



Police Federation
of Australia

The National Voice of Policing

ABN 31 384 184 778

Level 1, 21 Murray Crescent
GRIFFITH ACT 2603

Tel: (02) 6239 8900
Fax: (02) 6239 8999

The Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

TaxRev.reps@aph.gov.au

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND SUPPLY IN AUSTRALIA

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA), representing in excess of 65,000 police officers across state, territory and the federal police, has had a long-standing role in providing submissions to and appearing before, parliamentary inquiries that have an impact on our membership.

It would come as no surprise to the Committee that many police officers across the country, particularly in capital cities, work in locations that they cannot afford to purchase houses in and are often therefore required to undertake significant commute times.

The PFA and its various state, territory and federal branches, have over the years been approached by developers looking for their support to build affordable housing for police, nurses and other emergency service workers, who find themselves in these circumstances.

The PFA is still supportive of such actions, however investment has been very small so far. We are aware of a number of large superannuation funds pursuing responsible investment and encourage initiatives which aim to improve affordable housing for police and emergency service workers.

At the same time, the PFA has lobbied successive governments to allow police to access like salary packaging/sacrifice (capped FBT) benefits as nurses (in public and non-profit hospitals) and ambulance officers, that would allow them to salary package/sacrifice their mortgage.

The Committee would be aware that in 2004, a special Fringe Benefits Tax \$17,000 gross benefits exemption per employee was provided to ambulance services, because of an adverse court finding (*Ambulance Service of New South Wales v. Deputy Commissioner of Taxation for the Commonwealth of Australia* (the 2003 Ambulance case), concerning a wrongful, yet pre-existing, practice undertaken by ambulance services. In other words, ambulance services were providing the benefit to employees illegally. The benefit was not originally bestowed by a specific government policy decision – it was merely partially maintained after the ambulance case decision.

Specific statutory amendment was needed to achieve the FBT relief for the ambulance services and *Tax Laws Amendment (2004 Measures No. 2) Bill 2004* was passed on 18 June 2004. This bill contains fringe benefits tax (FBT) and deductible gift recipient status changes for employers that provide public ambulance services, or services that support those services, and any employee who is predominantly involved in connection with the provision of those services. (A similar amendment would be required to provide the same concessions to police).

Note that the Explanatory Memorandum¹ to the bill provided the following commentary on the scope of the definition of “services that support” ambulance services.

“An employer would provide “services that support those services” in circumstances such as where the employer operates a call centre which answers emergency telephone calls made to public ambulance services. This would be the case even in circumstances where the call centre operated services for other emergency services.”

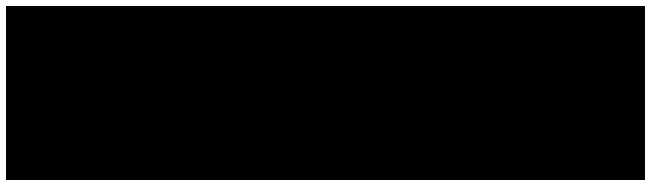
There are situations where these operators would also be dealing with emergency telephone calls or other services, to a police service. Indeed, it is even feasible that a majority of their work may involve handling of calls or services for non-ambulance related matters.

To date our lobbying of government has not been successful.

¹ Paragraph 8.12 , page 170

The issue however, of police being priced out of the housing market in many areas of the country, is ongoing and a provision for salary packaging/sacrifice for police for mortgages would go some way to alleviating that problem.

Sincerely yours



Scott Weber APM
Chief Executive Officer
13 September 2021