



Police Federation  
of Australia  
The National Voice of Policing

# Media Release

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## ACCLAIMED AUSTRALIAN SONGWRITER JOHN SCHUMANN PENS NEW SONG 'GRADUATION DAY' FOR POLICE FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA'S MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN.

Singer-songwriter John Schumann, credited with changing the way Australia thinks and helping to bring our Vietnam veterans home with his song "I was only 19", has written and recorded 'Graduation Day' to support the Police Federation of Australia's mental health campaign. Graduation Day will be released on 8<sup>th</sup> April and sales of the single via <https://www.fineprint.net.au/graduation-day> will go towards supporting police officers (serving and retired) and their families who are in need.

**Graduation Day – hear it [here](#)**

"Police all around Australia now have their own song, 'Graduation Day'. It will remind them that they're not alone - and it will give the broader Australian community an empathetic insight into the lives of the men and women who hold the 'thin blue line'," said Mr Mark Carroll APM, President of the Police Federation of Australia (PFA).

"I have yet to meet a police officer who hasn't been stopped in his or her tracks while listening to this song," he said.

Mr Carroll said the job of keeping our communities safe can carry very significant psychological costs for the people involved - and their families. These costs include mental ill-health, psychological injuries and, in the worst cases, suicide.

Mr Carroll referred to the recent Beyond Blue study of first-responders, which showed that suicidal thoughts among police officers are twice as common than in the general population. Worryingly, police and other emergency services workers are three times more likely to have some sort of suicide plan.

John Schumann said that 'Graduation Day' took him almost a year to write. "To write it with credibility, I had to get inside a cop's head, walk around in a cop's shoes – and look out and see the world through a cop's eyes," John Schumann said. "The song owes everything to all the police officers around Australia who trusted me with their stories. The stories were very hard to listen to - but I got a real insight into what it means to go to work every day to keep the community safe – and then come home with a head full of barbed wire without knowing how to talk about it or what to do about it."

"I firmly believe that if you want to change the way people think and behave, tell them a story. That's what I did, quite by chance in fact, with "I Was Only 19". We are Australians - we respond best to stories. Don't lecture us, don't subject us to death by PowerPoint, don't write a report - tell us a story and we'll get it."



Recorded with Schumann's long-time band, the Vagabond Crew, and featuring guest vocalist Taasha Coates from The Audreys, proceeds from 'Graduation Day' are being directed to the National Police Foundation to assist police officers and their families who are in need.



**WATCH THE VIDEO CLIP [HERE](#)**

'Graduation Day' can be downloaded at <https://www.fineprint.net.au/graduation-day>. The money will go to help cops and their dependents who might have fallen on hard times because of their service to the community," Mr Carroll said.

'Graduation Day' can also be purchased via iTunes and will be added to the digital version of John Schumann's recent album, 'Ghost and Memories' upon release.

Mr Carroll said that 'Graduation Day' is part of a comprehensive mental health program being developed and rolled out by the PFA with the assistance of the federal government.

The program includes a suite of cop-specific materials - handbooks, workplace posters and a compelling and powerful tele-movie called "Dark Blue", the likes of which has not been produced in Australia.

"The scourge of mental ill-health and psychological injuries, which destroy lives, families and careers, cannot go unaddressed. But before this scourge can be addressed, it has to be understood - and herein lies the power of 'Graduation Day' - and 'Dark Blue', Mr Carroll said.

Mr Carroll said the PFA acknowledges that police departments around Australia are also taking up the mental health challenge, albeit in a different form.

"Without wishing to diminish these important efforts, the PFA is able to tell it like it really is - unrestrained by bureaucratic niceties and department-speak."

"Now is not the time to hold back. We all need to understand what's going on, especially police families who can suffer very much too," Mr Carroll concluded.

**GRADUATION DAY – RELEASED ON 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2019**

<https://www.fineprint.net.au/graduation-day>

<http://pfa.org.au/>

**John Schumann and Mr Mark Carroll are available for interviews and comment**

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