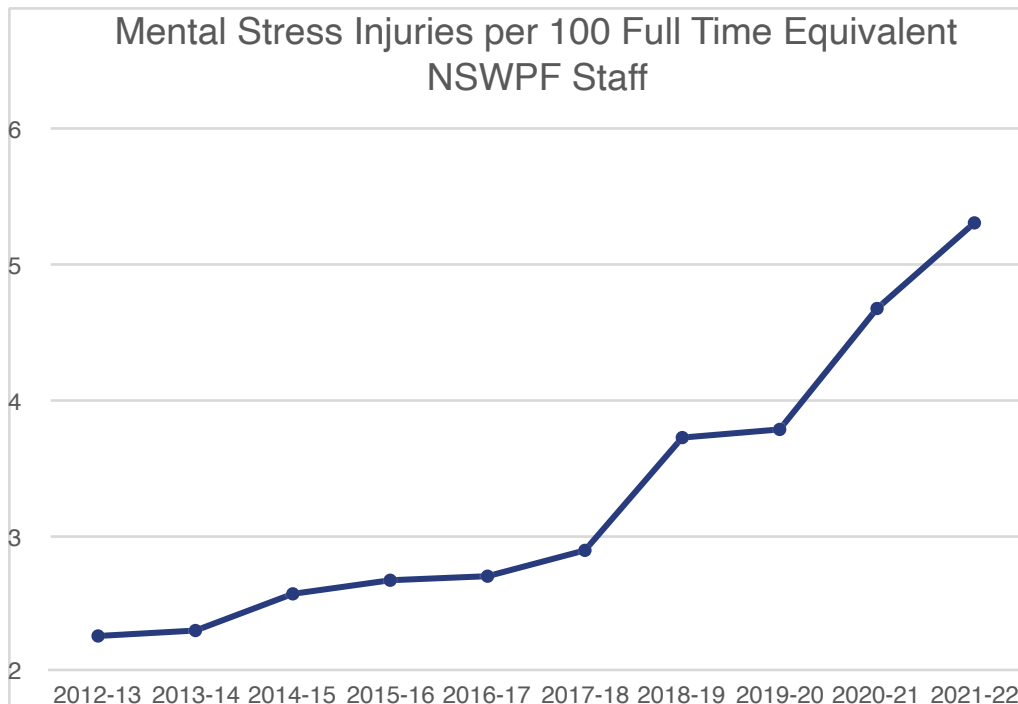
The strategies required to achieve this are:

- **Preventing Injury:** Identify and control risks before they cause harm to police officers, in particular psychological risks.
- **Recovering from injury:** Early intervention support and treatment options to reduce the severity and duration of injuries when they do occur.
- **Support at work:** Flexible and supportive recovery at work.
- **End reliance on medical discharge:** Don't throw police on the scrap heap.

NSW police officers are being injured at alarming rates. The 2<sup>nd</sup> most common cause of an injury, and the fastest growing, is mental stress:







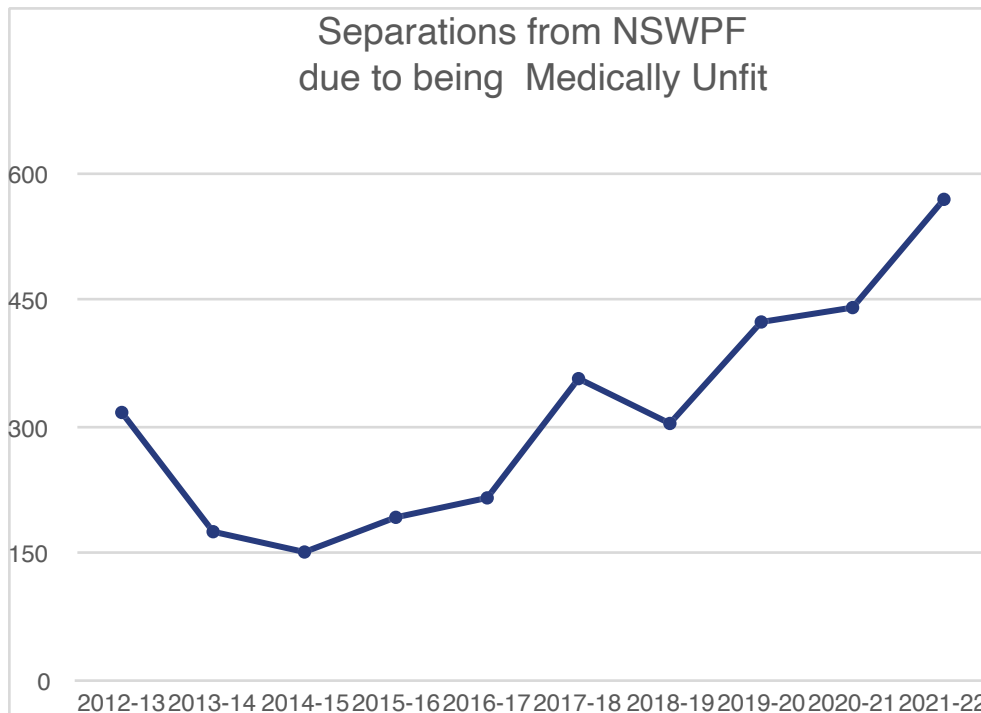
As well as injuries becoming more frequent, the severity and duration of injuries is also becoming worse; injuries are resulting in police spending longer off work, and more and more police are medically discharging from the NSWPF.

We have now seen years of drastic deterioration in the RTW outcomes for injured workers in NSW. The performance of NSWPF in returning injured police to work is even more concerning, suffering a similar decline as the broader scheme, but from an already lower starting point. For example, the percentage of officers with a psychological injury who returned to work by 26 weeks after injury dropped from 60% to 42% between 2016 to 2020.

The amount of time lost in the NSWPF due to injury leave climbs every year: the graph below shows the average number of hours lost due to injury per NSWPF staff member in the 5 years 2015 to 2020 (in 2020 NSWPF stopped publishing that specific data).



The number of officers leaving the NSWPF due to being medically unfit has also increased significantly. Between 2011 and 2015, a strong commitment to retaining injured police and getting them back to work reduced medical separations to 152 in the financial year 2014-15. Last year the number of officers leaving medically unfit reached 569. That is 569 officers whose career ended, and whose valuable skills, experience and service were lost for the NSW community, because NSW did not protect those officers from injury or support them back to work.



This is damaging to the long-term health and financial security of police officers and their families, is a loss of an officer with years of experience and skills at a time when recruitment is slow, and it is a cost to the NSW Government.

### Preventing Injury

The NSW Government and NSWPF must act to make policing safer and less harmful to police officers. The worsening injury data shows the failure to do so over the past 10 years.

Support programs like counselling, WellCheck and RECON are very important and have the full support of the PANSW. But that is not preventing harm; that is treating harm after it has already affected police officers.

The expertise that is designed to prevent injury before it happens is Work Health and Safety (WHS).

The NSWPF is experienced in applying WHS skills to identify and control physical risks, but the ability to apply those skills to psychological risks is challenging, and one that needs significant improvement in all workplaces, and this certainly includes NSWPF.

While policing has unavoidable risks, like physical danger and traumatic work, best practice shows us that we can prevent these leading to harm and injury; improving controllable workplace factors like excessive workload, repeated and frequent traumatic tasks, workplace conflict, and supportive leadership, will protect officers from harm and prevent injury.

## Commitments sought from candidates to 2023 Election

### *Recommendation 12:*

Having adopted the recent amendments to the Model WHS Regulations that deal with psychosocial risks, the NSW Parliament and Government should lead the nation in developing further WHS Regulations that create obligations regarding specific **psychological** risks to the same level of detail to those that already address physical risks.

### *Recommendation 13:*

Emergency Services Agencies be required to report regularly and publicly on strategies to ensure the psychological safety of their workers, and specifically report on the systematic processes in place to comply with the new WHS Regulations, and the *Code of Practice: Managing Psychological Risks at Work*. This reporting should include:

- Publishing WHS policies specific to mental health and psychological risk factors.
- Regular risk audits and risk register cycles in all workplaces, and reporting on psychological injury trends.
- A focus on identification and control mechanisms for workplace and organizational factors, including conflict, bullying, harassment, discrimination, work intensification, low control over work, and frequency of traumatic incidents.

### *Recovering from injury*

While current injury rates are unacceptable and every effort must be made to prevent injury, some police officers will be injured as a result of the dangerous and traumatic nature of policing.

When police officers are injured, they should have early access to best practice support services and treatment.

In November 2022, the NSW Government committed \$79 million over five years to Pulse – the NSWPF program designed to better look after sworn and unsworn members' physical and psychological wellbeing.

This includes:

- mental health clinicians embedded in police workplaces,
- additional RECON program personnel, including psychologists,
- pathways through the WellCheck program into support from nurses, dieticians and trainers,
- additional injury management personnel to improve return to work outcomes, and

- additional career transition specialists.

The PANSW applauds the funding for these strategies.

The NSWPF, PANSW and NSW Government will need to form a tripartite consultation group to ensure the programs are effective and lead to better recovery and return to work outcomes for police officers.

#### *Recommendation 14:*

The NSWPF, PANSW and NSW Government form a tripartite consultation group that rigorously evaluates all strategies relating to police health and wellbeing, including specific program evaluation of those delivered through Pulse, and the need for any further programs to improve injury trends, recovery outcomes and return to work rates.

Currently, police officers with a psychological injury go through a highly stressful and often retraumatising claims process. The adversarial nature of claims disputes forces officers to re-live harmful psychological experiences, causing damage at a time when early intervention and recovery is the most crucial to long term wellbeing and return to work prospects.

A rebuttable presumption that a psychological injury suffered by an emergency services worker is a result of their work would alleviate the anxiety and trauma for many injured police and allow them to focus on recovery rather than reliving the events that caused the injury in the first place.

#### *Recommendation 15:*

NSW Parliament create a legislative presumption that when an emergency service worker suffers a psychological injury, that injury is a result of their work.

### **Support at Work**

Police officers should not be thrown on the scrap heap, they should be supported to stay in the job they love, or transition into rewarding careers where their skills and experience in policing are valued.

The most pressing need to improve the lives of injured officers, and reduce insurance cost to the NSW Government, is to support injured officers back to work, in a role designed to suit their capacity.

It is now well established that the quicker an injured worker is able to return to meaningful duties, the better their recovery and long-term health outcomes will be. Finding a position is also the most financially secure outcome for an injured worker and their family.

Retaining employment for injured police officers must be the top priority in injury management.

Employers in NSW, including the NSWPF, need to increase their commitment and effectiveness at creating suitable positions for injured officers, including the use of

adjustments or redesign of positions to suit the injured officer's capabilities, rather than requiring the police officer to fit to a narrow position description that was not designed to utilise injured officers to their full capacity.

Too often, police officers with a capacity to perform valuable and meaningful work to serve the people of NSW are offered extremely limited options (if any) for duties they can perform.

The view that every police officer needs to be able to perform 100% of the tasks a police officer might ever be called upon to perform is incorrect, not borne out in real life and no longer sustainable. There are too many injured officers not to change this way of thinking, and a failure to do so will just continue the long recovery times, deteriorating return to work rates, and skyrocketing medical discharges. Further, this is no longer a contemporary strategy that encourages diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

### Commitments sought from candidates to 2023 Election

#### *Recommendation 16:*

Insurers and Injury Management Advisors (IMAs) be given powers to directly influence the placement of injured workers in suitable positions or make adjustments to positions, to rectify circumstances where workplace managers deny injured officers access to positions. In the NSWPF context, this would mean Insurers, IMAs and the Workforce Safety Command can direct RTW outcomes, and Commanders cannot prevent an injured worker from taking up a position in their Command.

#### *Recommendation 17:*

A review to strengthen the obligation under section 49 of the *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act*, and whether the exceptions under 49(3) are frustrating RTW objectives and need to be rewritten.

Public Sector Agencies must make a far greater effort to comply with s49 of the *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act*, with lower reliance on s49(3)(a).

#### *Recommendation 18:*

Public Sector Agencies must develop a more innovative approach to workforce capacity, that utilises injured officers for the work they can do and meeting the demand for work they cannot do with others in the workforce.

### Ending over-use of medical discharge

A police officer being medically discharged from the NSWPF should be an extremely rare occurrence.

When a police officer is injured, they should be supported throughout their recovery, access best practice treatment and rehabilitation services, be given every opportunity to return to the workplace, and then continue to make a valuable contribution to the people of NSW.

In limited circumstances where they cannot perform work for the NSWPF but have capacity to perform other work, they should only be medically discharged when a career transition program has secured them a rewarding career in another job.

Where a police officer has been injured protecting the people of NSW, the employer should not be permitted to dust their hands of them. This approach does nothing for the recovery and long-term health of the officer, nothing for the financial security of them and their family, and is a key driver behind expensive claims.

While medically discharging officers has been seen as operationally convenient, it is costly to all parties in the long run and is no longer sustainable.

Unfortunately, medical discharges continue to occur at an unsustainable rate, and are only increasing.

### Commitments sought from candidates to 2023 Election

#### *Recommendation 19:*

Review the ability of employers to dismiss/medically discharge injured workers. The ability to do so is frustrating the objectives of the Workers Compensation Scheme. The *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act* ought to be amended to require employers to provide reasonable adjustments to a worker's position or redeployment to another position, unless not reasonably practicable, before they can dismiss an injured worker who has capacity to work.

#### *Recommendation 20:*

Where an injured worker in the Emergency Services has capacity to work (albeit not in the Emergency Services Agency) the employer should be required to ensure the transition of that worker into an external job before medical discharge is permitted, so there is no gap between employment.

#### *Recommendation 21:*

Disputes about suitable work and employers' obligations under the *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act*, are better placed in the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW rather than the Personal Injury Commission.

Remove the limitation on the industrial relations commission being able to consider and resolve dispute over attempts to return injured workers to work on graded return to work plans. This will enable disputes to be dealt with more effectively.

### Chapter 3: Safe career pathways and transition

New South Wales needs to provide a safety net to police who are injured, as well as career and retirement transition pathways that give police options before they become injured, so they can retire in dignity, with their health and financial security intact.

Overwhelmingly, NSW police officers’ careers come to an end due to medical reasons – in 2020-21, “medically unfit” was larger than all other separation types combined.

Police Officers leaving the NSWPF 2021-22	Number	%
Medically Unfit	569	55%
Resignation	279	27%
Transfer	70	7%
Dismissal	70	7%
Retirement	50	5%
Death	5	0%
Total	1043	

This means too many police officers are ending their career broken. Their ability to continue work and transition to a new career is difficult, their financial security in retirement is uncertain, and their health and wellbeing is compromised.

Policing is rewarding but also takes its toll.

Many police officers talk about the gradual filling of a bucket. Year after year, the bucket fills up a bit more with stress, work intensification, danger, traumatic incidents, and seeing people at their worst.

Eventually the bucket is full and unfortunately for some, this causes psychological harm that can be very difficult to recover from.

This harms that officer’s quality of life, their ability to work, their financial security, and it is also expensive to the NSW Budget; an officer leaving on an injury claim is far more expensive than an officer who moves on to a new career or retires in good health.

Research conducted by Beyond Blue demonstrated that the risk of psychological harm to police officers and emergency services grows significantly when they have been in the job for 10 or more years. The median years of service for a NSW police officer is now 13 years.



The financial circumstances, career pathways and retirement options available to police are forcing them to stay on even when the bucket is over-flowing, and only leave when they can no longer bear the years of stress, pressure, physical burden and trauma.

They leave due to medical reasons and may become reliant on whatever injury entitlements are available to them.

We need to retain long serving police officers for their skills and experience. But where officers start to feel their bucket filling up, and that the toll of policing is getting harder to bear, there has to be career and retirement pathways other than injury and medical discharge. Police need to be able to leave with dignity, on their terms, with their health intact.

Doing so is better for their health, their financial security, and reduces costs to the NSW Budget by providing career and retirement transition pathways and avoiding injury claim costs.

For those officers that do suffer injury, the current safety net needs to be maintained.

The PANSW is calling on all candidates for the NSW 2023 Election to commit to:

### *Recommendation 22*

Implementing the Recommendations in Chapter 2 of this document, to improve the injury trends and recovery outcomes for police, and in turn reduce insurance costs.

### *Recommendation 23*

Work with the PANSW and NSWPF to design an agreed sustainable death, disability, retention and disengagement scheme, and retirement strategy that ensures the financial security of police and their families, as well as enhancing the financial sustainability of the scheme.

### *Recommendation 24*

Until the above are fully completed and agreed upon with the PANSW, maintain the current safety net for injured police. Including all current entitlements and contributions for police under Workers Compensation and all insurance products applying to police.

## **Safe and rewarding career pathways**

To improve the safety and financial security of police officers, and affordability for the NSW Budget, police officers need career and retirement transition pathways other than leaving for medical reasons.

The long-term design of police injury insurance and separation and retirement schemes should achieve the best value for money for all relevant schemes, including but not limited to:

- Superannuation,

- Optional Disengagement,
- Workers Compensation,
- Police Blue Ribbon Insurance.

A redesigned scheme should ensure the financial security of all police officers and their families, represent the best value for money for the NSW Budget, and be designed to achieve recovery and return to work.

This represents a considerable project that will take significant time and effort by the NSWPF, PANSW, NSW Government and Parliament.

The PANSW is calling on all candidates to commit to working with the PANSW and NSWPF to design pathways for police officers to transition to new careers, or retire in good health, rather than the current trend of medical separations.

In addition, the following strategies can be immediately implemented:

### **Commit to the continuation of the highly successful Optional Disengagement Scheme (ODS)**

The Optional Disengagement Scheme, which commenced in 2022, is an initiative designed to help eligible police officers pursue an alternate career or life path by transitioning from the NSWPF in a dignified and supportive manner that recognises their contribution to policing in NSW.

Officers that access the scheme receive a lump sum, calculated by a formula that incorporates years of service.

As the ODS rewards years of service, it is therefore a retention strategy, but also provides an exit option for police at the time their risk profile for serious injury is increasing.

It is a pathway for police to transition to a new career, or retirement, before they become injured.

This is beneficial to the health and financial security of police officers and reduces costs to the NSWPF by preventing injury risk and increment creep. The scheme has been highly successful in its first round, but is scheduled to run for two more years.

### ***Recommendation 25***

The PANSW calls on all candidates for the NSW 2023 Election to commit to the permanent continuation of the pathways provided by the Optional Disengagement Scheme, and the consideration of expanding ODS (or similar schemes) as part of a broader disengagement, retirement and disability strategy.

## Remove the concessional cap barrier to police officers saving for their retirement

Governments want Australians to save for their retirement. The concessional tax rate on superannuation contributions incentivises this.

Everyone in Australia should be able to make contributions to their retirement savings up to the amount of the concessional cap.

NSW police officers are the only people in Australia prevented from doing so, and it is through no fault of their own.

By law, the NSWPF and police officers are required to contribute a percentage of salary to a police death and disability insurance product.

Those contributions are administered through police officers' superannuation, washing through their account. These contributions are purely paid towards the insurance product, they do not add a cent to the retirement savings of police officers.

Despite this, these contributions are included in the calculations of police contributions under the concessional cap, and also police officers income assessments.

As a result, police officers are hit with bills at tax time for exceeding the cap, and their income is assessed as an artificially inflated amount, affecting things like access to child support, medical benefits, and other supports that are means tested.

This is all due to money that is being paid to an insurance product, it is not money that police officers can access or save.

Every year the cost of the insurance product increases, meaning this unintended consequence affects more and more police, and the consequences become increasingly severe.

### *Recommendation 26*

The NSW Government and the Federal Government must resolve as a matter of urgency the assessment of police insurance costs under the Concessional Cap and any income assessments or means tests where these insurance costs are included.

### **Maintain the current safety net for injured police**

Efforts to design a holistic scheme will be a significant project and will take time and transitional arrangements. While that work is underway, police officers must have certainty regarding their current entitlements to ensure the scheme does not come under immediate pressure driven by uncertainty and concern.

Police officers put themselves in harms way to protect the people of NSW, and therefore the NSW community has a moral obligation to ensure the financial security of police if they are injured.

Accessing injury support entitlements is no free ride or golden handshake; becoming reliant on injury entitlements is a risk to an officer's long-term health and financial security. This should be considered a last resort by the NSWPF, police officers and their families.

But this safety net must be maintained for officers that are harmed protecting the people of NSW.

## Chapter 4: Retention and recruitment incentives

The people of NSW and the NSW Government are asking more from the NSW Police Force than ever before.

Policing continues to become more and more complex and intensive, as police need to adapt and apply new skills to combat organised crime and drugs, domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse.

Add to that the huge role police play in the COVID-19 response and implementing health orders, and the leadership and expertise required for responding to floods and fires, and it is clear that police officers are delivering more and more for the people of NSW, on a wide range of public safety and law enforcement challenges.

At the same time police deliver more, face more scrutiny, and require a hugely diverse skill sets and area of expertise, they are also facing a wages cut in real terms, have little opportunity to utilise flexible and remote work the way the rest of the State has been able to explore post lockdown, and are in a career path where the most common form of career transition or retirement is injury and medical discharge.

Police officers join the policing profession due to their desire to help people. They do not do it for the thanks and the money.

But at a time when they continue to learn new skills, understand complex legislation, and face new risks, receiving a wages cut in real terms is incredibly demoralising.

It should also concern the people of NSW that the once huge numbers of people wanting to join the police is now drying up, and it is clear that making police working conditions more attractive is necessary to recruit new officers in sufficient numbers.

### Police lauded as heroes but real wages cut

Real wages are the lowest they have been in ten years – while the cost of living has spiked sharply, governments around Australia have been suppressing wages.

This is not some abstract assessment by economists. This means police officers, nurses, paramedics, firefighters and every other worker in NSW, have suffered a pay cut.

For over a decade now, the NSW Government has suppressed the wages and employment conditions to a maximum 2.5% per year, often further reduced as superannuation increases are taken from the wages cap.

The PANSW appreciates the NSW Government provided short term pay rises above the 2.5% cap in 2022 and 2023. But this is still well below the current cost of living increases.

In the past year, CPI rose 7.3%. These are the costs you have to pay to buy food, power your homes, and travel to work. The cost of essential household items increased the most, for example the cost of fruits and vegetables increased by 16.2%.

This is a smashing of living standards, everyone in NSW is feeling the pinch on their household budget, and everyone deserves to be angry about it. Including police officers.

This not only harms peoples' standard of living and financial security, it is also bad for the economy. With wages falling compared to essential costs, people have less money to spend back into the economy, harming local businesses, in particular in Regional NSW.

Economists and Federal and State Governments around Australia recognise the necessity of increasing wages for the living standards of Australians, the national economy, and Government Budgets. And yet the State Governments is suppressing the wages of their public sector, a huge proportion of the workforce.

### Lack of modern flexible work arrangements

During COVID lockdowns, many people and industries had to completely change the way they worked. Without the restrictions of those lockdowns, many individuals and businesses have realised that new, modern and flexible ways of working are better for everybody.

New ways of working that incorporate flexibility into time, location and technology, have been shown by international research to improve productivity, employee satisfaction, and workplace participation.

As a result, businesses, employers and workers all over Australia now support and benefit from flexible work arrangements.

Crucially, the availability of flexible work is a necessity for an organisation to attract new recruits and retain highly skilled and sought after workers.

Emergency services have not been able to benefit from new improved ways of working and NSWPF will struggle to recruit new officers from a population that now considers flexible work one of its top priorities when looking for a job.

Commitments sought from candidates to 2023 Election:

## Improve employment conditions to retain and attract police by unlocking the IRC.

The Government suppression of wages in NSW has been achieved through a wages cap, enforced by legislation.

Prior to 2011, agency led bargaining promoted productivity amongst the public service.

Where negotiation could not reach a conclusion, there was an independent arbiter, the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC), that could set employment conditions and create industrial awards according to the work value those employees delivered.

But in 2011, the NSW Government legislated its wages suppression policy, and imposed severe restrictions on the IRC.

This has meant emergency service workers, including the police, nurses, and firefighters that have protected the people of NSW through pandemics and natural disasters, have been unable to seek improved employment conditions and had to take what the Government offers.

This is why essential workers cannot negotiate a fair pay rise while they take on more and more work, and why all of us in NSW are being paid way below inflation and can't keep up with the rising cost of living.

### *Recommendation 25*

To remove the artificial suppression of wages and conditions, NSW Parliament should amend the Industrial Relations Act to:

- Repeal s146C to allow negotiation of wages without a legislated cap, and for an independent arbiter to set Award conditions,
- Remove the current requirement for dollar-for-dollar employee related savings for fair pay increases,
- Restore agency-led bargaining to incentivise productivity improvements,
- Remove the prohibition on the industrial relations commission setting fair and reasonable conditions of employment providing death and disability benefits for police officers by way of an Award.

### *Recommendation 26*

Establish recruitment incentives to attract the best and brightest to join the NSWPF, and enable people from diverse circumstances to complete recruitment processes.

Many people in NSW spend their lives dreaming of being a police officer. They want to help people, they want to prevent and investigate crime, they want to catch people that harm others.

But to follow that dream, NSW demands of them that they pay thousands of dollars in fees, spend months away from their families, and go without income for months while they train.

For many, this is simply not something they can afford to do, or is not the best financial decision for their family.

Some people may argue that lots of people pay money to do courses or to go to university, so why is it a problem for those that want to be a police officer? The difference is, people that go to university or do training courses aren't limited to only one employer, and they can still work and earn money while they train.

How could a prospective recruit with children spend months away from their kids, with no income to pay their mortgage and meet the cost of living?

How would the recruitment process look to a young person starting their working life? Incur thousands of dollars of debt, take yourself out of the job market for months, and at the end of it, only one employer?

Low recruitment numbers are now a real concern for NSW.

Candidates to the 2023 Election need a clear strategy to attract the best and brightest to joining the NSWPF and enable people from diverse circumstances to complete recruitment processes.

## Chapter 5: Housing for police in communities where police are needed

Police officers work in every corner of NSW. Regional and metropolitan, big city or small town, bustling or remote, there is not a community in NSW that police officers are not a part of.

There are difficulties in accessing housing in all of these locations. Whether it be lack of affordability in expensive cities, or lack of availability in remote areas with only a few houses, housing is a major concern of police officers across NSW.

The NSW Government has done very little to help police with this problem. The Government is always keen for police to pose for a ribbon cutting at affordable housing, but a quick investigation of the eligibility criteria shows no police officer will ever set foot in those homes.

We acknowledge that police earn an income above people that face acute housing problems. Affordable housing should be available to everyone in NSW and there are many that need it urgently.

But housing challenges have exacerbated to the point that even those on steady, medium income like police will struggle to find a home.

Choosing to serve the people of NSW should not be a choice to give up on a suitable home.

We should reward the choice to serve NSW as an emergency services worker with the opportunity to own a home.

A failure to address this is another barrier to the NSWPF recruiting and deploying police officers to certain areas where housing is unaffordable or unavailable.

### Regional housing challenges for police

Many police officers have established roots in regional and remote areas and are a permanent part of those communities.

Sometimes the NSWPF also needs to attract police to move to these locations on a long term, but not permanent basis, and an officer will therefore be placed in a rental managed as police housing (NSW Housing Services).

In circumstances such as this, many police are struggling to access available housing at a standard NSW should provide its essential workers.

With small populations and housing stock, there may be very few houses available, if any.

Police officers have raised serious concern with the standards of housing they have been provided in these circumstances. Reports of properties in disrepair, insufficient temperature control in areas with extreme climate, mould and damp are all conditions police officers are forced to accept as part of serving a remote community.

The Commissioner of Police was questioned on this issue of poor quality police housing in 2022 Budget Estimates. The Commissioner indicated that police housing is now managed by Property NSW and so police should have the same standard of housing available to any other public sector worker that is entitled to housing for working in a particular community.

But in practice this has not yet addressed the hundreds of police already in rental properties that are not of a suitable standard.

### *Recommendation 27*

Significantly increase funding to Property NSW to maintain and replace housing used by NSW Police officers across the state, to ensure all police housing is of a suitable standard.

### Metropolitan housing challenges for police

In the most extensive study of housing affordability for essential workers, including police officers, the Sydney University and the Urban Housing Lab revealed the



extent to which emergency services had been pushed out of metropolitan areas due to cost of housing.

For example, even for a Senior Constable on the top pay increment, there were no affordable Local Government Areas in the inner and middle ring of Sydney, and only five and seven in the outer ring and outer greater metropolitan area.

The result has been a mass exodus of essential workers from Sydney.

Many seek to work outside of Sydney. But Sydney still needs essential workers, so those that have to work in Sydney live long distances away. As a result they start and finish their shifts with long commutes, raising fatigue issues that affect safety and productivity. The PANSW even encountered a group of young officers who for their shift block would commute into Sydney at the start of their roster, sleep in their car between shifts, then travel back home for their days off.

There has been almost no response from Government.

Announcements of affordable rental stock are sometimes publicised, but the finer details make police officers ineligible.

With the lack of Government led solutions, the PANSW, Police Bank, and HOPE Housing collaborated to deliver a shared equity scheme to emergency service workers. Trials for this program commenced and the model is highly promising.

The NSW Government announced a similar scheme, but once again the eligibility criteria effectively excluded police.

### *Recommendation 28*

The PANSW calls on all candidates to the 2023 State Election to:

- Waive stamp duty for properties purchased under the HOPE Housing' essential worker shared equity program,
- Work with the Commonwealth Government, Superannuation Funds and other stakeholders to increase investment in HOPE Housing and similar schemes,
- Include in State Government shared equity programs a devoted pathway for emergency service workers, and eligibility criteria be set so as to not exclude police and other emergency service workers, and
- Review the amount of affordable housing stock with eligibility criteria that excludes emergency service workers.

## **Conclusion**

The PANSW has provided recommendations to ensure we have the right police, in the right place, at the right time.

Police officers and the communities they serve want to see candidates to the 2023 NSW State Election provide meaningful commitments and policies to implement these recommendations.

The PANSW will communicate the commitments made by each party to all its members and stakeholders who care about policing in NSW.