

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

Organisation: NSW Police Force

Date received: 21 July 2017



NSW Police Force

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

Mr Stewart Smith
Director
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Legal Affairs
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Smith,

I refer to the current NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Legal Affairs
Inquiry into Emergency Services Agencies.

The NSW Police Force is pleased to provide the enclosed submission.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,


Mary-Louise Battilana
Director
Office of the Commissioner

21 JUL 2017

Inquiry into emergency services agencies – Police Submission

- a) **The prevalence of bullying, harassment and discrimination, as well as the effectiveness of the protocols and procedures in place to manage and resolve such complaints within the New South Wales Police Force.**

Comment:

The NSW Police Force has a sound framework in place to support appropriate standards of behaviour in the workplace and includes systems, policy, programs and education and training.

The policy and programs available to support employees in the workplace are subject to ongoing review to ensure that the NSW Police Force response to issues of inappropriate workplace behaviour remain contemporary and effective.

NSW Police Force are represented on a number of Public Service Commission working groups relating to diversity and inclusion and workplace culture. The Public Service Commission will be releasing a campaign on Respectful Workplaces, which will include a range of tools to support public sector agencies. As part of the Respectful Workplace Behaviours Campaign all NSW Police Force employees will be required to undertake mandatory on-line training which will focus on Respectful Workplace Behaviours.

In January 2017, NSW Police Force was recognised through White Ribbon as a workplace that is taking active steps to stop violence against women.

An outline of initiatives implemented by the NSW Police Force to address inappropriate behaviour is provided below:

Workforce Relations and Equity Unit

The Workforce Relations and Equity Unit was established following a review undertaken in 2007 by Chris Ronalds, Senior Counsel into all NSW Police Force policies, training, support and complaint management procedures relating to sexual harassment and sex discrimination.

The Workforce Relations and Equity Unit has responsibility for the provision of consistent expert advice on workplace equity matters and implementation of programs and strategies around respectful workplace behaviour.

Some of the other recommendations implemented following the Ronalds report included the mandatory referral of sustained sexual harassment and discrimination matters to the NSW Police Force Internal Review Panel and the Commissioner. As well as the delivery of online training focusing on sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying and the implementation of a new policy for Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying.

Joint Human Resources and Professional Standards Command Working Party

The Joint Human Resources and Professional Standards Command Working Party (Working Party) was established following the 2011 Ombudsman review of the NSW Police Force Workplace Equity Resolution Procedures.

A key recommendation from the Working Party was the establishment of the Inter-Command Forum (ICF) on Workplace Equity matters in November 2013.

The ICF is responsible for oversight and monitoring of strategic approaches to discrimination, harassment and bullying within the NSW Police Force to ensure safe, healthy workplaces, and adopting a collaborative approach to the identification and implementation of risk mitigation strategies relating to discrimination, harassment and bullying.

NSW Police Force Policies/Procedures

Some of the key policies and procedures delivered by the Workforce Relations and Equity Unit include:

- Respectful Workplace Behaviours Policy Statement
- Respectful Workplace Behaviour Guidelines
- Workplace Equity Guide for Investigators (the guide addresses key investigative considerations in relation to complaints of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, victimization, vilification and bullying.
- Video messages from Corporate Sponsors (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, Workforce Improvement Program, Vulnerable Communities and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex) on standards of behaviour expected of all NSWPF employees.
- Tools and Resources to support Commanders and Managers.

NSW Police Force Committees and Plans

Women in Policing

The Executive Committee on Women in Policing was established under a key strategy in the 2011-2013 Strategic Plan.

In 2015, a Women in Policing Strategic Plan was implemented and covers the period 2015-2018. Key objectives under the plan include:

- Developing an inclusive workplace culture that supports and promotes women in policing.
- Providing accessible training, networks, mentoring and development programs to assist women in the NSW Police Force to build their skills and advance their careers.
- Identify and address barriers that may impact on the retention of female employees.
- Increase the representation of female officers within policing disciplines especially sworn officers in traditionally male dominated disciplines and within senior management.

Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Strategic Plan

In 2016, Human Resources Command implemented the first Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Strategic Plan 2016-2019.

Key objectives under the plan include:

- Developing an inclusive workplace that supports and promotes cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Providing accessible training, networks, mentoring and development programs to assist employees from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds to build their skills and advance their careers.
- Identify and address barriers that may impact on the retention of employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

b) The support structures in place to assist victims of workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination within the NSW Police Force.

Comment:

Any NSW Police Force employee who believes that they have been subjected to bullying, harassment or discrimination can contact the WREU for advice. The WREU team have a sound understanding of the legislative and policy framework relating to inappropriate workplace behaviour such as bullying, harassment and discrimination and are able to provide expert advice. They are also familiar with and discuss relevant support services with victims where indicated. This includes the Employee Assistance Program, Internal Witness Support Unit and Peer Support officers. The WREU also collaborates with other key areas of the NSW Police Force to identify and implement health and wellbeing strategies that support employees and ensure a safe, healthy and productive workplace.

c) The support services available to NSW Police Force workers to assist with mental health issues resulting from workplace trauma and the effectiveness of those programs.

Comment:

A range of employee support services and other initiatives have been implemented by the NSW Police Force to support the psychological wellbeing of employees and ensure a safe and healthy workplace. Relevant support services and other initiatives are outlined below.

Incident Support

The incident support service is available twenty four hours a day, seven days a week to any employee who is impacted by any potential traumatic incident. This service is delivered by experienced psychologists with specialised training and ongoing incident and case management expertise. The service provides liaison and support for

management in response to the incident and following initial intervention. Where required this includes development of support plans for individual staff members.

Peer Support

Peer Support Officers (PSO's) provide appropriate support to employees during periods of professional and personal distress. PSO's offer immediate assistance through one-on-one peer support and also assess the need for referrals to health professionals or alternative support programs. They are also trained to provide education and information around the various support services available to members of the NSW Police Force. PSO's are not trained counsellors or mental health practitioners.

External research into the effectiveness of peer support programs indicate that injured officers respond very well when speaking with peers post incident exposure.

Incident and Support database

The incident and support database was developed by the NSW Police Force and is used to store the details of an officer's exposure to incidents that may impact on their health and wellbeing. The psychological support provided or offered is also captured. This information is tracked centrally and is available when the officer changes command.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The New South Wales Police Force provides personal counselling services for all staff and their immediate families via an external counselling organisation. EAP employs registered psychologists who are located throughout the State and provide emergency help for all employees. Crisis telephone counselling can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. EAP offers general counselling to all employees and their immediate families through its extensive network of local providers. Counselling rooms are located in professional premises and are placed throughout the metropolitan area, as well as in most regional centres. Some services provided by EAP include short-term crisis intervention for any personal problem that may adversely affect an employee's ability to perform their normal duties. EAP can assist in specialist intervention referrals to for example, psychiatrists, community groups and support groups.

NSW Police Force Chaplaincy

Police Chaplains provide a number of services, including responding to critical and traumatic events in officer's lives. Chaplains support police officers at emergency situations and at the scenes of disasters.

The NSW Police Force, through its Workforce Improvement Program, has also sponsored the following health and wellbeing initiatives:

Family Support

The Family Support Coordinator is a new role within the Safety Command, Human Resources. This position provides information and coordinates support services for family members of ill or injured employees of the NSW Police Force.

The injury may be physical or psychological, work or non-work related. The primary role of the Family Support Coordinator is to support the family that are in turn supporting the employee in their recovery process. Whatever issue the family is experiencing, the Family Support Coordinator will assist in accessing the most appropriate information or service. The service has been provided for approximately one year. The feedback provided to date by users of the service has been very positive.

Reconnect

Reconnect is a service designed to improve the mental health of employees. Employees participating in the program are supported by a team including a psychologist, strength and conditioner and dietician. The program draws on the link between structured exercise and improvements in mental health. It is expected that by approximately August 2017 sufficient number of officers will have utilised the service to allow evaluation of the program.

Five things booklet

Five Things is an easy to use guide to help improve officer health and wellbeing. The guide provides 5 things for officers to consider when it comes to managing stress, building resilience, practicing mindfulness, getting better sleep and coping with shift work demands. It also has tips about diet, exercise and safe alcohol use. Each section of the booklet looks at easy things to incorporate into day to day life to better manage health and wellbeing. Feedback from the Field on the value of the booklet has been positive.

Resilience building workshops and Dr Gilmartin lecture tour

Resilience skills are useful in stressful times. Resilience can help buffer officers from developing mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder. Resilience may help offset certain factors associated with mental illness such as lack of social support, being bullied or experiencing abuse.

A number of tailored and customised educational workshops have been conducted around the state for NSW Police Force officers by the Beyond Blue organisation. Some specific workshops have also been conducted for Aboriginal officers who have unique cultural expectations placed on them.

In partnership with the Police Association of NSW, the NSW Police Force has also sponsored a series of lecture tours by Dr Gilmartin, a noted international expert on building resilience in police officers. His book *“Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement, a guide for officers and their families”* is provided to all newly graduating police officers. Feedback from officers who have attended the lectures has been positive. A video with key messages from the lectures delivered by Dr Gilmartin will be rolled out during 2017 via the NSW Police Force HR Intranet site to coincide with key communication messages on health & wellbeing.

Your Health First

This workshop provides practical advice on a range of issues including managing stress and suicide prevention. The workshop is aimed at reducing the stigma surrounding mental health and most importantly encourages employees to seek help when needed. Post workshop evaluations have been positive.

Your Health Check (YHC)

This program recognises the important connection between physical and psychological health. YHC includes the delivery of medical assessments (i.e. cholesterol, weight, blood pressure, waist circumference, stress checks etc) to all serving police officers. Over ten thousand tests have been conducted to date. A number of checks have resulted in employees being referred to medical practitioners for follow up treatment and in some cases implementation of health improvement plans. Officers with less critical health indicators have been referred to other health services such as Restart referred to below.

Restart

Is a twelve week health and fitness service, offering officers dietary advice, individual exercise training with strength and conditioning coaches, mentoring in diet planning and psychological advice where warranted. The training is conducted during work time in the first month and after this it is undertaken in the officer's personal time.

Taking the Lead

This initiative targets leadership training for constables to senior constables. The emphasis is on officers acquiring knowledge via lectures, class discussion, case learning and simulation based learning. The objective of the training is to obtain safe operations, safe people and safe working environments. A key component to creating a safe working environment is fostering the psychological health of individual team members.

d) The appropriateness of uniforms provided to personnel in the NSW Police Force

The NSW Police Force has in place a strong governance framework to support decisions around uniforms for police officers. The NSW Police Force Uniform Standards Committee (USC) provides advice and recommendations to the Commissioner and the Commissioner's Executive Team (CET) on the wearing, design and allocation of uniforms worn by members of the NSW Police Force. The role of the USC is to review uniform matters submitted in accordance with NSW Police Force procedures and where appropriate to provide advice and recommendations to the Commissioner and the CET for approval through the governance framework. The USC includes representation from the Field, Employee Relations, Union and Procurement.