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of Australia

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Aviation Green Paper
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POLICE FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA: SUBMISSION TO AVIATION GREEN PAPER

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA), the body representing the nation's 50,000 police officers in all jurisdictions, makes this submission on the *Aviation Green Paper*, December 2008 with the aim of having the arrangements for policing at the eleven 'designated' airports reconsidered.

Currently, the Unified Policing Model in place at these major airports is on the basis that the Australian Federal Police (AFP) funds the policing functions and provides Airport Police Commanders and Protective Service Officers (PSO's), but that the police officers assigned to the major airports are seconded from State and Territory police forces and services.

As at June 2008, the APF had 336 State and Territory sworn police officers seconded to it and 233 of those officers were seconded to work at the major airports. This falls 124 officers short of the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) commitment to 357 officers for the major airports (and 101 short of the reviewed commitment). Further, because States and Territories have been unable to meet and maintain all commitments to provide secondees, there were at 30 June 2008 eighty six (86) vacancies in the Airport Uniform Police.¹ For example, the three Queensland airports had 37 vacancies, Melbourne had 15,

¹ Statistics from AFP Annual Report, 2007-2008. Copy of extract attached.

and Sydney had eight vacancies. All up, officers deployed falls short of the COAG commitment by 124 sworn police officers. We understand the numbers have deteriorated further since June 2008. In other words the major airports are understaffed with sworn police by a staggering 35 % or more.

The extent of on-going understaffing of the crucial airport policing function leads the PFA to conclude that the Unified Policing Model for major airports, based on responsibility shared between the Australian and State and Territory Governments, is a failure. The so-called 'shared responsibility' is, in reality, divided responsibility. No one level of government is actually taking responsibility. This failure, after three years of implementation of the COAG 2005 agreement, leaves our major airports exposed to risks of crime and terrorism.

It also has implications for State and Territory policing. Using funds provided by the Australian Government via the AFP for the airport policing function, the States and Territories are able to backfill the positions of the secondees but nevertheless, the arrangement depletes the States and Territories of experienced sworn police officers and means that they have to recruit from far and wide, including recruiting from overseas police forces.

This current airport policing arrangement stemmed from recommendations of the Wheeler report – *An Independent Review of Airport Security and Policing for the Government of Australia*, September 2005. Sir John Wheeler 'took account of the opinion of the Australian Federal Police that they did not currently have the capability to undertake a 'community policing' role' at the major airports.²

After considering the Wheeler recommendations, COAG agreed at its meeting on 27 September 2005:

- to establish a unified policing model at each of the eleven designated airports;
- that the Commonwealth will fund under the unified model a full-time community policing presence of AFP officers wearing AFP uniforms under AFP command;
- **that the arrangements for the secondment or recruitment of State and Territory police to the AFP command** will be finalized by the National Counter Terrorism Committee in consultation with Police Commissioners as soon as practicable.³

It should be noted that COAG left open the option of the AFP recruiting rather than seconding State and Territory police officers under the airport unified policing model (see item above in bold text).

² Wheeler Report, paragraph 32.

³ Extracts from the COAG Communique, 27 September 2005.

Sir John Wheeler made the point that 'policing at an airport is a special skill for which all officers involved need to be appropriately trained so that they can deliver the full range of policing services. Such policing services are not confined to counter terrorism and the reactive investigation of so-called 'community policing' incidents. They should also include the proactive prevention, investigation and detection of serious, organised and volume crime and other offences, the maintenance of the peace, public reassurance, and ensuring public safety (with a particular emphasis on the capability to respond professionally to a major incident or emergency).'⁴

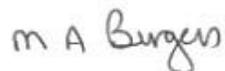
The PFA takes the view that since the Australian Government already funds all the personnel for the airport unified policing model, it would not be an additional drain on Australian Government financial resources if the policy position was that the AFP would provide the sworn police resources for the eleven major airports.

The advantage for the AFP would be that the Airport Police Commander would have a permanent AFP sworn police contingent at his or her disposal. For the States and Territories, their police services would not have sworn police officers regularly seconded from their services for AFP airport purposes. (The AFP also repeatedly seconds State and Territory police officers for its International Deployment Group and for the Northern Territory Intervention, compounding the problems created for States and Territories.)

The PFA believes that it is well past the time that the Australian Federal Police, responsible for these important policing functions, accepts the challenge of developing its sworn police capacity to the point where it can deliver on airport policing responsibilities without having to draw on the trained and experienced personnel from other police services.

A new Australian Government policy on this matter could be phased in over a twelve month period to enable training and recruitment as necessary. Such a policy would be entirely consistent with Sir John Wheeler's view about the strategic importance of policing at Australia's major airports.

Yours sincerely



Mark Burgess
Chief Executive Officer

Cc The Hon Bob Debus, Minister for Home Affairs

⁴ Wheeler Report, paragraph 13.

ATTACHMENT: EXTRACT FROM AFP ANNUAL REPORT, 2007-2008.

The implementation of AUP across designated airports continued throughout 2007-08. The following table illustrates the status of AUP deployed members as at 30 June 2008:

Table H: AUP Implementation at Airports as at 30 June 2008

Airport	COAG commitment	Reviewed Commitment*	Operationally deployed	In training	Expected commitment delivery date and required numbers
Adelaide	21	21	19		Commitment met [†] 2 vacancies
Canberra	14	14	13		Commitment met [†] 1 vacancy
Hobart	11	11	7	4	Commitment met [†]
Northern Territory (Alice Springs and Darwin)	37	37	Darwin (20) Alice Springs (4) Total = 25	1	Commitment met [†] 11 vacancies
Melbourne	55	50	35		Commitment met [†] 15 vacancies
Perth	36	36	24		Western Australia Police unable to produce final 12 due to current operational issues. To be reviewed in 2009
Queensland (including Brisbane, Cairns and Gold Coast)	113	99	Brisbane (32) Gold Coast (10) Cairns (10) Total = 52	10	Currently processes in place for recruitment of shortfall. Currently 37 vacancies.
Sydney	70	66	58		Currently 8 vacancies
Total	357	334	233	15	86 vacancies

* Internal Aviation commitment numbers

[†] Full complement of officers provided to the AFP but operationally deployed numbers may have decreased due to resignations, transfers or promotions.