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~~Supplementary to:~~

WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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**Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600**

YOUR REF:

OUR REF:

ENQUIRIES:

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find attached a submission from the Western Australia Police and its Women's Advisory Network to your inquiry into balancing work and family responsibilities.

I am pleased to submit this submission to the Committee and would be happy to discuss any part of the submission with members at your convenience. I can be contacted on 08 9323 1952 or mobile 0418913635.

I have emailed a copy of the submission to fhs.reps@aph.gov.au

Yours sincerely

MS JO HARRISON-WARD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE
CHAIR WOMEN'S ADVISORY NETWORK

19 April 2006

WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE

Submission from

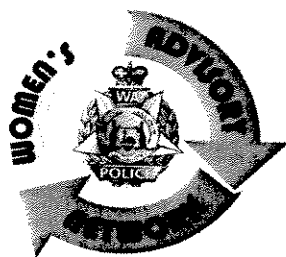
The Western Australia Police

To the

House of Representatives

**Standing Committee on Family and
Human Services**

Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family



frontlineFIRST

Executive Summary

Western Australia is the largest state in Australia and is the largest Police jurisdiction in the world. The combination of large area and few major centres with the full range of services and facilities make it difficult to attract and retain people for regional/remote service.

The Western Australia Police comprise of 5183 police officers and 1310 police staff. As at 31 October 2005 there were 4,254 male officers; 936 female officers; 577 male public servants (police staff) and 801 women.

Resignations or separations as they are called among police officers reported 6.95% of women separated from the agency (police officers and police staff) in the 2004-2005. This represents an overall increase of 1.58% from 2003-2004. The separation rate of female police officers increased by 0.67% and the separation rate for police staff increased by 2.11%. (See appendix 1).

One of the reasons reported by women in the exit interviews conducted is family responsibility. Research with women police officers leaving the job highlights the issue of child care and flexible work arrangement as deciding factors.

WA Police has introduced flexible work options to encourage and assist women, particularly those with children to return to work/stay in the workforce.

22.90% of women across the agency accessed part-time work arrangements in 2004-2005 reporting period. This rate increased from 22.58% in 2003-2004.

The WA Government has committed to recruiting 350 police officers above attrition over a four year period. WA Police like many other jurisdictions around the world are already experiencing a downward trend in capacity to attract/retain sufficient police officers. Attracting women to the agency and retaining them throughout their career is a key focus of the WA Police which has established a strong Women's Advisory Network to assist.

This submission identifies Government policy and systemic limitations to achieving work life balance that directly affects the capacity of policing to achieve the required workforce to meet current and future demands. The paper also presents options for policy action that would assist the situation.

Some changes to Government policies and systems would assist in efforts for policing to attract and retain a workforce that will meet current and future needs in regard to community safety.

For Employees

- Lower cost of child care and viable option to salary-sacrifice child care services.
- Greater availability of child care services.

- Availability of child care that would support services that are 24 hr/7 days ie after hours/overnight child care.
- Increased options to tap into part-time/casual carers to cover emergency call-out, professional development etc
- Equity of Government funded support for casual/nanny and other overnight and emergency child care coverage.
- Wide range of options under “carer” classification under related policies e.g. for overnight when parent on night shift; or in regional/rural & remote.

For Employers

- Incentives to provide options, e.g. child care, that will assist in attraction and retention of staff for policing services.
- Elimination of FBT to make it a viable option for employers to provide, fund or reimburse child care.
- Possibility to offer Salary-sacrifice options to staff for child care services and/or provide assistance without incurring FBT.

Importance of work-life balance to policing

The role of police is widely acknowledged as an essential service to the community. The WA Police provides a wide range of services including community patrolling, traffic enforcement and management, responding to calls for assistance, detection of computer crime, drug offences, responding to domestic violence and child abuse, investigation of offences, presenting cases to court, protection services, attending emergencies, and crime prevention and community safety strategies such as community education, working with young people, etc. Police officers are required to be able to undertake all of these services and as they are promoted, an increasing role in organisational management.

Policing work is by nature often difficult and potentially dangerous. This can add a lot of pressure to individuals and families, and makes it even more important to have a good work/life balance.

The range and type of work all indicate a challenge in terms of work/life balance, as the job requires a high level of dedication to professional development as well as the on-going demands of the job.

Added to this, policing is a 24hour/7day-a-week service. This requires on-going shift work and emergency call-out.

The increase in demand for policing services

The demand for policing services is increasing for a range of reasons, including population growth and additional security issues. At the same time there is increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining police officers to meet current demand, let alone future demand. The WA State Government committed to recruiting an additional 350 police officers above attrition over a four year period from the 2005-06 financial year.

Attrition is running at approximately 30 per month with one of the major reasons cited for women resigning was family responsibilities. The decreasing number of women re-entering or retaining work is of a concern to WA Police.

Child Care is increasing important in attraction/retention of police officers

A critical issue in attraction and retention, and the ability for police officers to have work-life balance, is the availability of affordable options for child care, family care and flexible working arrangements. Research with women police officers leaving the job highlights the issue of child care and flexible work arrangement as deciding factors.

This submission identifies Government policy and systemic limitations to achieving work life balance that directly affects the capacity of policing to achieve the required workforce to meet current and future demands. The paper also presents options for policy action that would assist the situation.

Issues in Work-life Balance for Policing

As with many employers, the WA Police are increasingly concerned at their capacity to attract and retain police officers to meet current and future demand. Whilst a range of initiatives have been introduced, such as flexible work options, lateral entry etc the agency is limited in some of the key factors that influence police officers, both male and female, to leave, or not return, to work in policing.

One of the key factors identified as a barrier to taking up policing and returning to policing duties after extended leave or secondment, is the high cost of child care, the unavailability of after-hours child care and the possibility that flexible work options may not remain available. Also identified was the fact that when part-time work was available and taken up, other career development options such as training and professional development opportunities were limited because of work load pressures for operational units.

For some time the WA Police have had many initiatives in place to attract and retain women police officers. Besides the good sense this makes from a policing management perspective, it assists us in providing a relevant service to our diverse community. These have proved somewhat successful, but we are starting to see a trend of an increasing number of women leaving or not returning to policing.

As demand for policing services increases, and available police officers decrease, there is added pressure on current police officers. Flexible work options may be restricted because of the need to populate each shift. This again adds to the barriers for entry/return to policing work.

As a community Australia need to recognise the key issues related to policing (and possibly other emergency services) and look to easing or removing any barriers to work entry/retention; and any barriers to developing and maintaining a work/life balance for policing personnel.

Pressures on the Policing Workforce Impacting Work/Life Balance

Many factors impact work/life balance. Key factors impacting policing include:

- Increasing demand for policing services in times of security concerns, population increase, urban expansion and crime trends.
- On-going need for 24hr-7 day-a-week service
- Issues of decreasing workforce 'pool'
- Inability to attract and retain adequate numbers of police officers
- When there are fewer staff, managing the pressure of meeting demand

- Individual parents/carers dilemma in balancing work & family
- Child care available & affordable and flexible work options- Barriers to entering/returning to policing work

The following summary expands these points

Increasing Demand for Policing Services

There is an increasing population in WA to be serviced by Police/emergency services.

- Increasing population – “Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory recorded annual growth rates greater than Australia overall in 2004-05. Queensland’s population increased by 2.0% while Western Australia’s increased by 1.6% and the Northern Territory’s by 1.5%.¹ “
- Increasing tourism –“ A total of 82,266 overseas visitors arrived in Western Australia by air on holiday in the three months to December 2005 - 5,248 (6.8%) more than in the same period of 2004.”²

There are increased community expectations of police/emergency in times of heightened security focus. The community seeks better response, and higher visibility of policing. There is also a need for police to cover a greater range of issues to monitor and respond to security and community safety.

WA has largest land area of any State in Australia. There is increasing need to provide better service levels to regional and remote.

On-going Need for 24hr, 7 day-a-week Service

- The community expects and requires a 24/7 policing service
- Providing 24 hr 7 day a week services becomes increasingly difficult when there is difficulty in attracting and maintaining staffing levels.
- With increasing concern re crime rates and security concerns – the community does expect that police, like other emergency services, are available when and where they are needed.

¹ ABS Publication 3218.0 - Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2004-05
Latest ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 23/02/2006

² ABS Publication 1367.5 - Western Australian Statistical Indicators, Mar 2006
Latest ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 05/04/2006

Issues of decrease in available workforce 'pool'

Studies on the aging workforce have projected a decrease in Australian workforce pool. This will mean fewer people available within police recruiting age range. Policing is in competition for employees from that decreasing pool.

Modern policing requirements mean criteria for entry that means even fewer to choose from in the 'pool'. There are community expectations that there will be a high level of selection criteria. In addition policing is not an easy role; it requires committed, intelligent, physically capable, ethical people. There is also an increasing need for diversity in the workforce to service the diversity in community. Police need to be able to attract retain women/ethnic/indigenous people.

Difficulty in attracting/retaining quality people –

WA Police like many other jurisdictions around the world are already experiencing a downward trend in capacity to attract/retain sufficient police officers.

Western Australia is the largest state in Australia and is the largest Police jurisdiction in the world. The combination of large area and few major centres with the full range of services and facilities make it difficult to attract and retain people for regional/remote service.

An aging workforce wanting flexibility/decreased hours which will impact on available hours for duty.

Fewer staff; added pressure of meeting demand

Policing can be demanding work. There is added pressure when there are fewer staff to meet community demands. Operational requirements with reducing staff numbers also may mean the need to limit flexible work hours, and flexible work options when operational requirements so high.

Increasingly, the role is becoming a specialist role for police/emergency workers. This requires police officers to keep up to date, professionally & technically. This requires time to train and undertake professional development.

It is important that there are options for agencies to attract and retain a workforce levels to meet demand, with strategies such as child care assistance, workplace child care and flexible work options. Equally there needs to be options for child care for professionals such as police officers who need to undertake professional development to be able to continue providing a service to the public.

Individual parents/carers dilemma in balancing work & family

Police officers as parents/carers recognise their social responsibility and the need to have time & better relationships with children; this not only provides police officers with supportive family life, but stable and balanced families assist young people to stay away from crime and anti-social behaviour. When parents are also police officers, there are added demands of emergency call-out, shift work is an added difficulty and availability child care in this situation is essential.

Police officers are under obligation to transfer as the job requires – this can mean taking family to live in rural/remote towns that don't have child care services. Affordable employer funded child care support is needed to assist these families. Where the lack of child care services is an added burden for families, this can lead to pressure on police officers to abandon the job or not return after parental leave.

Identified Barriers to work entry / re-entry:

Employee Perspective:

- There is high cost of child care. At present this can not be off-set through salary packaging without FBT unless on employer premises (not really an option for police stations).
- There is a lack of availability of child care to cover emergency call-outs, shift work, 24/7 service delivery.
- Lack of coverage for child care to cover periods when training/professional development requires absence from home.
- Lack of child care centres in regional/rural/remote areas; need to tap into available child care sources – friends/family, and have them eligible under “carer”.

From Agencies/employers Perspective

- Attraction and retention of staff for policing services is a major concern.
- Fringe Benefit tax burden of providing child care services and high cost of employer-provided child care service. This is a major barrier as policing services offering added incentive to attract and retain the current workforce.
- Fewer staff combined with higher community demand for policing services leads to higher workload. This leads to increased stress and the consequences of stress such as sick leave. This may lead to restrictions in flexible work practices to cover the workload – and the cycle continues.
- This does not assist in making policing an attractive career, particularly as it is a 24-hr/7-day-a-week job.
- This leads to decreasing numbers of police officers in the workforce, and of those working there may be less availability of police officers through sick leave/stress;

Government policy and systemic changes that would assist

Some changes to Government policies and systems would assist in efforts for policing to attract and retain a workforce that will meet current and future needs in regard to community safety.

For Employees

- Lower cost of child care and viable option to salary-sacrifice child care services.
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APPENDIX 1

TURNOVER-WESTERN AUSTRALIAN POLICE As at 30 June 2005

WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE SERVICE	TOTAL SEPARATIONS	TOTAL PERSONNEL*	PERCENTAGE
	FEMALE POLICE OFFICER SEPARATIONS	TOTAL FEMALE POLICE OFFICERS	
2001-02	19	695	2.73%
2002-03	30	767	3.91%
2003-04	26	823	3.16%
2004-05	35	913	3.83%
	FEMALE POLICE STAFF SEPARATIONS	TOTAL FEMALE POLICE STAFF	
2001-02	65	764	8.51%
2002-03	47	785	5.99%
2003-04	65	811	8.01%
2004-05	91	899	10.12%
	FEMALE POLICE OFFICER & POLICE STAFF SEPARATIONS	TOTAL FEMALE POLICE OFFICERS & POLICE STAFF	
2001-02	84	1,459	5.76%
2002-03	77	1,552	4.96%
2003-04	91	1,634	5.57%
2004-05	126	1,812	6.95%

Figure 1 Source: HR Planning Equity & Policy Branch

- Total personnel is a headcount which includes employees on leave without pay. Part-time employees are counted as one (1).

**. NUMBER OF STAFF WORKING PART-TIME
WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE
As at 30 June 2005**

	2002	2003	2004	2005	Change from previous years					
					2003		2004		2005	
					No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male Police Officers	18	34	41	38	16	88.9	7	20.6	-3	-7.3
Male Police Staff	8	12	19	18	4	50.0	7	58.3	-1	-5.2
Male Police Officers & Police Staff	26	46	60	56	20	77.0	14	30.4	-4	-6.6
Female Police Officers	95	111	130	147	16	16.8	19	17.1	17	13.0
Female Police Staff	221	239	239	268	18	8.1	0	0.0	29	12.1
Female Police Officers & Police Staff	316	350	369	415	34	10.76	19	5.4	46	12.4
Total	342	396	429	471	54	15.8	33	8.3	42	9.7%

Figure 2 Source: HR Planning Equity & Policy Branch