

**Submission
No 11**

ASSAULTS ON MEMBERS OF THE NSW POLICE FORCE

Organisation: Wesley Mission

Date Received: 25 August 2020



25 August 2020

Ms Wendy Tuckerman MP
Committee Chair
Committee on Law and Safety
Parliament House
Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000.

Dear Wendy,

Thank-you for the invitation to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into assaults on members of the NSW Police Force. Wesley Mission is a large Christian provider of community services across NSW, and one key area of our work with visibility into the Terms of Reference for the inquiry is our Youth Hope activity based at Penrith.

Wesley Mission's Youth Hope activity is funded by the Department of Communities and Justice. Based at Penrith, it employs 26 experienced staff, including an Aboriginal Youth & Family Coach, a Health Facilitator, Youth Development Facilitators and many others. 150 young people between the ages of 10 and 19 and their families are assisted each month, with 30% of the young people identifying as Aboriginal. The Youth Hope activity is a crucial part of the overall response to high risk communities and changing entrenched patterns that disadvantage young people's life prospects. We commend the Youth Hope program to you, and its alignment with Wesley Missions' intent to do all the good we can because every life matters.

Youth Hope has been involved with many programs aimed at promoting positive community connections as well as individual support for young people. Wesley Mission's partnership with local First Nations agency Ngulla Wal is especially positive as they have facilities to support these programs as well as other supports provided by police. This strong community engagement means that Wesley Mission has the opportunity on a regular basis to observe *current strategies that the NSW Police Force has in place to engage with the community, including current or past community and school based programs*. Lachlan Price, Wesley Mission's Youth Support Services Team Leader, has been involved in conversations with the Mt Druitt Local Area Command and other service providers around developing strategies around referral pathways and directly accessing services that could support and redirect youth away from the justice system and into activities that could address the underlining issues.

Our observations overall are very positive in relation to the NSW Police Force's engagement with community.

The Breaking Barriers program run by the Mt Druitt Police, for instance, works with Aboriginal Youth in the Mt Druitt area to live a life without crime. A lot of young people that Wesley Mission has referred there have commented about how they see the Police in a different light now. They're not as afraid and are a lot more respectful in their dealings with the Police since attending the program. The children participating are picked up around 5-6 am every Tuesday and Thursday morning. They participate in physical activities, take turns in preparing breakfast and then are transported to school. In addition, helpful NSW Police Force strategies we have observed include:



- Bike Safety Week – bikes and helmets were donated and NSW Police attended the day to educate children and families around road safety
- NAIDOC week – The Local Area Command is always present at First Nation events
- The Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) runs a fit for life program that supports health and wellbeing for young people. A version of this program is also provided to students in school
- Youth Week (Hawksbury) – Police attended with sniffer dogs and community members were able to interact with the animals which created opportunity for connections with the community
- Sporting programs within schools – Mt Druitt Chifley College had police attend and participate in sporting games with students, increasing connections and relationships with students and community
- Youth Liaison Officer attending schools and Interagency meetings
- LOVE BITES – is a program run in schools where police regularly attend
- Support rights of young people – an example was given where the local NSW Police Youth Liaison Office attended a meeting with Westfield management and advocated on behalf of the young person based on the treatment received by security staff.
- We have observed respectful but straight forward interactions with Police when our staff attend a Police station with young people.

Having identified many positive aspects of the NSW Police Force's engagement, we also have observed two matters of concern:

Racial profiling continues to negatively impact relationships between the NSW Police and the community, especially young black males who seem to be targeted more frequently. For instance, some young black men who were dressed appropriately, not overly loud nor disturbing the public, yet were stopped and spoken to. They noted that white children, who weren't dressed as neat and tidy as them, who were louder and being stupid, were left alone.

Transit police seem to target young people and issue fines, fines the young people have little or no chance of paying. These fines continue to grow and then have greater social and financial implications, including not being able to secure a licence until the fine is paid. Consideration could be given where Transit police have an allotment of Opal cards which can be issued to the young people on the spot and avoid fines and further antecedent behaviours.

As you can see from the above, our general consideration in this response is that we have very positive things to say about the Police's engagement and raise two areas of concern as our people have perceived them.

We are glad to have had the opportunity to respond and hope that these comments prove helpful in your deliberations.

Warmly yours,



Rev Keith V Garner AM
CEO/Superintendent
Wesley Mission