



Police Federation
of Australia

The National Voice of Policing

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The Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
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Security Legislation Amendment (Critical Infrastructure) Bill 2020

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to make a submission to this Inquiry. As the Committee is aware, the PFA represents the professional and industrial interests of in excess of 64,000 police officers across every police jurisdiction in the country.

For over a decade the PFA has been campaigning for a Public Safety Mobile Broadband (PSMB) capability for police and emergency services agencies. During that time there has not been an Inquiry or Inquest, where the issue of communications both within agencies and the interoperability between agencies, has not been raised as an issue of concern. This has been particularly the case where the incident in question has occurred in a regional, rural or remote location.

The most recent of these Inquiries, was the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements to which the PFA made a submission which highlighted the importance of a Public Safety Mobile Broadband capability for police and emergency services.

The PFA believes that three (3) recommendations in particular have relevance to this Inquiry:

Recommendation 6.1:

Assessment of the capacity and capability of fire and emergency services in light of current and future natural disaster risk

State and territory governments should have a structured process to regularly assess the capacity and capability requirements of fire and emergency services, in light of both current and future natural disaster risk.

Recommendation 6.3:

Interoperable communications for fire and emergency services across jurisdictions

State and territory governments should update and implement the National Framework to Improve Government Radio Communications Interoperability, or otherwise agree a new strategy, to achieve interoperable communications across jurisdictions.

Recommendation 6.4:

Delivery of a Public Safety Mobile Broadband capability

Australian, state and territory governments should expedite the delivery of a Public Safety Mobile Broadband capability.

This final recommendation will require a nationally coordinated response from all levels of Government.

For public safety agencies, effective communications are not just another business input, it is a critical input.

In fact, the *Radiocommunications Act 1992* recognises this when it says that adequate spectrum must be provided for defence, law enforcement and emergency services. Allocation and ongoing control of dedicated spectrum would give police and other emergency services the mission-critical standards they need, the access and priority they determine and the robustness, security and reliability that is essential to their responsibilities to the Australian public. Unfortunately, such access is currently determined by private telcos.

For perfectly understandable commercial reasons, the telcos do not have the design, reliability, resilience, redundancy and security required for public safety purposes. Vital considerations including guaranteed access, freedom from congestion, reliability, security, sufficient capacity and real-time priority from commercial carriers' systems have not been demonstrated and are unlikely to be able to be assured. A commercial carrier losing just a

few sites where a disaster is occurring, could have tragic consequences for police and emergency services members and the public.

Since the beginning of the debate around PSMB there have been numerous technological advances seeing the development of further sophisticated equipment.

Police and other first responders are now commonly wearing body worn video devices and in car videos are common in many police vehicles. Smart watches are also being worn and this advance in technology provides the capacity to live stream data from crime and disaster scenes, directly to a command centre, not only for operational reasons, but importantly, officer safety.

Communities also have access to far more technology than before. In fact, in many cases, far better technology than that available to our first responders. Sensors in streets, camera's in public places, drones and other sensor technology are just some of the equipment being deployed in the public sphere. Whilst creating a flood of data this technology can also be essential in guarding public safety.

Many public and commercial buildings are now being outfitted with various sensors and control systems to improve their operation and protect the safety of their occupants.


Another significant advancement that needs to be embraced is 'next generation 000'.

Currently emergency communications centres receive voice calls and in some instances text messages to enable the dispatch of appropriate first responders to incidents. Advances in technology will soon see those centres have the capability to receive, from the public and first responders, files, images and video clips and then to triage that information and send appropriate material direct to the scene of the incident.

PSMB will be an essential component of that process and the importance of critical infrastructure, underpinned by effective legislation, is a crucial component of a PSMB capability.

The PFA therefore supports the intent of the Bill and would be happy to provide evidence to any hearings, should that be required.

Sincerely yours



Scott Weber APM
Chief Executive Officer
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