



The Police Federation of Australia (PFA)

**National Recruitment and Retention  
Summit Report**



## **Ian Leavers APM, President Police Federation of Australia**

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) convened a National Police Recruitment and Retention Summit on 27 October 2023.

The Summit drew representatives from every Police department in Australia and all the leaders of Australia's Police Unions and Associations. We came together to seriously consider the recruitment and retention issues facing our industry.

The recruitment troubles impacting police are not unique to our industry and all high-pressure employment environments have to best consider retention policies that keep our skilled employees for a long time.

Australia is currently enjoying high employment rates, and mobility inside roles is low compared to pre-Covid. In this unique environment, people leaving policing are difficult to replace and employers are struggling to retain people.

Historically, it is the role of Police Commissioners and police agencies to manage the recruitment of the next generation of police, and to work collaboratively with unions through the industrial relations landscape to manage retention.

The PFA has a clear interest in the safety and wellbeing of our members and ensuring the sustainability of our workforce and a reduction on frontline pressures requires Police Unions and Associations to take an active role in recruitment and retention at this time. The extraordinary circumstances impacting our industry have drawn the PFA together to lead the discussion on this topic. In the lead up to 27 October discussion occurred between the PFA and all Police departments to reach agreement on key priorities.

This document represents the PFA's commitment to continue these discussions with police agencies and to engage with government on this important topic. There is no silver bullet to recruitment and retention, but there needs to be a policy reset and a new understanding of policing as an industry and the role that all stakeholders can play in supporting our industry to continue to be the eminent community safety agencies in Australia.

Police are the custodians of our community at the most difficult times. Police are responsible for conducting investigations and ensuring that our communities are safe and made right in the face of criminal behaviour. Ensuring that our police are supported by policies and procedures that benefit their careers and wellbeing – a strong pipeline of talented recruits – is a key priority for the PFA at this time.

The PFA has identified three immediate steps that we believe will best support Police in Australia:

1. lowering the preservation age of superannuation for police to 55 years old to provide greater financial flexibility, enabling officers to plan for their futures and retirement. This reflects similar superannuation arrangements for Australian Defence Force personnel.
2. Fringe Benefits Tax to enable police to salary sacrifice their mortgages to offset the financial stress and pressure frequent transfers have on employees and their families.
3. Develop a Police Blue Card for eligible serving and retired members, like the Defence White and Gold Cards. This would include greater access to health care services, pharmaceutical benefits and concessional travel.

The Police Commissioners through the Australian New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) have developed further options to support police. We will briefly acknowledge this work in this document. Where values align, the PFA will collaborate with our Police Commissioners to support our members.

The discussions from the Summit have led to the development of this document and represent the right steps that Police Agencies and the PFA can take to address recruitment and retention issues. It is only through key players working together we can hope to tackle this issue and land on a body of work that is collaborative and impactful.

The opportunity to directly impact the outcomes of police recruitment and retention is now. We need to be brave and show leadership in standing together to tackle this complicated issue.



**Ian Leavers, APM**  
**President**  
**Police Federation of Australia**

## Summit Priorities

The PFA acknowledges the significant contribution police make to our nation regarding law enforcement, maintaining public safety, crime prevention, traffic regulation and providing an emergency response. The PFA also acknowledges the unique challenges and stress of police work, and the importance of protecting the safety and welfare of current and former police officers.

The current labour market has made it difficult to attract and retain employees, particularly those with specialist skills, and the global pandemic has placed unprecedented pressure on frontline police, who worked tens of thousands of extra hours to keep the community safe. The role of policing during the pandemic changed the community's perception of police work, further contributing to the recruitment and retention crisis.

In an interconnected world, community safety remains paramount as rising instability and violence overseas increase the risk of extremism in Australia. Across Australia and New Zealand the police are the preeminent community safety agency and must be fully resourced to protect and serve the public effectively.

All Police agencies have worked tirelessly to address the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges; however, no jurisdiction has solved the issue.

The PFA believe that a new approach is required to develop a national approach to a national issue. This will require collaboration at the highest levels.

To address these issues, five priority areas have been identified. They include:

- (1) A review of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations and Visa priority status to reflect the skills and specialisations of police officers.
- (2) Support for the Government's review into Higher Education Funding Clusters to remove the financial barriers to pathways into policing, and the professional development of police officers.
- (3) A Government-funded national marketing campaign to raise awareness of the role and responsibilities of police officers and position the agency as an Employer of Choice.
- (4) A commitment towards greater flexibility for lateral transfers between jurisdictions.
- (5) Trialing new initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of police members.

Police agencies must retain highly capable and engaged employees to maintain the quality of law enforcement services the community expects. A better work-life balance must be achieved to attract and retain the next generation of leaders. The changing employee value proposition and the current economy have meant that retaining

employees after the first five years of service is challenging. To increase retention, the PFA calls for the following actions to be taken:

- (a) Provide additional support and mentoring to recruits.
- (b) Increase investment to upskill recruits in their first five years of policing.
- (c) Develop stronger initiatives to promote career planning and development.
- (d) Provide greater recognition and support to police families who are fundamental to retention.
- (e) Ensure recruits understand and are actively encouraged to live by the values of policing in their careers.
- (f) Improve access to police housing, particularly in regional and remote Australia.

Addressing the police housing shortage is a priority and greater support should be provided to police and their families as they transfer between locations to ensure a smooth transition into their new community.

To become an Employer of Choice, the barriers that prevent people from joining must be removed. This means investing in policies and programs to support diversity, inclusion, flexible working arrangements and paid parental leave so that our workforce better reflects the communities that we serve. We must also consider childcare options to enable women, parents and families to share caring responsibilities.

Policing is a rewarding and challenging career that requires our people to put themselves at significant risk to protect and serve the community. Protecting and managing the mental health and psychological wellbeing of our people is a priority, and we must continue to support police to manage stress and seek support early if required.

The pandemic highlighted the complexity of the environment in which our police operate. At times, these complexities, and the poor actions of a few can diminish the reputation of the police. It was noted that Police agencies must continually elevate the profession by publicly recognising the excellent work police do.

## Agreed Outcomes

The PFA acknowledges that although every jurisdiction has unique recruitment and retention challenges, police recruitment is a critical national issue that requires a collaborative approach at the Commonwealth level.

The PFA calls for

- (a) The lowering of the preservation age of superannuation for police to 55 years old to provide greater financial flexibility, enabling officers to plan for their futures and retirement. This reflects similar superannuation arrangements for Australian Defence Force personnel.
- (b) Fringe Benefits Tax changes to enable police to salary sacrifice their mortgages to offset the financial stress and pressure frequent transfers have on employees and their families.
- (c) A Police Blue Card for eligible serving and retired members, like the Defence White and Gold Cards. This would include greater access to health care services, pharmaceutical benefits and concessional travel.
- (d) Support and investment in the five priority areas, as outlined on page 5, to strengthen recruitment and retention.

# Recruitment and Retention Issues in Policing

## Snapshot of Policing in Australia and New Zealand

Since the COVID-19 pandemic the Australian economy and jobs market has been impacted. The current jobs market is concentrated with high employment and consistent job vacancies, the potential employee holds the advantage. In 2023 the Reserve Bank noted 'difficulties in securing appropriately skilled labour are delaying the progress of investment'<sup>1</sup>. In policing, the variety of job openings in the economy have disrupted the pipeline of recruitment into police roles. Police agencies have had to work harder to target future employees and ensure that the recruit pipeline was secured. At the same time attrition rates for Police have increased, with the significant attrition in 2021-22 in the Northern Territory stabilising slightly in 2022-2023.

### Police Attrition Rates<sup>2</sup>

State	2022-2023	2021-2022
Queensland	5.6%	3.8%
New South Wales	8.09%	5.5%
Victoria	5.2%	5.12%
South Australia	5.5%	4.31%
Western Australia	8.3%	5.91%
Tasmania	5%	4.50%
Northern Territory	8.6%	10.46%
AFP	6.4%	6.1%
New Zealand	4.5%	Not available

These figures are concerning and represent a trend that has traditionally not been seen in policing in Australia and New Zealand.

In the history of the PFA our industry has usually enjoyed low attrition and steady growth. These signs are worrying and indicate the basis for the concerns of affiliates around trying to tackle this issue.

<sup>1</sup> Statement on Monetary Policy – May 2023, Reserve Bank Australia retrieved from <https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/smp/2023/may/pdf/statement-on-monetary-policy-2023-05.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Figures are taken from publicly available annual reports and affiliate data sets. The PFA has attempted to verify all figures, however some agencies have opted not to make the information available at the time of printing.

By way of example in Queensland there is 315 growth positions open as vacancies. In New South Wales there is 1500 vacancies across the state and 1500 police unable to work due to illness. In Victoria there is 800 vacancies across the state and a further 800 police unable to work due to illness. In South Australia there is 200 vacancies across the state, in Western Australia there is 500, Tasmania is sitting at 300 and the Northern Territory at 244. Our police agencies have the space for new employees but the pipeline of recruits are not forthcoming. Our Unions and Associations are speaking out about this issue to make the point that we need people to join our industry and to stay in policing.

The recruitment story as it relates to the PFA is clear – consistent recruitment and retention promotes officer safety. The safety of our members is assured by police having colleagues that they can rely upon. The safety of the communities our members police requires sufficient police numbers to manage crime and ensure community safety. A strong pipeline of recruitment ensures that all our members are safer on the frontline.

Recruitment does not tell the whole story of the issue that is impacting policing in Australia and New Zealand. The retention conversation is extremely vital for police capacity across the nation. The retention of talented and experienced police in our industry ensures that we continue to have qualified, investigative police to support victims and victim survivors and ensure the appropriate carriage of justice in the criminal justice system.

## Federal Government Jobs and Skills Summit

In 2022 the Federal Government brought together unions, employers, civil society, governments and policy experts from various industries to consider the shared economic challenges. The PFA recognised the need to build common ground across policing in Australia and New Zealand and to build on the model of the Jobs and Skills Summit to pool skills and expertise to design the way forward.

Key recommendations of the Jobs and Skills Summit intersect with the work the PFA hopes to achieve and we have reflected them below.

### A better skilled, better trained workforce

\$1 billion dollar one-year National Skills Agreement commitment to fund more fee-free TAFE.

Opportunities in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system for Police Agencies to develop a pipeline of students into recruits.

The creation of Jobs and Skills Australia is a significant opportunity to increase national capacity and skills conversations for Police.

## Addressing Skills Shortages and Strengthening the Migration System

The commitments to tackling visa backlog and increases to permanent migration program planning levels is an opportunity for police. Police agencies in different states have been able to get migration support federally in ad hoc arrangements – a nationally consistent approach could assist with recruitment.

## Commensurate Industry Reviews – 2022-23 Defence Annual Report

With low unemployment rates across Australia and a competitive job market, the Australian Defence Force faced significant challenges to recruit and retain elements of their workforce during 2022–23. Defence has invested significantly in attempting to address this issue and promote recruitment to address these shortfalls. Police agencies across Australia and New Zealand are competing against this defence investment with the same job market challenges whilst lacking commensurate advertisement budget and reach.

### Regional Challenges:

- o Regional recruitment and retention is a challenge; often people take posts and depart from the location back to larger centres within the first two years.
- o A key finding was that support services provided by Defence needed to cater to supporting more than just the employee.
- o Assistance for families and children to settle into communities as well as accommodation were vitally important.

### Recruit Profile:

- o Defence identified that there needed to be a very clear profile of potential recruits.
- o The goal for police agencies is to determine the desired cohort of recruits and proactively recruit people who reflect those qualities.

### Diversity and Inclusion:

- o Statistically diverse communities are growing in Australia and agencies need to proactively map and tap resources to engage with diversity in the community.
- o Diversity of employees will require practical changes to policies and procedures and new flexibilities and capabilities will need to be achieved in core business functions.
- o When diversity exists in workplaces it promotes feelings of respect, connection between colleagues and empowers people to progress and contribute to organisational success.

# Young People and Work: Values, Recruitment and Retention

## Presentation by Professor Lucas Walsh and Dr Jo Gleeson – Monash Youth Policy and Education Practice

Professor Walsh and Dr Gleeson presented to the Summit about current graduate employment and career contexts in Australia. Together they presented an understanding of the landscape of young people in Australia and how they are seeking work today. Following the presentation of this data they explored the challenges to recruitment and retention and provided the policing context.

### Recruitment

#### Graduate Employment and Career Context

Covid-19 continues to impact graduates and how they relate to the economy more broadly. The change in the economy has meant that higher education qualifications are dropping off as a career leverage and more employers are expecting degree qualifications of graduates. In this context, capturing graduates into sectors or jobs is a challenge. Graduates are uncertain about the longevity of their 'career' and are willing to make changes to benefit themselves. The challenge for employers is to overcome the uncertainty that exists in the minds of graduates. Research still suggests that young Australians still have preference for secure, long-term work – irrespective of changing work profiles<sup>3</sup>.

The complexities of the Federal Structure, which inhibits national vision and response are impacting on a number of industries – teaching, nursing and policing to name a few. In spite of this people are still drawn to these professions so the opportunity for growth continues. Graduates who are struggling to find appropriate graduate level work are concerned about their long-term prospects and the decline in the value of their graduation qualifications over time. Policing needs to be clear about what values proposition it makes to these graduates and how policing can be seen as a 'first' choice for graduates.

Both globally and in Australia we continue to see young people's career aspirations limited within a narrow range of traditional career aspirations. Professional, tertiary-qualified careers are perceived as secure over the long term and valued over other professions. This position is largely mismatched with global employment contexts. Effectively the old adage stands 'you cannot be what you cannot see'. The challenge for policing in this context is to be seen as a secure and long-term career opportunity, something which historically has been the case for the profession.

<sup>3</sup> Walsh, L., Gallo Cordoba, B., Waite, C., & Cutler, B. (2022) The 2022 Australian Youth Barometer: Understanding Young People in Australia Today. Monash University, Melbourne: Centre for Youth Policy and Education Practice DOI: 10.26180/21541410; and; Walsh, L., Waite, C., Magyar, B., Gallo Cordoba, B., Mikola, M., & Cutler, B. 2021 Australian Youth Barometer: Understanding Young People in Australia Today. Monash University, Melbourne: Centre for Youth Policy and Education Practice; 2021. DOI: 10.26180/16910956

## Values alignment

Post Covid-19 there has been high economic participation of graduates which prompted a shift towards values over economic considerations for graduates. The recent cost of living crises impacting Australia are slowing this trend, and economic factors are once again key on the minds of graduates. The opportunity for police is to translate the economic benefits of the work into recruits. In 2023, the three most important factors young people (18-24) consider when thinking about the type of work they want to undertake are 1. location (70% of respondents), 2. high salary (68%), and 3. long-term security (67%).<sup>4</sup> Graduates are attracted to linear plans but are increasingly following non-linear pathways in their careers. Generally, the view is that younger generations will change careers 3-7 times across their lifetimes. The challenge for police agencies is that they offer linear pathways (extremely desirable), but with narrowing promotion pathways (less desirable).

Professor Walsh and Dr Gleeson's research has demonstrated that values are changing across population groups. Fewer women are marrying and are considering themselves less likely to have children in the future. This change in the economy for women has seen a shift away from childcare concerns towards securing accommodation. The opportunity for police agencies in this space is the capacity to provide housing for employees as part of their work in regional and remote locations.

## Barriers to entry

The data demonstrates gendered patterns for career preferences:

### *Top 5 Career preferences of young women:*

1. Medicine (16.7%);
2. Law (12.1%);
3. Nursing (11.5%);
4. Creative Arts (9.9%);
5. Teaching/Education (8.2%)

### *Bottom 5 Career preferences of young women:*

1. Apprenticeships (0.7%);
2. Computing/IT (<1%);
3. Engineering (2%);
4. Science & Maths (2.4%);
5. Architecture & Built Environment (4.5%)

### *Top 5 Career preferences of young men:*

1. Business & Management (15.4%);
2. Engineering (14.3%);
3. Law (12.9%);
4. Architecture & Built Environment (11.6%);
5. Medicine (9.8%)

### *Bottom 5 Career preferences of young men:*

1. Nursing (<1%);
2. Health Services (1.2%);
3. Psychology (1.6%);
4. Teaching/Education (2.6%);
5. Apprenticeships (3.6%).

Policing as a career does not factor in the gendered perimeter for career preferences for young women or young men.

4 Walsh, L., Gallo Cordoba, B., Cutler, B., Huynh, T. B. & Deng, Z. (2023) The 2023 Australian Youth Barometer: Understanding Young People in Australia Today. Monash University, Melbourne: Centre for Youth Policy and Education Practice. DOI: 10.26180/24087186

The research demonstrated that Australian Defence Forces and Police (ADF/P) are preferred by lower socio-economic students; young people based in the outer-metro and regional areas; and; predominantly males.

<i>High SES all-female metro school:</i>	<i>Low SES co-ed outer-metro school:</i>	<i>Low-Mid SES co-ed regional school:</i>
1. Medicine (24.2%);	1. Medicine (10%);	1. Medicine (5.2%);
2. Law (7.6%);	2. Law (5.5%);	2. Law (5%);
3. Apprenticeships/ Traineeships (1.1%);	3. Apprenticeships/ Traineeships (12.5%);	3. Apprenticeships/ Traineeships (9.9%);
4. ADF/P (1.1%);	4. ADF/P (8.5%);	4. ADF/P (5.2%);
5. Specialised (13.4%)	5. Specialised (16.5%)	5. Specialised (14.1%)

Professor Walsh and Dr Gleeson noted that lower socio-economic students aim to join police agencies for a number of factors. The hierarchal structure of the police service is a positive factor. The service also provides an opportunity for some recruits to turn around family dysfunction and/or to make a positive difference in their lives or their community. In an ad hoc way police agencies have tended to 'target' men from these communities. The question for police agencies now is how clear are they about who they wish to recruit and in/from what areas?

In general, the opinions of others shape the decision-making processes of graduates about what steps they will take in their careers. Young women are strongly influenced by the opinions of others – including friends, parents and teachers; this trend is slightly lower for young men. According to the research, nearly half (49.1%) of young women base their career choices on what others expect of them with over half (54.6%) report choosing careers to please others<sup>5</sup>. In this data are some clear contradictions that police agencies should consider. Young people are seen to be in control of their decisions, but are dependent on the perceptions and trust of 'others' to back their decision-making process. In fact over half (51.5%) of young people worry that others won't approve of their career choices, with nearly 40% worried about others' opinions, reporting that they feel career stress. In this environment the pathway to policing as a respectable career option for young people is dependent on the perceptions of others.

Careers fairs, counselling and other school based and university-based interactions are important for all police agencies but to lift the profile of policing as a future career option work needs to be done inside the family unit. Parents and caregivers have a demonstrable level of influence in the career planning and pathways of young people in Australia. Police agencies should take this data to recognise the need for a conversation in the society and particularly to the adults around younger Australians about the value and prestige inherent in a career in policing. Young people can be engaged with at school or university but if the conversation about policing as a career is questioned at home, they are significantly less likely to consider that as a career option.

5 Ibid

If policing as an industry lifts engagement with young people to drive recruitment the conversation must occur with their families and support networks as well. The exercise of engagement will not succeed fully unless policing is marketed effectively to families and caregivers.

In considering recruitment outside of young people, Police agencies need to identify the skillsets that they wish recruits to possess and market to those industries where workers possess those skills. The ability to manage customers or conflict in a shop setting may in fact present a skill set that is desirable to police agencies. University students who are unable to complete their studies due to changes in circumstances could be encouraged to engage with police recruitment if police agencies build relationships with universities. Policing is a versatile career that is rewarding for people who have higher education qualifications, vocational qualifications or no formal post-schooling qualifications. The important factor for policing is the right ethos and mindset; the agency can train recruits to fulfil the role. Agencies must think innovatively about how they can engage with a number of different types of people and suggest policing as a career that might work for their circumstances. The value of a well-paying role with an inbuilt training and career development process has to be seen as a benefit that police agencies bring to all employees.

## Retention

### How do we keep them there?

What is clear on current trends is that graduates will leave careers for other opportunities if they believe that their values align better elsewhere or their career can be advanced. Police agencies have to consider that if the first hurdle is getting recruits into the organisation, the second is ensuring that the agency gets a valuable amount of service from an employee. Historically policing careers have spanned a number of decades, more recently we are seeing this contract back to over a decade and the trend seems to suggest shorter lengths of service as a police officer. Policing provides practitioners with a large number of transferable skills and a career as a police officer is a valuable first step for employees who are interested in diversifying their career in the future.

Dr Gleeson noted the need for employers to ensure that the first seven years of employment needed to be rich in experience and opportunity. From the time that a recruit graduates from the academy there needs to be a clear pathway laid out for them. When the recruitment pyramid is so narrow at the top, recruits need to understand the pathway they can take and how the skills they develop are transferable skills. It must be noted that policing teaches skills which are highly desirable to the rest of the workforce; the ability to conduct investigations is one key skill that all police acquire.

Succession planning inside our Police agencies needs to be considered. There is a huge value in the organisation understanding the lifetime of its senior leaders and identifying early those with the potential to lead. There must be a clear understanding from all Police agencies however that the ability to manage is not the same as the ability to lead.

Promoting employees with managerial skills is vitally important to retention of staff, the culture of a workplace is fundamental to the longevity of employment.

In Queensland, via the *Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence*, and in South Australia's *Sex Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Predatory Behaviour in South Australia Police* inquiry we have seen clear identifiers of the role good management has in ensuring that people stay and feel supported by their agency. As unions and employee associations we know first-hand the value of effective, people-focused management on the morale of stations and worksites. Dr Gleeson and Professor Walsh invited attendees to consider the role that 'values' inside police agencies and how they translated into real life had a direct impact on retention.

The value of learning products cannot be understated, and there needs to be a clear correlation between learning products and how they translate in other industries. Policing is no longer a career for life, agencies need to recognise how they can skill their employees to proselytise the profession as a foundation to future employment and highly desirable skills. Shying away from the link between a highly-trained and skilled workforce and the reality that these are translatable skills is a disservice to retention.

Recognising that the work that police undertake in unique and diverse communities builds a base of knowledge that enhances the work of all police is essential. Various police agencies employ liaison officers to assist in culturally and linguistically diverse communities and in First Nations communities. Recognition of on-the-ground knowledge and adequately capturing and disseminating this knowledge contributes to job satisfaction.

The concept of remuneration is complicated but essential to the question of keeping people employed within policing. The remuneration of police has to include superannuation and must be at a competitive standard. The PFA recognises that organisational and geographical requirements vary across the country and how our affiliates have negotiated their agreements meets the expectations of members. However, there is a value in policing as an industry considering a set of standards that can drive the profession and lead to a very clear approach for industrial organisations to take to Governments.

## What does this mean for Agencies?

Professor Walsh and Dr Gleeson considered some of the key first steps for Police Agencies across Australia and New Zealand.

### Careers Education in Schools

Young people are a key demographic for Police agencies as potential recruits. Police need to seriously consider which young people they are recruiting and how they are communicating with those young people and the people that influence them. A catch-all approach has not yielded the recruitment targets of previous years and there is a need for agencies to collaborate to consider how young people are targeted and recruited.

Police agencies must identify who they want to recruit, when they want to recruit them and how long they want these recruits for. The PFA considers the need for an uplift in the understanding inside most police agencies to engage with young people to be of high importance. Policing is a proud profession that guarantees community safety and takes a proactive role in investigating crimes and promoting justice for victims and the community. A clear message and signal must be sent to young people about the professional aspects of policing and how targeted groups should conceptualise themselves in the role of a police officer.

The importance of young people being able to conceptualise themselves in a policing career needs to be considered. Agencies have to readily identify the community service values of police agencies and be able to understand how those values apply. The attacks on policing as a profession fuelled largely by social movements in other countries present a challenge for policing agencies to overcome. The overwhelming values base for all police agencies in Australia and New Zealand is to protect the community, investigate and prosecute crimes and support the community.

The research identifies that caregivers, parents, friends and family play a large role in the decision-making processes of young men and women. Agencies have to develop communications strategies that lift the profile of police work in the eyes of the influential figures around most young people. Engagement must be targeted and clear in focus. Police agencies need a presence on schools that inoculates parents and caregivers to the success and opportunity that policing brings to the lives of their young people. At the same time engagement needs to target students as individuals and target peer groups as influencers on career decision making for young people. Agencies need to be clear about how policing as a career is socialised and work to profile policing as an opportunity that is viewed positively.

Broader engagement with communities of interest should be considered; agencies need to identify the values that are priorities for the workforce. The PFA considers the following attributes to be of value:

- Ability to work collaboratively and show initiative in high pressure environments
- Communication skills
- Active listening
- Keen interest in solving problems

Whilst this list is not exhaustive the consideration needs to rest around how the 'values' identified are mapped against different industries and cohorts of people in the community who police agencies can target to encourage recruitment. By way of example, some of these skills could be identified in young people who work in retail. The wages of police are significantly higher than those in retail and a greater degree of flexibility is available for working conditions and entitlements. If a 'workplace' or group of workers or students are identified as possessing the desired skills, agencies must think innovatively to target these individuals and engage their thought processes to see their skills being used in a policing environment.

Police agencies need to better lead conversations with their workforce about the transferable skills policing provides and the opportunities that a career in policing can afford. In the view of the PFA the culture of keeping employees in the dark about their options contributes to the idea amongst employees that policing is their only option, instead of a vibrant and rich career that empowers employees for life. Police need to walk the talk and feel like their time in police agencies contributes richly to their career, even if they do not remain police for life.

Police agencies need to dispel the prejudices, stereotypes and half-truths that exist about policing. Policing is a profession that can financially reward employees. It is not a profession for brutes and bullies. Policing is a challenging and diverse career that brings employees into contact with a number of key challenges facing the community. The idea that celebrating police work means sugar coating it is impractical. In a values-based career approach individuals must be encouraged to grasp the challenges that policing presents and to see themselves on the frontline of maintaining the social contract. Capturing these ideals should be based around the real-world experiences of police across each State and Territory in Australia and in New Zealand. Police across all agencies have WOW moments, stories of tenacity and grit that fundamentally changed their lives and the lives of their community. In the busy employment market, policing is a career that can take people from great lows to great highs. Potential recruits must be invited to accept that challenge.

### **Support for recruits in post-school education settings and graduate employment.**

Schools are not the only vehicle for recruitment; police agencies need to engage with universities and vocational training providers to engage potential recruits from these streams. Post-school education providers have an interest in graduate recruitment and are sources of information on trends in recruitment expectations and desires for graduates, as a profession, police agencies must engage more collaboratively. Schools do not have the same resources that are found in post-school education and these resources can be put to work for policing as a profession. Universities and Vocational Training providers are sources of information and provide the emerging skills that the economy needs. Ensuring that policing is engaging with the development of necessary skills for our workforce requires greater engagement.

The PFA hopes that over time partnerships can grow with education providers to assist students who are looking for career experience before returning to study could be encouraged to consider a career in policing. There are a number of opportunities that with flexibility from police agencies could build strong pipelines from education facilities to police work. Not all students will continue with their studies but if their engagement with post-school education leads to a career in policing this process can be considered a success. This approach is about recognising that people who are interested in pursuing post-school education have the grit and determination required to be police.

## Training Investment

Recruitment is only part of the story, to maintain a functioning workforce and retain talented individuals requires a clear pathway and training for recruits. Agencies must ensure that the first few years of a new employee's life are structured, provide options, and reward people who are looking to develop and advance. A key challenge will always be the limited opportunities for career progression to the commissioned officer level. It is important, however, for employers to identify the most skilled recruits and ensure that their career development can get them into the limited leadership positions available in policing. For the remainder of the workforce, professional development must be a focus, ensuring that people feel like they are progressing in their career even if they are not moving in rank.

A comprehensive training and development and early careers team is necessary in all police agencies. Police can borrow from other industries to build professional development that is structured but does not compromise the capacity of the front line. It is not acceptable for agencies to cite the frontline as a barrier to progressing the development of staff. The benefits of this investment are paramount to retention. Police officers who leave policing should leave well trained and as agents capable of extolling the virtues of the career, the skills it gave them, and the ability to express this.

## Coordination is Required

Across Australia and New Zealand, police agencies compete with each other over an increasingly smaller pool of applicants. This approach has encouraged inter-jurisdictional rivalries and can be identified as a barrier to policing as a profession. The PFA is made up of organisations from across Australia and New Zealand who 'compete' against each other to get the best deal for our members. Our organisation is founded, however, to promote collaboration to advance the profession of policing. Coordination across agencies is required to pool resources, expand trial opportunities and lead national conversations with other sectors and experts.

Police agencies must consider how they engage with parents and caregivers in their jurisdictions and how to engage with schools and education providers. In considering the approach, national collaboration is essential to harmonise messaging and ensure that the profession is seen homogeneously in the community. The PFA invites the industry to consider policing as one profession that is split across geographical lines. Consideration must be made to horizontal opportunities to aid police in moving across jurisdictions. It is not a loss for the profession of policing if a police officer moves states, it is the industry retaining a highly skilled professional.

Police agencies must consider the need to engage young people where they live and access information. Social media is important to disseminate information and tap into trends to promote interest. Informal learning products must be developed by Police agencies centrally to inform young people about the profession. Consideration must be placed on how young people are engaged in the home environment and how agencies can reach the people who need to understand how policing fits into their life and the opportunities it can provide.

All agencies have capacity to understand the skills that police are trained in and how those skills are applied on the ground. It is essential that a body of work is undertaken to identify how these skills are transferable and can be identified on resumes or used in other professions. Allowing employees to see the door does not necessarily encourage them to leave.

The issue of housing is one that all police agencies grapple with. Coordination across jurisdictions to speak to Government about housing needs must be a priority. Housing is a crisis across the country but the needs of police as a profession could be better expressed by policing as a united profession instead of individually inside each jurisdiction.

## Final Word

Young people need improved careers education and greater support with career decision-making; police agencies need to develop tools and collateral that can inform that. Internal recruitment and retention strategies need to be integrated with external communications and education regarding police careers. There is a need to focus on early careers, including rich experiences and horizontal mobility, and to marry organisational values with organisational practice. Police agencies need to address workforce stereotypes and expand the view that policing is a career that is only available to a certain 'type' of recruit.

## Group Discussions

As part of the summit, participants were asked to consider the issues explored and to brainstorm strategies to address the issues. All police agencies, police unions and associations were represented in each group and a diverse range of views were considered.

Below is the outcome of those discussions.

### Group 1

- Salary packaging and healthcare
- Streamline the entry process
- How do we professionalise policing?
- Improve career planning and support
  - o Develop tenure processes to improve career planning
  - o One on one career planning

### Group 2

#### Recruitment

- Splitting training for recruits into a full-time stream or a part-time stream to modernise for people to train.
- Inter-jurisdictional mobility scheme - Police can move within the industry of police. Leverage ANZPAA's work to standardise things across jurisdictions to keep people in their rank when they move states.

- Improve organisational literacy to communicate the recruit message – how we have the recruit conversation with students and potential recruits and building a 'script' or message that is uniform. Police as recruiters are the best but the organisational expectations or checklist need to be ingrained in the language that police use to recruit.
  - Also ensuring that our Police as recruiters are young and can demonstrate the value of the profession. Recruitment cannot just be a role for older police
- Review of Psychometric testing as a barrier to recruitment
  - Risk management appetite for all agencies – testing can be a barrier for recruitment.
  - Younger people are mental health literate and having a process for managing them may be an exclusion under current structures.
  - There needs to be consideration about the narrow focus of psychometric testing and how it can exclude recruits, an appropriate balance needs to be struck.
- Fixing childcare
  - There is an appetite federally for an improvement for childcare, police need to lean into this to achieve for our industry.
  - We need the federal government to recognise areas of need and locations of importance. The system needs to be about funding on a location basis to support police with childcare rather than giving money to individuals.
- Broadening pathways to policing
  - How do we tap into people that are taking different pathways that do not lead to policing, when those pathways are disrupted how to propose policing as an option – eg. students who are leaving university being redirected to policing as another option.
  - Tapping into industries with customer service skills that can turn into police recruits, encourage our agencies to identify skills that are desirable and then doing a body of work to identify those industries and target their workforce as a group of recruits.

### Retention

- Making it easier to move laterally inside agencies at rank.
- Keeping our people safe.
  - Mental health, physical health.
- Mid-late career incentives to stay in policing.
  - Different for the streams of employees eg mid to late career over 20/30 years of employment versus mid to late career for a workforce on 5-7 years of a career

- o How do we keep people in their 3rd and 4th years of employment in policing for the long term?
- o Possible incentives
  - Salary packaging;
  - Superannuation access to incentivise people staying in policing at the end of their career.
- Penalty free career break
  - o People who take career breaks often cannot return to work. Consider that a career break is a chance to retain people in the industry.
  - o It is possible that some people will leave policing after a break however a break might reset some people in their careers.
  - o Net benefit versus loss to that approach.
- Fringe Tax Benefits
  - o Salary packaging for police
- Support for families to retain people in their regional locations
  - o Examples from NSW and other jurisdictions of support that is provided to people to encourage them to feel connected to their communities.
  - o ADF family scheme
    - \$800 per family member for healthcare – consideration of this for policing.

### Group 3

- School Age recruits
  - o Hook onto the education curriculum to talk about community safety, online safety, drug and road safety delivered by police in schools – idea to build buy in for policing with students.
- SA is doing a flexible industry pathway to support students to get their ATAR but can support students to enter policing – develop skills for policing
  - o 5 subjects in year 12 that can lead to a uniformed position.
  - o There is still testing to join the program, but it is one step closer to policing.
  - o 5-6 schools across the state – 100 students per year.
- National standardisation of ranks and classifications across all states and territories
  - o Idea is to retain people in the profession of policing even if it means people move interstate

- Access to superannuation at the preservation age of 55, encouraging people to stay a little longer.
- Standardised superannuation across the country.

#### Group 4

- Supported the ANZPAA submission.
- National advertising campaign to support policing as a unified profession.
- Employee value proposition of policing – need to develop a better approach
  - Who are the people that all police agencies want to keep – for all organisations there frameworks are different but building a shared profile of who are the desired police to keep in the job.
- Strategic workforce planning environment – we need to promote synchronicity across the country to get the same focus or similar focuses nationally.
- FBT and Superannuation.
- Improve financial literacy of officers across Australia - to understand superannuation planning and co-contributions to set up for the future. How do we train police to see the financial opportunity for the workforce.

#### Group 5

- Housing issues – incentives are not keeping people in the community.
- National Gap Year – Federal Funding for people outside of school to do a gap year in policing to be part of the national disaster response.
- Health Insurance - Salary sacrificing for health insure.
- Professionalisation of the job.
- Procurement – Harmonisation of procurement across the country and training/development. Ability for states to collaborate on uniform costs, weapons costs, etc. Federal Government Centre for Excellence or the like

### Conclusions

There is no roadmap for the industry to address this issue. The PFA has seen the clear benefit of taking the initiative to engage with affiliates and respective police agencies to ensure discussions can occur, and a shared understanding can develop across all jurisdictions. As we progress forward there are clear commitments that we believe will address some of the issues that policing is facing as an industry. The PFA recognises the need for further collaboration across Australia and New Zealand and hopes that the information presented in this document can contribute to ongoing discussions.

These issues are greater than the sum of any single jurisdiction and represent a challenge for policing as a profession. The policing profession is deeply entrenched in communities across Australia and New Zealand and is necessary for maintaining and defending the social contract that binds society together. The continued evolution of the profession is the challenge that recruitment and retention has presented us with. The PFA recognises these challenges as opportunities to better engage with future employees, and to continue the proud history of policing in Australia and New Zealand.

