

## Chapter 4 Policing strategies and resources

The terms of reference require the Committee to examine policing strategies and resources in the Redfern and Waterloo area. The Committee has received a considerable amount of evidence about this term of reference from submission makers and witnesses. Evidence has been presented by NSW Police, the Police Association of NSW, several officers stationed at the Redfern Local Area Command and by other interested individuals and organisations. The evidence has revealed a number of issues that the Committee feels should be addressed in this Interim Report. Those issues include: violence against police, police resources including staffing issues, and police strategies to deal with robberies. A brief overview of policing in Redfern and Waterloo is provided by way of introduction.

A number of other issues fall within this term of reference, including the important issue of the relationship between police and the Aboriginal community, police strategies to deal with drug-related crime and coordination between NSW Police and other services, such as DoCS. These issues will be examined in the Final Report, after further consideration by the Committee.

On 16 July 2004, the NSW Police Minister, the Hon John Watkins MP released a package of initiatives aimed at addressing policing issues in Redfern.<sup>224</sup> The initiatives were based on the recommendations of Strike Force *Coburn*. The Committee has not yet received a copy of the Strike Force *Coburn* report. Some of the initiatives relate to the issues examined in this chapter and will be referred to where relevant. Other initiatives aim to address issues that the Committee intends examining in the second stage of the Inquiry. These initiatives will therefore be discussed in the Final Report.

### Policing in Redfern and Waterloo

#### Redfern Local Area Command

- 4.1** New South Wales is divided into 80 Local Area Commands (LACs) that report through five region offices to the Deputy Commissioner Operations, David Madden. The suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo fall within the Redfern LAC. Redfern LAC covers approximately 35 square kilometres of inner Sydney, encompassing the suburbs of Alexandria, Beaconsfield, Chippendale, Darlington, Erskineville, Eveleigh, Redfern, Rosebery, Waterloo and Zetland. A map of the Redfern LAC is set out in Appendix 5. Redfern LAC falls within the Inner Metropolitan Region Command.
- 4.2** In evidence before the Committee, the Commander of the Redfern LAC, Superintendent Dennis Smith, stated that ‘as a policing jurisdiction goes, it is one of the most challenging police jurisdictions in Sydney.’<sup>225</sup> Several submission makers and witnesses expressed strong support for the police at the Redfern LAC. For example, Mr Peter Rodgers, a resident of

<sup>224</sup> Hon J Watkins MP, ‘Enhanced Policing in Redfern 2004 - 32 Strategies and initiatives to improve policing in Redfern Local Area Command’, 16 July 2004 and Hon J Watkins MP, Minister for Police, ‘Redfern Crime Plan: Enhanced numbers, training, response and relations’, *Media Release*, 16 July 2004.

<sup>225</sup> Superintendent Dennis Smith, Commander, Redfern Local Area Command, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p40

Waterloo, stated 'I have lived in the area for nearly 10 years and have found the level of police commitment to the job to be very good'.<sup>226</sup> The City of Sydney Council also acknowledged the work of the local police in its submission:

Council would like to acknowledge the vital role Redfern Police have taken in improving community safety in Redfern and Waterloo. Local Area Commander Dennis Smith has worked tirelessly to improve relations between the community and Redfern Police. Rather than taking a reactive approach to policing, Redfern Police are now embarking on a range of pro-active community-based policing strategies designed to strengthen community relationships as a key crime prevention method. Furthermore Redfern police have been an active participant in the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project and are committed to building strategic partnerships to address local issues.<sup>227</sup>

- 4.3** As well as praise for the police who work in Redfern and Waterloo, criticisms were also levelled at some aspects of policing in the area. Most significantly, the relationship between the police and the Aboriginal community, particularly those living near and visiting the Block, was identified as being very problematic. For example, the Redfern Legal Centre noted in its submission that '[t]here have been reports to the Redfern Legal Centre consistently over the past five years that suggest that at times police display inappropriate behaviour towards Aboriginal people, young men in particular'.<sup>228</sup> As noted in the introduction to this chapter these issues will be further examined in the second stage of the Committee's Inquiry.

### **Crime in Redfern and Waterloo**

- 4.4** As noted by the City of Sydney Council in its Redfern-Waterloo Community Safety Plan, the interpretation of crime trends is a difficult task.<sup>229</sup> Comparisons of suburbs with varying populations are problematic and recorded crime statistics do not take account of unreported crime. The Committee has therefore only provided an overview of crime in Redfern and Waterloo in this section.
- 4.5** The Committee has been informed that the major hot-spots of crime within the Redfern LAC are the streets surrounding Redfern Railway Station and the Block. While the Committee has been advised that there are some areas near the large housing estates in Waterloo that also are problematic in terms of policing, the major focus of the submissions and evidence received by the Committee concerned the hot-spots in Redfern. Much of the discussion in this chapter, therefore, relates by necessity to crime and policing issues in these areas.
- 4.6** The Committee understands that while the Redfern LAC is not an area that has a high rate of major crime such as murder, low-level crime (including break and enters, assaults, drug offences and robberies) is prevalent. The Government's submission advises that, in relation to most crimes in the Redfern and Waterloo area over the past two years, there has been

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<sup>226</sup> Submission 71, Mr Peter Rodgers, p1

<sup>227</sup> Submission 84, City of Sydney Council, p17

<sup>228</sup> Submission 50, Redfern Legal Centre, p3

<sup>229</sup> City of Sydney, *Redfern-Waterloo Community Safety Plan*, 10 March 2004, p23

either an improvement, or the levels have remained static, with the exception of robbery without a weapon which has increased over a five year period:

NSW Crime Statistics and Research crime data shows that [over 2 years] there have been improvement in the suburbs of Redfern, Waterloo, Zetland, Chippendale and Darlington, with assault down 19.5%, robbery with a weapon not a firearm down 30.6% and motor vehicle theft down 26.0%. The offences of murder, sexual assault, indecent assault, robbery with a firearm, break and enter, stealing offences and fraud have all remained static. BOCSAR has indicated that the only upward trend in the five year trends is in robbery without a weapon (53.1%).<sup>230</sup>

**4.7** In evidence to the Committee, Deputy Commissioner Madden made the point that, apart from robbery crimes, the Redfern LAC ranks well down the list compared to other LACs:

...once you move away from the robbery crime and in terms of ranking, there is this comparison of say Redfern with other local area commands, conscious that there are eighty within the State, Redfern does not seem to figure prominently. In fact, if you looked at for instance, break and enter, it is about the 29<sup>th</sup>. This is based on OCR data that we used around February this year, somewhere in the vicinity of being 29<sup>th</sup> out of 80 local area commands or for instance, steal motor vehicle was down at 36 out of the 80 local area commands. Again the point I am making here is that whilst it sits as number one for robbery, when you look at the other volume crimes, it moves down the list quite markedly.<sup>231</sup>

**4.8** The Committee has found that there is a strong perception among members of the public, as well as among several members of the local police, that there is a very high level of crime in Redfern and Waterloo. For example, the Committee received several submissions from local residents living near the Block, who expressed great concern about the level of crime in the area and the behaviour of young children in particular.<sup>232</sup> In addition, a Constable with the Redfern LAC stated that '[r]egardless of what crime rates may state for individual months, which are largely determined by successful criminal convictions or current individual custody remands, the Redfern area suffers a major criminal element that greatly influences crime reporting.'<sup>233</sup>

<sup>230</sup> Submission 55, NSW Government, p264. Note: p264 sets out the recorded crime statistics for a group of suburbs including Redfern and Waterloo for the period 1999-2003. These statistics are reproduced as Appendix 6. The statistics include an analysis of the trends over a two year period and a five year period and were compiled by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR).

<sup>231</sup> Deputy Commissioner Madden, NSW Police, Evidence, 18 May 2004, p52

<sup>232</sup> For example, submission 11, name suppressed at request of author; Submission 13, Mr Stephen Gale; Submission 21, confidential at request of author; Submission 27, Vine and Hugo Action Group; and Submission 40, name suppressed at request of author.

<sup>233</sup> Submission 24, name suppressed at request of author, p4

## Violence against police

- 4.9 The Committee received several submissions from individual police officers stationed at the Redfern LAC detailing what they perceive to be a very high level of violence against police, particularly occurring near Redfern Railway Station and the Block. Some of those submissions recounted a disturbing number of violent incidents against police in the past few years. A number of officers included personal accounts of verbal and physical assault. We thank the officers for providing submissions to our Inquiry.

### Incidents of violence

- 4.10 In evidence to the Committee, Sergeant Huxtable, the Administrator of the Redfern Branch of the Police Association, described the level of violence experienced by officers stationed at the Redfern LAC as 'extreme':

There are extreme levels of violence. We talked about the incident prior to the riot when two police officers had their guns stolen. These are people who are prepared to mob and attack police, steal their guns and throw bricks at people's heads. People say, "We were bricked." It is a phrase that rolls out. How someone has not been killed I do not know. This is not in retaliation or to resist arrest. Of course, should someone try to resist arrest, the matter gets worse; you get 30 or 40 people set upon you. You have no option but literally to run for your life.<sup>234</sup>

- 4.11 A Senior Constable with eight years experience at the Redfern LAC described his daily experience with violence as follows:

I am not saying that other police in other commands are not subjected to this but I can say on a personal note that whilst working the street at Redfern I can guarantee that I will be abused at least twice during a shift. It is not uncommon to be driving the Police Vehicle through the Block and be rained upon by bricks and bottles. If you attempt to make an arrest in the Block area you will expect to be assaulted or missiles thrown at you and your colleagues.<sup>235</sup>

- 4.12 The Committee was also presented with information about injuries sustained by police officers on the night of the riot in February this year. The Government submission states that 36 officers reported some injury after the riot.<sup>236</sup> While this is a significant issue in itself, we note that Strike Force *Coburn* is investigating the riot and the WorkCover investigation described in paragraph 1.21 will examine occupational health and safety issues relating to the riot. The Committee will therefore not go into detail about the injuries sustained by police officers on the night of the riot; suffice to say that it is an extreme example of officers being subjected to violent assault in the course of duty.

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<sup>234</sup> Sergeant Huxtable, Branch Administrator, Redfern Branch, Police Association NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p13

<sup>235</sup> Submission 72, name suppressed at request of author, p1

<sup>236</sup> Submission 55, NSW Government, p279

**4.13** The Committee was informed that incidents of violence experienced by officers within the Redfern LAC were reflective of a pattern across the State. For example, the Director of the Police Association's Research and Resource Centre, Mr Greg Chilvers, acknowledged that there was a 'significant level of violence against police in Redfern' and also informed the Committee that the issue of violence against police was 'reaching disturbing levels across the State'.<sup>237</sup> The President of the Police Association of NSW, Mr Bob Prichard, also stated in evidence to the Committee:

What is happening in Redfern is a symptom for what is happening in public disorder hot spots all around the State. Following the events at Redfern I asked members to identify areas where they were subject to assault, ranging from minor to serious affrays. The areas identified, which are not exclusive, were Armidale, Auburn, Bankstown, Bourke, Campbelltown, Dubbo, Kempsey, Merrylands, Moree, Mount Druitt, Nowra, Surry Hills, Sydney central business district, Wagga Wagga, Warilla and Wilcannia.<sup>238</sup>

**4.14** Mr Prichard speculated that the commonality among the areas with a high number of assaults on officers included the presence of 'crime hot-spots', a lack of resources and inexperience among officers:

I have worked in several of these areas, including Redfern, and I have to say to you that if you step back and analyse the situation there are common issues that seem to repeat themselves. I think it boils down to three factors. First, look at the crime hot spots and you inevitably see lack of resources—conditions of stations, equipment, and specialist police trained to deal with high-pressure situations. That is why we have called for a dedicated, full-time operational support group [OSG] to be deployed to public disorder hot spots. Second, there has been a massive influx of young police and they tend to be deployed in the State's more turbulent areas. There is a real issue with throwing new recruits into the deep end without sufficient experience and supervision. That is why we are making the status of sergeants a priority in our upcoming award negotiations.<sup>239</sup>

**4.15** Deputy Commissioner Madden noted that a combination of the type of people police deal with and the influence of alcohol and drugs leads to confrontational situations where police officers arriving on the scene are assaulted:

Let me just take the statistics on assault police, which is a good gauge in terms of violence against police. Redfern features alongside of other city commands such as Kings Cross, City Central and Surry Hills. Indeed, City Central experiences a higher rate of assault police than does Redfern and has consistently over a number of months. But if you take into account the area in which the central CBD and the areas that we are talking about, Kings Cross, the city, Surry Hills and Redfern, and the difficulties in terms of policing that area, the type of clientele you deal with on a regular basis, the influence of alcohol, the influence of drugs, police get called to confrontational situations and that is what they are doing, they are arriving and they are being assaulted in the course of their duty.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>237</sup> Mr Chilvers, Director, Research and Resource Centre, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, pp13-14

<sup>238</sup> Mr Bob Prichard, President, Police Association of New South Wales, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p1

<sup>239</sup> *ibid*

<sup>240</sup> Deputy Commissioner Madden, NSW Police, Evidence, 18 May 2004, p71

- 4.16** Most of the acts of violence described anecdotally in submissions prepared by police officers stationed at Redfern LAC related to incidents that occurred in and around the Block and the assailants were identified as being people of Aboriginal descent. The Committee has not received sufficient information to draw conclusions about the profile of perpetrators of violence against police in the Redfern LAC. The Committee accepts, however, that at least some acts of violence against police are the product of racial and historical tensions between police and Aboriginal people. The Committee intends examining these issues in detail in the Final Report.

### Extent of violence and recording incidents

- 4.17** While the Government's submission makes no mention of violence experienced by police working in Redfern and Waterloo, the Committee received evidence on the issue from representatives of NSW Police during its hearings. Superintendent Smith advised the Committee that the Redfern LAC ranked 'about the same as other Sydney police jurisdictions in terms of the number of assaults against police'.<sup>241</sup>
- 4.18** Subsequently, the Committee was provided with a comparative table of incidents classified as 'resist/hinder/assault officer' incidents under section 58 of the *Crimes Act 1900*, drawn from the Computer Operations Program System (COPS) database. The table shows that the Redfern LAC is comparable to other inner-Sydney commands:<sup>242</sup>

#### 'Resist/hinder/assault officer' incidents under section 58 of the *Crimes Act 1900*

	Redfern	City Central	Surry Hills	Kings Cross
2001	61	49	49	62
2002	62	62	53	57
2003	62	99	38	45
2004 (to May 2004)	33	33	26	22

- 4.19** Although these statistics provide a useful comparison between four LACs of the 'resist/hinder/assault officer' incidents recorded on the COPs database, they do not show the full picture of the level of violence against police in Redfern or the other LACs. In this regard, the Committee was advised that some assaults on police may be recorded as 'Assault Incidents' rather than 'Assault *Officer* Incidents'.<sup>243</sup>
- 4.20** As to the accuracy of reporting, Mr Huxtable advised the Committee that some incidents that *occur* in the Redfern LAC are subsequently reported by officers at the police station they are attached to, which may not be the Redfern LAC:

A number of the injuries reported through the chain of command at City Central, Surry Hills, Newtown and Mascot would have been suffered in and around the

<sup>241</sup> Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p31

<sup>242</sup> Answers to questions on notice taken during evidence 25 May 2004, Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, p3

<sup>243</sup> *ibid*

Block...You go through your normal chain of command, whatever police station you are attached to.<sup>244</sup>

- 4.21** The Committee was advised that as well as the COPS database that records 'resist/hinder/assault officer' incidents, there are several other mechanisms that can be used to capture information about violence against police (although the Committee notes that none collates comprehensive statistics):

On COPS (Computer Operations Program System). The use of COPS is the most important means of recording incidents or events coming to police notice including instances of violence against police. Any assault or violence against police, regardless of whether an offender is identified, should be recorded on COPS as an event.

Register of Injuries. A register of injuries form is used to record any assaults/injuries sustained by a Police officer in the execution of his/her duties. Police tend to fill in these forms even if they have NOT lost any time from the injury sustained. The form is seen as a permanent record of the injury in case in later years a medical problem arises which may be related to the injury. The COPS event number should be cross-referenced with this form.

Workers Compensation File. A record is also made on an individual's Workers Compensation File. This record is maintained with the officer's personnel record if any time was lost.

Redfern LAC also maintains its own local folder of incidents reported by the Duty Officer of the day.<sup>245</sup>

- 4.22** NSW Police advised the Committee that the Redfern LAC has established an Injury Review Panel:

Injuries to police are initially reported to a supervisor and investigated by a Duty Officer. Redfern Local Area Command has implemented an Injury Review Panel which meets on a regular basis. The panel consists of the Local Area Commander, an OHS representative, the Local Area Manager, the Staff Administration Officer and the Duty Officer of the day. This is in addition to the Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OH&S) which convenes monthly and reviews all injuries to police.

With regard to the Injury Review Panel, each incident is analysed separately taking into consideration the type of injury, how it occurred, its severity etc. Any OH&S concerns from the OH&S Committee are also raised, as are ways in which the injury could have been prevented. The panel also examines future action that is required to be taken to minimise or prevent the incident from reoccurring

The Panel ensures the officer receives appropriate treatment options depending on the circumstances of the incident. A range of rehabilitation programs are available to the Panel. Welfare factors are also considered and if the person is off work for some time, regular welfare contacts are made. The Region may also appoint a Rehabilitation Officer. The goal of the Panel is to return to pre-injury duties as quickly as possible. Individual officer reviews and recommendations made by the Panel are maintained in

<sup>244</sup> Sergeant Huxtable, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p13

<sup>245</sup> Answers to QON taken on 25 May 2004, Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, p2

the register of injuries folder. This portfolio is the responsibility of the Local Area Manager.<sup>246</sup>

**4.23** Superintendent Smith indicated that assaults against officers at the Redfern LAC are reviewed by the panel to 'try and stop the chance and opportunity of that happening again':

In relation to the assaults, one assault against a police officer doing the job is one too many. We try to review those assaults in our injury review panel each month to try to stop the chance and opportunity of that happening again. Unfortunately, sometimes it will, and probably will continue, but the issues of rocks and bottles and other missiles being thrown at police is also one of concern and that occurs mainly in and around the Block. We have a strong position on that, that we will not allow that to occur and arrests will be made.<sup>247</sup>

**4.24** Mr Chilvers also provided the Committee with some statistics gathered by the Police Association:

Admittedly these are not official police documents, but from our research among members there have been 650 incidents of assault against police in the past three months...There are 125 incidents of riot and affray, where there have been potentially serious, dangerous situations for our members. Those incidents include an incident at Kempsey in which four police officers were threatened by 15 people carrying baseball bats and iron bars...These are incidents of violence against police that are reaching disturbing levels across the State. They are certainly exhibited very openly and publicly in Redfern, but they are serious problems facing the whole community, and it is something that requires a full community response.<sup>248</sup>

**4.25** Sergeant Huxtable proposed, during evidence to the Committee, that a new system of reporting and registering violence against police be established so that the full extent of such incidents can be recorded:

One of the other recommendations we made was adequate reporting of violent incidents. Greg touched on that. It is difficult to get any definitive figure, because there is no way of capturing this data. We need a system on the COP system which records violence against police. Under the present system, if someone throws a brick and smashes your police car, it is malicious damage. If someone throws a bottle or something near you, which happens often at the Block, it is a form of intimidation; we record it as some form of thrown missile. These are all acts of violence and intimidation against police. We need them under one distinct heading, so that you can record all those different levels, from calling you offensive names right down to serious assault on police, so that we can readily capture this data and produce it.<sup>249</sup>

**4.26** The Committee has found the evidence relating to violence against police working at the Redfern LAC to be a matter of concern. The Committee accepts the evidence presented by both the Police Association of NSW and NSW Police that, in general, the level of violence is similar to that experienced in a number of LACs. We have found it difficult, however, to

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<sup>246</sup> *ibid*

<sup>247</sup> Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p31

<sup>248</sup> Mr Chilvers, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, pp13-14

<sup>249</sup> Sergeant Huxtable, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p14



gain a clear picture of the nature and extent of violence against police in the Redfern LAC and this is due in part to the lack of a specific method of recording assaults on police. We agree that NSW Police should keep detailed and accurate records of incidents of violence against officers sustained in the course of duty in all LACs.

- 4.27** The Committee notes that included in the initiatives to improve policing in the Redfern LAC recently announced by the Minister, is a review of the existing police computer systems for recording violence against police:

The classification of incidents of violence against police in the Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS) will be reviewed to ensure police officers can readily record acts of violence against them and/or police property. This is to enable accurate and timely analysis of such offences and development of appropriate tactics to protect the police and their property from attack.<sup>250</sup>

- 4.28** The Committee agrees that the review announced by the Minister is necessary. We are also of the view that the existing databases where information about assaults on police can be captured, as explained by Superintendent Smith, are not adequate. The Committee believes that a specific system of recording incidents of violence against police sustained in the course of duty should be established. The system should enable the type and location of each incident to be recorded, as well as the details of the officer(s) concerned, to allow statistics to be collated and monitored in relation to each LAC and State-wide and to allow comparisons to be made.

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### Recommendation 10

That the Minister for Police establish a specific system of recording incidents of violence against police sustained in the course of duty. The system should enable the type and location of each incident to be recorded, as well as the details of the officer(s) concerned (and any other relevant details). The system should enable statistics to be collated and monitored in relation to each Local Area Command and State-wide and comparisons between Local Area Commands to be made.

- 4.29** The Committee notes that the Minister also announced a review of legislation relating to deliberate acts of violence and civil disorder towards police, including the adequacy of existing offences and penalties for throwing missiles at police. The Minister's announcement stated that Redfern police had identified that the offences currently available to NSW Police in cases where offenders deliberately throw objects at police officers and police vehicles are inadequate.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Hon J Watkins MP, 'Enhanced Policing in Redfern 2004, 32 Strategies and initiatives to improve policing in Redfern Local Area Command', 16 July 2004, Item 30

<sup>251</sup> *ibid*, Item 27

### Preventing violence against police and minimising harm

**4.30** The Committee is aware that violence is in some respects an inevitable part of policing, due to the physical contact officers are at times required to have with suspects and offenders and, as pointed out by the Police Association, the pattern is reflective across the State. In this regard, Deputy Commissioner Madden advised the Committee of the training and equipment all police receive to prepare them for violent incidents:

We try and prepare officers to deal with that type of event right from their training at the New South Wales Police College in terms of defensive tactics. In terms of the provision of the best equipment we can possibly have, and that includes the extendable batons, which each officer carries, it includes OC spray as an alternative to the lethal force which is provided by the Glock. Other preventative tactics, training and techniques which are as each officer undertakes a mandatory component every year. So every officer in New South Wales, operational officer, undertakes a mandatory package of defensive package training, and that includes the use of their weapon, OC, the baton and various spontaneous knife defences, etcetera, defending themselves against people attacking them with knives.<sup>252</sup>

**4.31** Superintendent Smith also noted that officers receive additional training at the Redfern LAC:

Sometimes the severity of those assaults are quite frightening. However, policing is a contact sport and they turn up every day. We provide additional training as best we can for police in terms of Redfern of OC spray. They have riot training. We have the riot equipment available to them at the police station—we are the only police station in the State to have that additional equipment.<sup>253</sup>

**4.32** In relation to training and equipment specific to the Redfern LAC, Deputy Commissioner Madden also stated:

In Redfern specifically we have identified that they will be exposed to or could be exposed to riotous behaviour and as a result over the last twelve months we have commenced in undertaking a riot training course. It is not the full operation support group course, which goes for two weeks, but it is a familiarisation with riot techniques, crowd behaviour, crowd psychology, familiarity with the equipment, the shields, the batons, the helmets and other equipment that are available to them. We then have the back up of supervisors and a range of other people with the best radio communication we can provide. Recently there was a criticism that there was a black spot in and around the Block and within a very short time we had our technicians down to identify that there was no black spot, so we are trying to ensure the best possible officer safety for those officers in the field.<sup>254</sup>

**4.33** While the additional training received by officers at the Redfern LAC no doubt assists their ability to deal with violent incidents, the Committee is concerned, however, that the kind of violence levelled at police officers in Redfern is symptomatic of the damaged relationship

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<sup>252</sup> Deputy Commissioner Madden, NSW Police, Evidence, 18 May 2004, pp71-72

<sup>253</sup> Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p31

<sup>254</sup> Deputy Commissioner Madden, NSW Police, Evidence, 18 May 2004, pp71-72

between police and the Aboriginal community. One officer stated: 'I would like to come to work without being hassled and threatened not only because of the uniform that I wear, but because of the colour of my skin'.<sup>255</sup> As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the Committee intends exploring the relationship between the police and the Aboriginal community in the next stage of its Inquiry.

**4.34** Sergeant Huxtable commented in his submission that '[u]nfortunately the prevailing view amongst police is that such violence is part and parcel of working at Redfern'.<sup>256</sup> In taking exception to this view he argued:

The government and the police force have an obligation to ensure that the police who arrive to work each day at Redfern, and for that matter at any location in New South Wales, are protected from foreseeable danger. In that regard the police at Redfern have been let down badly by both authorities. Many from both of those agencies speak of supporting Redfern Police however there is no evidence that that support extends beyond the oratory.<sup>257</sup>

**4.35** Sergeant Huxtable also argued that the establishment of a full time Operational Support Group (OSG) would assist in minimising the violence perpetrated against police. In this regard he stated: '[o]ne of the issues is a permanent OSG—qualified operational police circulating the metropolitan area, trained to deal with violent incidents, limiting the violence directed against police'.<sup>258</sup> The proposal to establish an OSG is examined elsewhere in this chapter.

**4.36** The Committee has been advised that the frequency of violence against police, and the severity of some assaults, is having a negative impact on the morale of officers. The level of distress felt by some officers was clear in some of the submissions. One officer who described four major incidents of violence against himself and his colleagues advised the Committee that violent incidents and the way they were handled created a sense of disillusionment:

These four major incidents highlight how volatile the areas were. I'm not saying the Police are without blame either. I think that the way these situations were handled both during and after left a lot to be desired. Senior Police by withdrawing and containing these situations were more thinking of the criticism that would come as a consequence of their action instead of dealing with the situation at hand. This resulted in police like myself becoming disillusioned. I felt that in my whole time in Redfern the problem was never addressed. Rather it would be 'band-aided' in the hope that it would never happen again.<sup>259</sup>

**4.37** The Committee is concerned about the effects of violence against police on the morale of officers and their long-term mental health. The Committee did not receive any information about counselling and support services available to officers at the Redfern LAC. It is the

<sup>255</sup> Submission 44, name suppressed at request of author, p11

<sup>256</sup> Submission 29, Huxtable, p2

<sup>257</sup> *ibid*

<sup>258</sup> Sergeant Huxtable, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p14

<sup>259</sup> Submission 28, Name suppressed at request of author, p3

Committee's view that the Redfern LAC needs to ensure that its officers are properly counselled and debriefed after serious incidents.

- 4.38** The Committee believes that a review of the level and type of violent incidents against police officers in the Redfern LAC should be conducted to ascertain the precise extent and nature of the problem and to identify measures to minimise acts of violence against police. The review should compare Redfern with other LACs where violence against police is similarly a problem. The Committee also believes that NSW Police should take into account the level of violence against police, and the outcome of the review, when considering the allocation of resources to the Redfern LAC.
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### **Recommendation 11**

That the Minister for Police initiate a review of the level and type of violent incidents against police officers in the Redfern Local Area Command over the past 10 years, in order to ascertain the precise extent and nature of problem and to identify measures to minimise the number of violent acts against police officers. The review should compare Redfern with other Local Area Commands where violence against police is similarly a problem.

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### **Recommendation 12**

That NSW Police take into account the level of violence against police when considering the allocation of resources to the Redfern Local Area Command in the future.

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## **Police resources**

- 4.39** The terms of reference require the Committee to examine police resources in the Redfern and Waterloo areas. As Redfern and Waterloo fall within the Redfern LAC, the Committee has therefore focused on the resources of that local area command. This section examines several resource issues including the state of the Redfern Police Station, the number and experience of officers assigned to the Redfern LAC and the Police Association's proposal to establish a permanent full-time OSG.

### **Redfern Police Station**

- 4.40** Several submissions, particularly from officers stationed at the Redfern LAC, stressed that the Redfern Police Station located in Turner Street, Redfern is desperately in need of an upgrade. One Senior Constable stated that 'the condition of the station is atrocious with cramped conditions and flea ridden carpet. Airconditioning fails, holes in the ceiling with water dripping over wires.'<sup>260</sup> The dilapidated state of the station was also raised by Mr Charlie Richardson, Coordinator of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, who also noted the effects on officers and visitors:

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<sup>260</sup> Submission 72, name suppressed at request of author, p2

Redfern police station is horrible. The sooner it can be moved to more suitable premises, the better. The current state of the police station building does nothing to help retain police officers, and nor does it inspire confidence in visitors.<sup>261</sup>

- 4.41** The Government's submission acknowledges that the station is '...inadequate for the number of officers who are attached to the Redfern LAC and it fails to meet appropriate occupational health and safety standards.'<sup>262</sup> The submission also advises that planning for a new station in the TNT Tower located near Redfern Railway Station is currently underway and it is expected to be operational in early 2005:

...the Department of Commerce has secured, on behalf of the Police Department, a five year lease with three times five year options on at least six floors of the western TNT tower. The final number of floors is dependent on the outcome of Strike Force Coburn. The new station is expected to be operational by early 2005.<sup>263</sup>

- 4.42** In June 2004 the Minister for Police, The Hon John Watkins MP, announced that \$5.6 million has been allocated for the Redfern Police Station upgrade.<sup>264</sup> The new station was described by the Minister, in response to a question without notice in the Legislative Assembly, as follows:

The project will deliver the modern, custom built police station they have been waiting for, a station they so richly deserve. The new Redfern police station will be right where the officers want it. It adjoins other local services and the train station. It has a bird's eye view of the Block. The proposed lease and fit-out will provide six floors of the former TNT Tower, secure undercover parking for police, extended ground floor space with security features including bullet proof glass, air conditioning, a secure van dock, secure designated lifts for police and prisoners, and an external ramp to ensure access for disabled visitors.<sup>265</sup>

- 4.43** Several submission makers expressed support for moving the station to the prominent TNT Tower.<sup>266</sup> The Committee also notes that the Government's submission maintains that the position of the new station will contribute to increased safety in the area:

The proposed relocation of Redfern Police Station to the TNT Tower would have an immediate benefit to safety in the Town Centre precinct. The TNT Tower is in a prominent position located between Redfern Station and the main shopping Streets.<sup>267</sup>

- 4.44** The Committee is also aware that the location of the new station, which will allow police to have a 'birds-eye view' of the Block, is causing consternation among some in the local Aboriginal community who already feel they are subject to intense surveillance. In this regard the Redfern Legal Centre stated that '...the whole Block community experiences

<sup>261</sup> Submission 70, Mr Richardson, Coordinator, Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, p2

<sup>262</sup> Submission 55, NSW Government, p303

<sup>263</sup> *ibid*

<sup>264</sup> Hon J Watkins MP, Minister for Police, 'Police Stations Master Plan Begins', *Media Release*, 22 June 2004

<sup>265</sup> Legislative Assembly, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 19 March 2004, p41

<sup>266</sup> For example, Submission 1, Mr James Walsh, p2, Submission 13, Mr Stephen Gale, p2 and Submission 42, Aboriginal Housing Company, p2

<sup>267</sup> Submission 55, NSW Government, p196

intense surveillance. There is a continuous police presence at Redfern Station end of Eveleigh Street and frequent police vehicle movements through the area.<sup>268</sup> Reverend Crews, Chairman of the Exodus Foundation, put the issue in an historical context:

There is also in a way a blindness to the suffering that a lot of people have got. I was just coming up here and I was driving across the Block. There were all these police at the top of the Block. I was talking to one of the Aboriginal people from the stolen generation and he and his friends, as young kids, used to swim in a river. On the hill overlooking the river were the welfare. Every now and then the welfare would come down and pluck out a kid and put him in Kinchela or somewhere like that. Now you have these people who are in their forties and fifties now. When they see the welfare or the authorities on the top of a hill, their minds go back to when they were kids. ... Doing that just causes more riots because it brings back all the pain that these people suffer.<sup>269</sup>

- 4.45** The Committee is mindful that the position of the new station may exacerbate the existing unease that many in the Aboriginal community have about over-policing. Care must be taken to minimise the feeling of constant supervision experienced by the Block community, in order to promote constructive relationships between the police and the community and a much-needed sense of autonomy. The Committee is aware that the great difficulty lies in achieving this and balancing it with vigilant policing. These issues will be explored in the next stage of the Committee's Inquiry.

### **Staffing**

- 4.46** Several staffing issues at the Redfern LAC were brought to the attention of the Committee in submissions and in evidence. In this section the Committee examines staff numbers, staff turnover and the level of experience among officers.
- 4.47** Other staffing issues, including the employment of Aboriginal police officers and the role of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, have also been raised with the Committee. As noted previously, the Committee intends to examine the relationship between the police and the Aboriginal community in the second stage of its Inquiry and will include Aboriginal staffing issues within that analysis.

### ***Staffing levels***

- 4.48** The number of officers stationed at the Redfern LAC was criticised by several submission makers. For example, in his submission Sergeant Huxtable argued that '[t]he only way that crime can be reduced in Redfern, in the short time, is by an increase in police numbers. At present there are insufficient police to provide either a physical deterrent or to solve crimes committed.'<sup>270</sup> In addition, Sergeant Frank Reitano, the Redfern Branch Delegate of the Police Association, argued in his submission and in evidence that there are not enough

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<sup>268</sup> Submission 50, Redfern Legal Centre, p3

<sup>269</sup> Reverend William Crews, Chairman, Exodus Foundation, Evidence, 26 May 2004, p9

<sup>270</sup> Submission 29, Sergeant Huxtable, p18

officers dedicated to investigating robberies at the Redfern LAC. (Police strategies to deal with robberies are examined in detail later in this chapter.)

**4.49** Deputy Commissioner Madden advised that the Redfern LAC has an ‘authorized strength’ of 164 officers (ie the number of positions in the corporate structure) and an ‘actual strength’ of 180 providing front line service in the Redfern local area command.<sup>271</sup>

**4.50** Superintendent Smith stated that while Local Area Commanders could always do with more police ‘...the reality is that they have to come from somewhere.’<sup>272</sup> He advised the Committee of the staffing resources currently available at the Redfern LAC, including resources that can be drawn from other areas of the State in certain circumstances.

My job as the Local Area Commander of Redfern is to manage with the police and resources I have available to me. We are at full strength. We have 164 officers, and that moves up to 180 if we include our overstrength probationers. Basically that includes our mounted police unit as well. I have the ability to deploy that group throughout the week on intelligence-based reports, and we do that. Beyond the local capacity, I can also approach the region and we have access to a range of resources there from the transit police to the dog squad, the robbery unit, anti-theft and Vikings.

Beyond that we have State resources that I can call on through the State crime command on agreement by the deputy. We have enough police to get the job done. In June last year the deputy granted us eight additional police. Those police form Operation Concertina, which is a high visibility operation in and around Redfern railway station. I have the police; it is my job to ensure they are effectively deployed. I believe we do that. If I need additional resources I can call on them.<sup>273</sup>

**4.51** Some inquiry participants expressed the view that community liaison officer numbers needed increasing rather than the number of sworn officers. In this regard, Mr Tony Pooley, Councillor for the City of Sydney, argued that:

While Council acknowledges that the incident on Lawson Street on 15<sup>th</sup> February was unfortunate, it is suggested that committing more resources to Police in community liaison roles (including upgrading such positions to the sergeant level) especially Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, and increasing dialogue with the local Aboriginal leaders may be beneficial in developing a more culturally appropriate policing model for the area.<sup>274</sup>

**4.52** Views were also expressed that increasing staff numbers of itself would not necessarily reduce crime or improve policing in the area. For example, the Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) argued that an increase in staffing numbers was only a ‘partial solution’:

A major strategic objective of policing in Redfern/Waterloo ought to be the arrest of local drug dealers, the identity of whom is known in many cases. In our view, there would be little point in a significant increase in police numbers in the Redfern Waterloo area unless this happens. We also say that an increase in the number of

<sup>271</sup> Deputy Commissioner Madden, NSW Police, Evidence, 18 May 2004, p52

<sup>272</sup> Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p19

<sup>273</sup> *ibid*

<sup>274</sup> Submission 45, Mr Pooley, City of Sydney Council, p6

police per se is only a partial solution. Of critical importance is a very substantial increase in the community resources to address the service gaps highlighted in this submission.<sup>275</sup>

- 4.53** The Committee notes that, as well as the AMS, several other inquiry participants expressed frustration at the relative failure of the Redfern LAC to successfully arrest and charge known drug dealers. The Committee intends to examine the issue of police strategies to deal with drug related crime in the second stage of its Inquiry. The Committee notes its agreement with the comments made by the AMS that an increase in police presence is only a partial solution.
- 4.54** Despite claims that the number of officers at the Redfern LAC needs to be increased, insufficient evidence was presented for the Committee to draw the conclusion that the Redfern LAC is understaffed in total. The Committee also notes the comments made by NSW Police (which are borne out by the BOCSAR statistics) that the level of most crimes perpetrated in the area has either reduced or stabilised. The Committee is conscious of the warnings from members of the Aboriginal community that over-policing can increase tensions. We also agree that there is a need for more community liaison officer roles at Redfern. The Committee is also wary of assuming that an increase in human resources, particularly in rank and file officers, will in itself will reduce crime and improve policing generally.
- 4.55** The Committee notes that the recent initiatives announced by the Minister for Police included an increase in staff at the Redfern LAC to 'around 220'.<sup>276</sup> This increase is made up of a range of new positions, secondments and transfers of positions into the Redfern LAC, as summarised below.
- **5 permanent duty positions:** NSW Police will allocate an additional five permanent general duty positions to Redfern, to be filled by experienced officers. In six months a further review will be conducted of general duties staffing levels.<sup>277</sup>
  - **4 criminal investigation positions:** Three sergeant positions (Investigations Manager, Crime Coordinator and Criminal Investigation Team Leader) and a constable position will be allocated to criminal investigation. The NSW Police Workforce Planning Unit reviewed Redfern LAC and recommended an increase in positions from 164 to 168, with a focus on criminal investigation capabilities.<sup>278</sup>
  - **6 criminal investigators seconded:** Six criminal investigators to be seconded to Redfern LAC, to target serious drug and robbery crime, for 6 months minimum.<sup>279</sup>
  - **12 officers for Operation Concertinas:** Operation Concertinas is to be retained, and the number of officers assigned to the operation is to be increased by 12, to a total of 20 officers.<sup>280</sup> (Operation Concertinas is discussed in paragraph 4.132)

<sup>275</sup> Submission 47, Aboriginal Medical Service, p5

<sup>276</sup> Hon J Watkins MP, Minister for Police, 'Redfern Crime Plan: Enhanced numbers, training, response and relations', *Media Release*, 16 July 2004

<sup>277</sup> Hon J Watkins MP, 'Enhanced Policing in Redfern 2004 - 32 Strategies and initiatives to improve policing in Redfern Local Area Command', 16 July 2004, Item 13

<sup>278</sup> *ibid*, Item 9

<sup>279</sup> *ibid*, Item 10



- **29 TAG officers relocated to Redfern LAC:** The 29 member City Central Target Action Group will be relocated from Regent Street to the Redfern Police Station. This will result in an increase in police visibility and activity in and around Redfern Station and other “hot spots” within Redfern LAC and bordering commands with a focus on serious criminal activities including robbery and drug activities.<sup>281</sup>

**4.56** The Minister also stated that current vacancies at the Redfern LAC would be filled as a matter of priority, including one duty officer position, an unidentified number of supervisor positions and an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (ACLO) position.<sup>282</sup> With regard to the ACLO position the Minister stated there are currently three ACLOs with a fourth position to be filled:

ACLOs are usually recruited from within the community they will be working in to ensure they are aware of the specific cultural issues. Recruitment processes for the fourth position are underway and the position is expected to be filled by August. Having a full complement of ACLOs will substantially increase the community-police partnership approach to solving problems in the area.<sup>283</sup>

**4.57** The Committee strongly supports the filling of existing vacancies as soon as possible, including the vacant ACLO position. The Committee is unclear, however, as to how many of the four ACLO positions are currently vacant. In this regard, Superintendent Smith advised the Committee on 25 May 2004 that ‘a third’ ACLO position was to be advertised ‘that week’.<sup>284</sup> The Committee urges the Redfern LAC to fill all four positions as soon as possible. The role and effectiveness of ACLOs will be examined by the Committee in the second stage of the Inquiry.

**4.58** The Committee, however, greets the increase in officers announced by the Minister with caution, for the reasons set out in paragraph 4.54. We are particularly mindful of views expressed that the difficult problems faced by the police in Redfern, in terms of both investigating crime and the relationship between police and the local community, cannot be solved by increased police numbers alone.

**4.59** The Committee is therefore of the view that the review of the Minister’s initiatives, to be undertaken in six months time,<sup>285</sup> should carefully examine the impact of the increase in officers on the ability of the Redfern LAC to investigate crime and on the local community. The review should also identify whether the new positions and secondments, and the existing vacancies, have been filled.

<sup>280</sup> *ibid*, Item 4

<sup>281</sup> *ibid*, Item 3

<sup>282</sup> *ibid*, Item 19, 20 and 24

<sup>283</sup> *ibid*, Item 24

<sup>284</sup> Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p28

<sup>285</sup> Hon J Watkins MP, ‘Enhanced Policing in Redfern 2004 - 32 Strategies and initiatives to improve policing in Redfern Local Area Command’, 16 July 2004, Item 32

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**Recommendation 13**

That the Minister for Police, as part of the six month review of the initiatives announced on 16 July 2004, carefully examine the impact of the increase in officers on the ability of the Redfern Local Area Command to investigate crime and on the local community. The review should also identify the actual and authorised strength of the Redfern Local Area Command, the number of officers on leave and whether the new positions and secondments and the existing vacancies have been filled.

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***Turnover of staff***

- 4.60** It was suggested to the Committee that there is a high turnover of staff at the Redfern LAC. For example, one submission referred to the ‘constant stream of rookies coming through with little or no experience in dealing with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.’<sup>286</sup> Ms Deirdre Cheers, the Senior Manager of the South East Sydney area for Barnardos, who expressed general support for the Redfern LAC, referred to the ‘rapid’ turnover of officers:

Our observation is that Redfern police are managed appropriately. The local commander there does a good job in trying to provide effective policing strategies. They are very visible in the community. We have had a lot to do with the youth liaison officer positions, as I have said, and have felt that they are very effective. Staff feel that sometimes the police presence is hampered by the rapid turnover of officers. I understand that is often a problem for numbers of government departments and for many different reasons. Turnover prevents that continuity and trust developing so, again, that is a problem.<sup>287</sup>

- 4.61** As to the reasons for staff leaving the Redfern LAC, a range of issues were raised. Some submissions from officers stationed at Redfern indicated that police are under stress and may be ‘burnt out’. One officer argued that there is no incentive for police to go to Redfern because the conditions they must put up with on the street and in the station itself are ‘terrible’. He also suggested that ‘...Police should provide incentive for Police at Redfern perhaps serving your tenure and be allowed a choice of their next placement.’<sup>288</sup>

- 4.62** Superintendent Smith expressed the view that there is not a high turnover of staff at the Redfern LAC, noting that he does not have ‘...a revolving door of police wanting to get out of Redfern. Police come there; they are committed to their job’.<sup>289</sup> Similarly, Deputy Commissioner Madden advised the Committee that the turnover of staff at the Redfern LAC in the last 12 months is not disproportionate to similar LACs:

An analysis of staff movements (from SAP) between 23 June 2003 and 25 May 2004 for Redfern Local Area Command and other similar commands within the Inner Metropolitan Region demonstrates that the number of officers transferring out of

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<sup>286</sup> Submission 53, Confidential at request of author

<sup>287</sup> Ms Cheers, Barnardos, Evidence, 4 June 2004, pp5-6

<sup>288</sup> Submission 72, name suppressed at request of author, p2

<sup>289</sup> Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p19

Redfern LAC over the last 11 months is not disproportionate to similar size commands within the Inner Metropolitan Region. At Redfern, for Constables and Senior Constables there were 20 officers who transferred from Redfern, 8 and 12 respectively. At Surry Hills LAC there were 15 Senior Constables and 10 Constables and at northern beaches there were 7 Senior Constables and 8 Constables.<sup>290</sup>

- 4.63** Whether or not the turnover of staff at Redfern LAC is greater or the same as other LACs, it appears to the Committee that the lack of continuity among officers is having a negative impact on the local community. In the context of police/youth mentor programs, Mr Robert Welsh, Chairperson of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council described the impact of the rotation of staff:

So the problem that we have, and that I had with trying to set up and structure mentor programs and that kind of stuff, is that the on-rolling, how they move in and out of the Redfern Police Station, as they get to know the community they are then pushed off and moved along. So you can set up and structure mentors but you are going to have to do it on an annual basis basically because the police are just rolling in and just moving on: bringing them into Redfern to train off their cadetships, given the quick fast-learning experience of dealing with the Aboriginal people in Redfern and then pushing them off to somewhere else.<sup>291</sup>

- 4.64** Mr Gary Moore, the CEO of NCOSS indicated that the capacity to build relationships between the Police and the community is hampered by the ‘significant rotation of staff’:

... It is also put to us constantly that Redfern - and Waterloo, but Redfern - numbers remain below level on establishment and have done and continue to do, but one of the real issues is that it almost appears that the place becomes a dumping ground for inexperienced police who stay there very short periods of time. ... it is put to us that the capacity to build relationships, the capacity to do things in proper police community relating ways, particularly in this community, are undermined by the significant rotation of staff, by the fact that there are a number of positions that are not filled. ... that is a real concern about how you ever hope to promote strong active police community relations in these sorts of communities and build some trust and some social capital etcetera along the way.<sup>292</sup>

- 4.65** Mr Charlie Richardson, Coordinator of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, stated that with the loss of staff comes a loss of corporate memory which also creates difficulties in building trust between the police and the community:

... much of the local police ‘population’ is also, to some extent, transient. The frequent turnover of Commanders and of police Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers is of particular concern, but other police officers also seem to move on with unhelpful frequency. We do not say this to denigrate those officers that leave. It is a difficult posting. However, it must be recognised that with a frequent turnover there is a loss of corporate memory and of the wisdom that might otherwise be built up in regard to the area in which they work. We must keep a Commander who will stay around long enough to put long term strategies in place. We must also keep

<sup>290</sup> Answers to questions on notice taken during evidence 18 May 2004, Deputy Commissioner Madden, NSW Police, Qu 1, Turnover of staff

<sup>291</sup> Mr Welsh, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p11

<sup>292</sup> Mr Gary Moore, NCOSS, Evidence, 18 May 2004, pp31-32

Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers in place long-term, because the very nature of liaison between groups that are often in conflict (Aboriginal people and police) demands it. It is necessary to build up trust, it is necessary that the personal qualities of the officer become respected.<sup>293</sup>

- 4.66** The Committee notes that the evidence provided to the Committee indicates that the turnover of officers at the Redfern LAC appears to be mainly among probationary constables.

### *Level of experience*

- 4.67** An issue that has stood out, more so than the number of officers stationed at the Redfern LAC, is the level of experience of those officers. While some submission makers expressed support for young police officers working in Redfern and Waterloo,<sup>294</sup> an overwhelming number of inquiry participants highlighted the impact that the lack of experience among officers working in the area is having on the local community.

- 4.68** For example, in its submission the Aboriginal Housing Company referred to the disrespectful and racist behaviour of some inexperienced officers toward members of the Aboriginal community:

Generally, the Redfern command deserves to be applauded for their cooperative, proactive approach to policing in this area. The efforts of the Redfern command are sometimes undermined by the stupid action of a few inexperienced police in the area. We have observed that on occasion new recruits to Redfern have shown disrespect to law-abiding members of the Aboriginal community. We have heard racist taunts and just general loutish behaviour by rookies with an Arnold Schwarzenegger attitude. The inexperience of police officers like this can really damage relations in Redfern and this issue should be addressed.<sup>295</sup>

- 4.69** Ms Deirdre Cheers of Barnardos expressed concern that younger officers can sometimes appear anxious:

The other observation made by Barnardos staff is that the younger police officers sometimes appear anxious about the hotspots or the troublesome areas. Again, that is not helpful, because the community perception of that is very acute and very high. Overall, I think there is a need for as experienced staff as possible to be working in those front-line sorts of positions, whatever the department is.<sup>296</sup>

- 4.70** Ms Helen Campbell, Director of the Redfern Legal Centre, stated that inexperienced police make 'community relations objectives challenging'. She also noted the reported behaviour of some officers at the memorial service for TJ Hickey:

... the high turnover of young, inexperienced frontline staff makes the achievement of community relations objectives challenging, to say the least. We commend the restraint of the police shown on the night of the riot. They showed courage in very

<sup>293</sup> Submission 70, Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, p2

<sup>294</sup> For example, Submission 40, name suppressed at request of author

<sup>295</sup> Submission 42, Aboriginal Housing Company, p2

<sup>296</sup> Ms Cheers, Barnardos, Evidence, 4 June 2004, pp5-6

difficult circumstances. Were it not for the hysterical and biased media response they might even have been able to delay arrests until after the funeral. But anyone who attended the memorial service for TJ the following week, including my staff who can, if required, attest to this tribunal, would have observed inappropriate and disruptive behaviour shown by street police. This is part of an ongoing culture—a wider culture—of racism and disrespect for human rights. Redfern should not be the first police job after training school, or the place that everyone wants to get out of as soon as possible. We need experienced police who take this posting with pride. It may be with enhanced pay or promotional opportunities for those who demonstrate Aboriginal cultural training and experience.<sup>297</sup>

- 4.71** Ms Marcia Ella Duncan, Chairperson of the Regional Council of ATSIC, pointed out, in the context of the relationship between police and the Aboriginal community, that the focus on young inexperienced officers is not the only issue:

Certainly I agree that is an issue and it could well be a critical issue in the Redfern/Waterloo area, but do not be fooled for a minute that older and more mature police are better, because sometimes they are not and sometimes it is the older and more mature police that maintain that culture.<sup>298</sup>

- 4.72** As to the number of inexperienced officers, Sergeant Reitano advised the Committee that:

... in February 31 per cent of our staff were probationary constables and a further 38 per cent had less than five years service so, if my maths is right, 69 per cent of our staff had under five years service at Redfern. Obviously, that includes plainclothes and everyone else, but when you take the proportion of probationary constables to front-line general duty officers, that percentage comes probably closer to 50 per cent of our general duty staff are probationary constables.<sup>299</sup>

- 4.73** Deputy Commissioner Madden informed the Committee that 35% of the officers at the Redfern LAC are probationary constables (ie officers at some point within their first twelve months of service). He also stated that this percentage reflects the average in the State:

Interestingly if you look across inner metropolitan region and greater metropolitan region, that is in fact the average. The Redfern command does not stand out as an area that has a large number of inexperienced police, nor does it come out as one that has very few inexperienced police. It has the same number on average as most other commands.<sup>300</sup>

- 4.74** Deputy Commissioner Madden noted that the proportion of young officers is due to the recruitment of approximately two and a half thousand officers in the last few years:

That is not surprising when you think of the massive recruitment that the organization has gone through in the last few years. We have recruited some two and a half thousand officers in just a few years to rebuild our strength because we have been

<sup>297</sup> Ms Helen Campbell, Director, Redfern Legal Centre, Evidence, 26 May 2004, p36

<sup>298</sup> Ms Marcia Ella Duncan, ATSIC, Evidence, 18 May 2004, p39

<sup>299</sup> Sergeant Reitano, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, pp3-4

<sup>300</sup> Deputy Commissioner Madden, NSW Police, Evidence, 18 May 2004, p52

falling in strength. So as a result these officers need to be trained and they do go to metropolitan commands and that is where the area of greatest need is.<sup>301</sup>

**4.75** Mr Bob Prichard, President of the Police Association expressed the view ‘...because we are the youngest police force in Australia in most local area commands we have very junior police’.<sup>302</sup> The Director of the Police Association’s Research and Resource Centre, Mr Greg Chilvers, elaborated on the issue as follows:

This is a problem we have been looking at for quite some time. A number of factors have contributed to the difficulty in terms of experience levels. Certainly one of them is that we have had a massive increase in numbers in recent years. As Mr Pritchard said, we are the youngest police force in the country not only in terms of age but in terms of experience. Even though we have older people coming into the job it does not impact on experience levels. We have also had a loss in the key area of experience in supervision over many years. Part of the problem is the way the occupation is structured in terms of promotion. There are simply not enough promotional positions available for people coming up so there has been a drain from the organisation in that area as well...

There has also been a crisis, which we accept, in experience levels and retaining good investigators and detectives. We actively participated in the recent detectives review in an attempt to improve conditions for detectives so that we can retain their experience as well. There have been significant changes in the organisation in recent times. The problem of experience levels is certainly obvious in Redfern, but it is throughout the State as well.<sup>303</sup>

**4.76** Sergeant Huxtable argued that the lack of experience is due to the difficulty in attracting experienced staff to the Redfern LAC:

I also want to touch on the issue of experience levels. The problem is how to attract experienced police to Redfern. We cannot. Someone asked why we did not move experienced police from Newtown to Redfern and from Marrickville to Newtown. But Newtown and Marrickville do not have any experienced police. We need to be looking at giving incentives to police to stay in Redfern for three or four more years—doing the hard yards. For example, custody manager is a sergeant's job; it is a very important job that involves looking after prisoners and custody issues. I believe that in the last two advertising rounds Redfern has had vacancies and we have not got one application. That is because it is so far down the list of people's choices. When you look at Redfern and the custody issues and the high-risk clientele—members of the Aboriginal community—it is outrageous. We cannot adequately task our command with people to perform the job.<sup>304</sup>

**4.77** A Constable stationed at the Redfern LAC speculated in his submission to the Committee that the lack of experienced officers at the Redfern LAC was a consequence of the effects of the Wood Royal Commission and over-concern about police accountability:

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<sup>301</sup> *ibid*

<sup>302</sup> Mr Prichard, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p7

<sup>303</sup> *ibid*

<sup>304</sup> Sergeant Huxtable, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 200, p9

The level of policing experience within the Redfern Command is extremely junior and inexperienced, which results in flawed investigations, crime control and supervision of staff in general. This occurs in many Policing Commands and I believe is a result of the Wood Royal Commission into Policing in NSW as the effects are still being felt from this Inquiry. Senior Police have left the NSW police Force leaving a substantial experience gap between management and operations. Another symptom of this is that the NSW Police is too concerned with Policing accountability and corruption than actual policing. As a consequence officers are being promoted who show a more organisation minded approach to policing than officers who prove themselves time and time again in actual operational policing successes. This proves a general failure of Police hierarchy in understanding core policing failures.<sup>305</sup>

**4.78** The Committee accepts that the level of experience among officers at the Redfern LAC may be similar to other LACs. The Committee also notes the reasons for the high proportion of junior officers State-wide. The Committee's concern, however, is the impact of that lack of experience in the particularly troubled area of Redfern and Waterloo.

**4.79** In this regard, Mr Clive Small expressed the view that '...while the police as a whole has a high proportion of very junior and inexperienced officers, the impact of this is far greater on the more difficult commands such as Redfern'.<sup>306</sup> Similarly, Sergeant Reitano stated that '[it] is probably not very different from other commands but in a LAC such as Redfern, with the sorts of problems that it has, it could perhaps be beneficial to have police with a little bit more experience in the suburb'.<sup>307</sup>

**4.80** The senior management of the Redfern LAC contended in evidence to the Committee that, while many of its officers are inexperienced, they are enthusiastic and are provided with adequate support. For example, Detective Inspector Darren Bennet, the Crime Manager at Redfern LAC stated that in relation to the level of experience: '...it is very junior but they are second to none in the State in their enthusiasm and skill level'.<sup>308</sup> Deputy Commissioner Madden, also argued that probationary constables in Redfern become experienced very quickly:

I suppose the question is, are there a large number of young officers, inexperienced officers at Redfern. Probably the command and many others would argue that an officer in Redfern after a very short period of time is an experienced officer. They work alongside experienced officers. There are excellent supervisors within the commands. There are excellent field training officers. There are excellent detectives and there is good supervision and leadership in the command. Whilst there may be a large number of probationary constables, I believe that a probationary constable who serves at Redfern will be a very experienced officer in a very short period of time.<sup>309</sup>

**4.81** Superintendent Smith described to the Committee the type of support that senior officers provide to the junior recruits:

<sup>305</sup> Submission 24, name suppressed at request of author, p12

<sup>306</sup> Submission 80, Mr Clive Small, p6

<sup>307</sup> Sergeant Reitano, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June, p5

<sup>308</sup> Detective Inspector Darren Bennet, Crime Manager, Redfern, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p40

<sup>309</sup> Deputy Commissioner Madden, NSW Police, Evidence, 18 May 2004, p52

About 35 per cent of police are in their first year and probably half have less than five years service. With that youthfulness and enthusiasm comes the sprinkling of experience that I provide. The team leaders are sergeants of police, and they are on every shift. They are available and they go out in the field with the constables. Above that I have a duty officer, who is an inspector of police and who ran police stations seven years ago. The duty officer is there around the clock to provide leadership for junior police in Redfern-Waterloo. We have senior police on duty throughout the day and night, seven days a week, to work with police who may not necessarily have years of service but are still committed to do the job.<sup>310</sup>

**4.82** It is clear to the Committee that despite this support, the level of inexperience among officers stationed at Redfern LAC creates problems, especially for the Aboriginal community, as noted in paragraphs 4.67-4.71. Various measures to encourage officers to stay at Redfern and to increase the level of experienced officers were posited in submissions and in evidence. At one end of the spectrum, the Redfern Legal Centre recommended in its submission that ‘inexperienced police should not be posted to Redfern’.<sup>311</sup>

**4.83** Mr Bob Prichard, President of the Police Association, stated that the Association is advocating ‘...that we must get very experienced supervisors, especially into areas such as Redfern’.<sup>312</sup> The Police Association also argued that more training is required:

Police new to the command should receive a reasonable in depth orientation to the community and relevant issues. Selection of officers to police in an area with the specific problems of Redfern and Waterloo should ensure that those police are sensitive to the needs of the community and are trained in the unique policing strategies that are required. These officers should have an understanding of the cultural differences of the local community. This strategy has been used successfully in other commands such as Cabramatta, where the local community cultural mix requires particular understanding from police.<sup>313</sup>

**4.84** An officer stationed at the Redfern LAC suggested that ‘...officers at Redfern should be stationed there for a fixed tenure, of perhaps 4 years. At the end of this period of tenure the officer can elect to be transferred, although this should not be forced’.<sup>314</sup>

**4.85** Some submission makers proposed incentives to encourage officers to stay at Redfern for longer periods. For example, Mr Richardson of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development proposed that incentives should be offered to reduce the turnover of staff and increase experience levels:

To keep officers in place may require incentives for them to stay. It is not an easy posting. Therefore it may be necessary to add a ‘loading’ to the pay of officers in difficult postings such as Redfern and Waterloo, and/or to award points toward

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<sup>310</sup> Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p19

<sup>311</sup> Submission 50, Redfern Legal Centre, p3

<sup>312</sup> Mr Prichard, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p7

<sup>313</sup> Submission 59, Police Association of NSW, p8

<sup>314</sup> Submission 43, confidential at request of author



promotion or transfer to more attractive postings for those who stay for a period of, say, five years or more.<sup>315</sup>

- 4.86** Senior Constable Shannon White suggested that officers who stay at Redfern for a certain length of time should be eligible for favourable transfers:

I propose that Redfern be classified as a disadvantaged station, allowing officers who work there for a certain period of time be given special consideration in relation to the Tenure and Transfer Policy. I have worked in the inner city area for seven years and because of the current Tenure and Transfer Policy, I will not be considered for a position at a station close to my family. The issue in relation to Redfern having special consideration in relation to the Tenure and Transfer Policy was raised and supported at the Association Meeting of the Redfern Branch after the riot.<sup>316</sup>

- 4.87** It was suggested to the Committee that a change in the ranking of the Redfern LAC from a Level 2 LAC to a Level 1 could impact on the level of experience among its officers. Local Area Commands are ranked from Level 1 to Level 3. The rankings are relevant to the rate of pay accorded to senior officers. The NSW Police Association has recommended that the Redfern LAC be upgraded to a Level 1 command:

We have been advocating—and this is one of the major focuses of our next enterprise bargaining—a remuneration model that will attempt to retain that experience level so that people can be rewarded for staying as operational police officers at a supervisory level without having to move out of that in the promotional scheme. This is a very significant issue for us and it is an issue that the other police agencies throughout the country will face at some stage as well.<sup>317</sup>

The status of Redfern and a number of other LACs was the subject of a NSW Police evaluation committee which met over 4 days resulting in a report dated August 2003. The Police Association was represented on this committee, as is the normal practice. It was recommended that 5 LACs, including Redfern be upgraded from Level 2 to Level 1, a further 4 LACs be upgraded from Level 3 to Level 2 and 2 LACs be downgraded from Level 1 to Level 2. At this point the recommendations of the committee have not been acted on (we presume due to financial implications – around \$400,000 pa).<sup>318</sup>

- 4.88** The Police Association advised that the upgrade would mean that senior positions would be upgraded without providing any more resources or numbers:

The effect of this change would be to provide more senior positions (and pay) to the Command Management Team. The Commander, Duty Officers (Inspector to Chief Inspector), Crime Manager (Inspector to Chief Inspector), Crime Coordinator (Sergeant to Senior Sergeant) and Investigations Manager (Sergeant to Senior Sergeant) would all be upgraded. It would not of itself provide any more resources or numbers. It would however, ensure equity in status and pay based on the complexity of the managerial roles, as it would arguable recognise those Commands that are more

<sup>315</sup> Submission 70, Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, p2

<sup>316</sup> Submission 82, Senior Constable Shannon White, p2

<sup>317</sup> Mr Prichard, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p7

<sup>318</sup> Correspondence from Mr Greg Chilvers, Director, Research and Resource Centre, NSW Police Association, to Committee, 10 June 2004

challenging. The evaluations are based on Hay methodology and attempt to objectively compare the positions in the Local Area Commands based on an overall complexity of the job being done.<sup>319</sup>

**4.89** The Police Association argued that an upgrade would ensure that the best officers were attracted to the Redfern LAC:

An upgrading would attract the best and most senior officers to managerial positions and therefore serve to provide greater assistance to more junior officers. It would serve to act as an incentive to attract and retain such officers to places such as Redfern, which are generally difficult to fill. We believe that the recommendations of the evaluation committee should be implemented as a part of the overall strategy to better support officers in difficult and challenging locations.<sup>320</sup>

**4.90** Ms Clover Moore, Member for Bligh, advised the Committee that she has previously lobbied for the upgrade:

When Commissioner Ryan was the Commissioner of Police he downgraded commands like Kings Cross and Redfern without any reference to the local community or to me as the local member. So I followed up by making representations to John Watkins, and I asked that he return to level 1 Kings Cross, Surry Hills and Redfern. That was because all those commands deal with complex social problems that impact on policing and that are not captured in the mathematical formulae. It was because of the nature of the work they do in those commands and the intensity and complexity.<sup>321</sup>

**4.91** As the preceding discussion illustrates, the level of experience among officers at the Redfern LAC and the related issue of police turnover received a great deal of comment during the first stage of the Committee's Inquiry. The Committee is concerned about the impact that the level of experience is having on members of the local community, particularly the local Aboriginal community.

**4.92** The Committee did not receive any comments to the effect that new or young officers were failing to undertake their core policing duties adequately.

**4.93** The Committee notes that the Minister's announcement included two initiatives to address the level of experience among officers at the Redfern LAC. First, the Minister announced that the Commissioner's Executive Team has endorsed "Directed Transfers" to increase experience levels within the Redfern LAC:

The Executive recognises the immediate need to place experienced officers at Redfern to stem the number of robberies and related offences occurring. ... In May this year, the Region Commander, Assistant Commissioner Bob Waites, directed the transfer of four experienced investigators from other commands to work at Redfern to meet these important and immediate community needs. This approach will continue to ensure experience levels remain high.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> *ibid*

<sup>320</sup> *ibid*

<sup>321</sup> Ms Moore, Mayor of City of Sydney and Member for Bligh, Evidence, 25 May 2004, pp77-78

<sup>322</sup> Hon J Watkins MP, 'Enhanced Policing in Redfern 2004, 32 Strategies and initiatives to improve policing in Redfern Local Area Command', 16 July 2004, Item 11

**4.94** Second, the Minister announced a 12 month suspension on the placement of probationary constables at the Redfern LAC, stating:

NSW Police has grown substantially in recent years resulting in the placement of many probationary constables at Redfern and other commands. Submissions from the NSW Police Association and community organisations to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into government services at Redfern and the intensity of the riot at Redfern in February justify this special measure.<sup>323</sup>

**4.95** The Committee strongly supports the 12 month suspension on the placement of probationary constables at the Redfern LAC. The Committee feels that the experience level of officers stationed at Redfern is an issue of great importance and believes the Minister should, as part of his review of all the initiatives in his package in six months, pay particular attention to this issue. The Committee also intends further examining the issue of experience among officers in the context of the relationship between police and the local Aboriginal community in the second stage of the Inquiry.

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#### **Recommendation 14**

That the Minister for Police, as part of the six month review of the initiatives announced on 16 July 2004, carefully re-examine the level of experience among officers stationed at the Redfern Local Area Command, including:

- whether it is in the interest of the Redfern Local Area Command and the local community to extend the suspension of the placement of probationary constables beyond the initial 12 month period
- whether any ‘directed transfers’ have been made
- whether any other measures or incentives to encourage officers to go to the Redfern Local Area Command and/or to remain there for a constructive length of time are necessary.

**4.96** The Minister also announced two initiatives relating to the relationship between police and the Aboriginal community. As the evidence received by the Committee indicated that the inexperience of some officers was impacting negatively on the Aboriginal community, these initiatives are discussed briefly below. The Committee notes, however, that a full examination of the relationship between the police and the Aboriginal community will be undertaken in the second stage of the Inquiry.

**4.97** First, in addition to Aboriginal cultural awareness training provided to new recruits at the Police College, police at the Redfern LAC will undergo additional cultural awareness training. The Minister stated that ‘training developed in consultation with local Aboriginal community leaders, organisations and police will strengthen relations and maximise outcomes for police and the Aboriginal community in Redfern.’<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> *ibid*, Item 12

<sup>324</sup> *ibid*, Item 14

**4.98** The Committee was advised by Superintendent Smith in evidence that officers new to the Redfern LAC currently undergo Aboriginal cultural awareness training and a new training program is to commence in June next year:

New police officers have a four-day induction period, which includes some hours spent talking to Aboriginal community liaison officers [ACLOs] about local Aboriginal issues. Barry Williams, a civilian officer who comes from the academy, trains all people in Redfern about traditional Aboriginal awareness and cultural issues. Half the staff members have gone through that training and the other half will complete their training in June. We are starting a new Aboriginal program with Tranby College in June next year.<sup>325</sup>

**4.99** It is unclear whether the Minister's announcement refers to training in addition to that described by Superintendent Smith. Several submission makers and witnesses raised the issue of Aboriginal cultural awareness training and the Committee intends to examine this in the context of the relationship between the police and the Aboriginal community in the second stage of the Inquiry. On the basis of the evidence presented to the Committee so far we strongly support additional cultural awareness training for officers at the Redfern LAC.

**4.100** The Minister also announced that Superintendent Smith, as the Redfern Local Area Commander, will be 'strongly supported' in his current initiative to implement Local Area Command Aboriginal Consultative Committees (LACACCs), an initiative recommended in the *NSW Police Aboriginal Strategic Direction 2003-2006*:

As stated in the NSW Police Aboriginal Strategic Direction, solutions to many of the crime problems confronting Aboriginal people are best identified by their community and resolved through a working partnership with police. Redfern LAC is currently discussing with Aboriginal people the best ways to establish and develop new senior and youth advisory committees that can demonstrate and deliver long-term, consistent attention to the concerns and needs of Aboriginal people. ...The new committees will maximise the police and community partnerships approach to problems in the area.<sup>326</sup>

**4.101** The Committee supports the concept of the LACACCs and is interested to learn the outcomes of the current discussions between the Redfern LAC and local Aboriginal people about the best ways to establish the LACACCs, to which the Minister refers. Once the senior and youth LACACCs are established, the Committee looks forward to receiving feedback from them in the second stage of the Inquiry. The Committee also notes that the Minister's initiatives relating to youth liaison officers appear to be a positive step toward improving the relationship between the police and the large youth population in Redfern.<sup>327</sup>

**4.102** With regard to the *Aboriginal Strategic Direction*, the Committee notes that in evidence Ms Brenda McDonnell, the Coordinator of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, expressed concern that the document had not been implemented:

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<sup>325</sup> Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p28

<sup>326</sup> Hon J Watkins MP, 'Enhanced Policing in Redfern 2004, 32 Strategies and initiatives to improve policing in Redfern Local Area Command', 16 July 2004, Item 15

<sup>327</sup> *ibid*, Items 22 and 23

...what fell into my lap and a colleague's lap was the report *Aboriginal Strategic Direction for 2003-2006*. I am sorry, but the Aboriginal community were not aware of this. If this were implemented, it would be wonderful. But it is like any other report on the stolen generation, the removal of children, and deaths in custody. I have consulted so many Aboriginal communities and come up with so many reports, but they have not been acted upon. That is why I am really concerned about this report as well.<sup>328</sup>

- 4.103** The Committee will be calling further evidence in relation to the *NSW Police Aboriginal Strategic Direction 2003-2006* during the second stage of the Inquiry. The Committee is of the view that the Minister should undertake an audit of the implementation of relevant initiatives contained in the *Aboriginal Strategic Direction* in the Redfern LAC. Where relevant initiatives have not been implemented the Minister make their implementation a matter of priority. The Committee is also of the view that as part of the Minister's six month review of the initiatives announced on 16 July 2004, the Minister should consider the impact of the initiatives on the local Aboriginal community with reference to the *Aboriginal Strategic Direction*.

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### Recommendation 15

That the Minister for Police undertake an audit of the implementation of the initiatives contained in the *NSW Police Aboriginal Strategic Direction 2003-2006* in the Redfern Local Area Command and that where relevant initiatives have not been implemented the Minister make their implementation a matter of priority.

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### Recommendation 16

That the Minister for Police, as part of the six month review of the initiatives announced on 16 July 2004, consider the impact of the initiatives on the local Aboriginal community with reference to the *NSW Police Aboriginal Strategic Direction 2003-2006*.

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## Proposal for an Operational Support Group

- 4.104** In submissions and in oral evidence to the Committee the Police Association and a number of individual police officers called for the establishment of a permanent full-time Operational Support Group (OSG).
- 4.105** An OSG is a network of officers with particular training to respond to special situations including protests and demonstrations, chemical, biological and radiological emergencies and security needs at court complexes.<sup>329</sup> The Committee was informed that currently a

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<sup>328</sup> Ms Brenda McDonnell, Coordinator, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Evidence, 7 June 2004, pp23-24

<sup>329</sup> Submission 55, NSW Government, p371

single part-time OSG services the State. The Government submission describes the current OSG as follows:

The unit participates in both reactive and proactive policing strategies, including high visibility policing (HVP) operations within the city area and crowd management situations including protests and demonstrations. They also contribute to Vikings Operations in the Inner Metropolitan Region, Greater Metropolitan Region and Southern Region. The unit is also involved in local proactive operations conducted by LACs and ceremonial engagements. This unit falls within the responsibility of the Redfern LAC.<sup>330</sup>

**4.106** The Committee was advised that the Police Association has recommended that '[t]here should be a permanent OSG readily available to the Redfern LAC, or have as many police as possible that are attached to Redfern receive similar training to the OSG'.<sup>331</sup> The Police Association's submission described the proposal as follows:

The role of a permanent full-time OSG is to provide state-wide operational support on a 24-hour basis to Local Area Commands and Regions in situations falling within the charter of the OSG. The specially trained and equipped personnel can be deployed to attend to complex operations or situations beyond the normal function of police in the area of incident. A permanent full-time tactical presence is required immediately in the metropolitan area. The high level of violence directed at police at "The Block" and the potential for that violence to escalate require the support of trained operatives who can respond in a timely manner.<sup>332</sup>

**4.107** Mr Greg Chilvers, Director of the Police Association's Research and Resource Centre, elaborated on the proposal in evidence to the Committee:

We propose to have a permanent, full-time operational support group to provide statewide operational support on a 24-hour basis to local area commands and regions, for example, at events where large crowds are anticipated, at protests and demonstrations, supporting policing operations during emergency incidents, and so on. Given that the majority of these sorts of events occur in the metropolitan area it is our proposal to have the OSG basically stationed in the metropolitan area but to have people at all the hot spots particularly trained in OSG operations and with the ability to call people out on a 24-hour basis to support police in these situations....

It is particularly for large-scale crowd control. Officers are trained to deal with highly volatile situations. An OSG would deal predominantly with volatile situations, where particular skills are required in crowd control and in the management of situations that could potentially turn dangerous for our members. We equip them and train them in the appropriate use of safety equipment in those situations, and they provide a rapid response.<sup>333</sup>

**4.108** Sergeant Huxtable was critical of the current part-time OSG arrangement, particularly in relation to February's riot:

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<sup>330</sup> *ibid*

<sup>331</sup> Submission 59, Police Association of NSW, p8

<sup>332</sup> *ibid*, Attachment: Submission to Strike Force *Coburn*, p1

<sup>333</sup> Mr Greg Chilvers, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p2

Because the OSG police we have now are part-timers—they perform the function of general duties and all other areas—the problem on the night was getting those people to Redfern in a timely fashion. In fact, at one stage the EKG got on the radio and spoke to channels Charlie, Echo, Foxtrot and Delta, which is effectively half the city and they got five OSG police. When you look at a few short years ago, there was an incident in the city where some member of the Kurdish community occupied the Greek Consul's office and if you look at the review of what the police did on that day and the review of what happened at Redfern, they are almost identical, so the police force has had a real problem learning from the problems and getting a remedy.<sup>334</sup>

**4.109** Sergeant Huxtable expressed support for a full-time OSG:

The only remedy here is a full-time OSG. We are talking about Redfern, we are talking about closing the railway station. If that riot had have gone for another six hours, through to, say 10.00 a.m. on Monday morning and all the train lines at Redfern had been closed, the city would have been closed down. When you look at the current environment with terrorism and that threat, we desperately need a permanent full-time OSG response.<sup>335</sup>

**4.110** A Senior Constable stated in his submission that: 'I feel Police need more training for riot style situations. If this requires a full time OSG commitment in the area then I would support that as a good idea'.<sup>336</sup> Similarly, Sergeant Reitano argued that:

The prevalence of riots and violent incidents leading to serious assaults upon police officers in the Redfern LAC, requires an increased resource commitment to the Redfern LAC and the introduction of a permanent Operational Support Group (OSG) to decrease the risk of harm for police.<sup>337</sup>

**4.111** The Committee did not receive sufficient evidence, representing a range of views on the Police Association's recommendation, in order to properly evaluate the matter. The Committee is also aware that the Police Association provided an extensive submission to Strike Force *Coburn* arguing for the establishment of a full-time OSG. The Committee therefore feels that it is unable to comment on the merits of this proposal.

**4.112** The Committee notes that the Minister's recent announcement contained several initiatives relating to 'enhanced incident response' that relate to the Police Association's proposal. These included the establishment of a 24-hour, seven day, OSG to operate through the Operation Vikings Street Crime Unit, OSG training for officers within that Unit and centralised coordination of OSG Policy. The initiatives are summarised below:

- **24 hr, seven day OSG to operate through the Vikings Street Crime Unit:** The Vikings Street Crime Unit will be staffed by trained OSG personnel from October to respond to incidents of civil disorder, public order management and other major

<sup>334</sup> Sergeant Huxtable, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p5

<sup>335</sup> *ibid*

<sup>336</sup> Submission 28, Name suppressed at request of author, p4

<sup>337</sup> Submission 38, Sergeant Reitano, p1

incidents. Officers will be available to support LAC-based OSG officers or as a discrete group.<sup>338</sup>

- **OSG training:** Future officers rotated through the Vikings Street Crime Unit will receive OSG training. Officers will be rotated every six months to increase the number of OSG-trained police who can respond to civil disorder and public order management. Officers rotated through Vikings will return to their local commands with OSG skills and knowledge.<sup>339</sup>
- **OSG policy to be coordinated by the Special Protection Group:** The SPG will assume responsibility for central coordination of OSG policy, procedures and training.<sup>340</sup>

**4.113** The Minister also announced several initiatives relating to riot training and equipment. For example, basic riot training and familiarity with riot equipment will be introduced to recruit training.<sup>341</sup> Redfern police will continue to receive specific training for use during riots and officers in neighbouring commands will also undergo riot training 'to ensure maximum numbers of police are trained and available for deployment.'<sup>342</sup> The Minister also announced that NSW Police Incident and Emergency Management Training will be upgraded to include specific training for commanders and supervisors in the management and resolution of civil disorder incidents and public order management events. Training will reflect lessons learnt from the Redfern riot.<sup>343</sup>

**4.114** As for equipment, the Minister announced that new riot equipment is to be provided to the Redfern LAC including riot helmets, shields and leg protectors.<sup>344</sup> A modern Command and Control Vehicle will be 'made available' on a 24 hour basis:

The vehicle will be deployed to scenes of civil disorder and public order management and other major incidents at short notice. Officers at the Redfern riot identified that access to a fully-equipped command post (Vehicle) would significantly assist in establishing command and control of major incidents. A vehicle with equipment to assist in commanding and coordinating the police response to major incidents has been made available 24 hours and day seven days a week. Commanders will be encouraged to use this vehicle as a command post at major incidents.<sup>345</sup>

**4.115** The Minister also announced that a state-wide assessment of local public order response capabilities, risk assessment systems and profiles will be conducted:

All commands will be required to reassess their procedures to ensure they achieve maximum public order response capacity. This will include standardised intelligence

<sup>338</sup> Hon J Watkins MP, 'Enhanced Policing in Redfern 2004, 32 Strategies and initiatives to improve policing in Redfern Local Area Command', 16 July 2004, Item 6

<sup>339</sup> *ibid*, Item 5

<sup>340</sup> *ibid*, Item 7

<sup>341</sup> *ibid*, Item 28

<sup>342</sup> *ibid*, Item 18

<sup>343</sup> *ibid*, Item 17

<sup>344</sup> *ibid*, Item 8

<sup>345</sup> *ibid*, Item 16



collection plans, developing resource strategies (including triggers to activate criminal investigators) and support units. Commands will also be required to review their risk assessment processes to ensure location profiles are current and operationally sound. All police will be required to familiarise themselves with the current Standing Operating Procedures for Public Order Management and ensure local plans are developed in line with these procedures.<sup>346</sup>

- 4.116** As the Minister's announcement was made shortly before the finalisation of this report, the Committee has been unable to ascertain the response of interested individuals and organisations to the Minister's announcement. Nor has the Committee received a copy of the Strike Force *Coburn* report. As stated in paragraph 4.111, the Committee did not receive sufficient evidence on this matter to comment on the merit of the Police Association's proposal. Similarly, the Committee reserves its comments on the Minister's initiatives.

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<sup>346</sup> *ibid*, Item 29

## Policing robberies

**4.117** The Committee was advised that robberies constitute the most significant crime problem in the Redfern LAC. In this regard, Deputy Commissioner Madden stated that the Redfern LAC ranked number one for robberies in the State:

The thing that stands out in terms of Redfern's specific crimes are robberies. It is ranked number one in the State for robberies. The way in which I examine robberies is obviously through business plans and targets and Redfern in the latter part of 2003 was not number one but it has become number one in more recent months.<sup>347</sup>

**4.118** Deputy Commissioner Madden also indicated that the main problem is with 'street robberies', perpetrated against people walking in the area:

The nature of the robberies are such that it is street robberies, particularly of young victims walking in and around the Block area or around the Lawson Street area, many of them on their way back from the universities or local colleges. That is the young people who are out on the street, travelling along and often preyed upon in the form of making it stealing from the person. That is the biggest issue and you will notice from the BOCSAR stats that it shows whilst robbery with a weapon has declined over a period, over the five year period, robbery without a weapon has in fact increased by over 50%. That is the nature of the problem in terms of robbery. It is not the violent bank robberies that we are talking about, we are talking about robberies upon the person and most of the offences are robbery with aggravation, that is pushing, shoving, punching the victim and removing their bag or removing their wallet, things that can be easily used, such as cash or cards or mobile phones.<sup>348</sup>

**4.119** Deputy Commissioner Madden also pointed out that 'break and enter' crimes were not high compared to other LACs:

The break and enters, as indicated, it is not high on the list in terms of ranking but certainly in terms of if you were a resident of Redfern or Waterloo it would be of concern. Again, I make the point in terms of ranking, not to indicate that it is not a problem for that command but in comparison with other commands across the 80 local area commands it does not figure prominently. But again what you find there is removal of property, computers, jewellery, cash, things that are easily disposed of through windows, through doors, first floor apartments to about the fourth floor apartments or even in some of the commercial premises that they are taking from.<sup>349</sup>

**4.120** The Committee was advised that the problem areas for robberies were the Redfern Railway Station, and to a lesser extent Waterloo.<sup>350</sup> The Redfern Legal Centre also noted that '[t]here is a higher than average rate of bag snatches at Redfern Station, a frequency ascribed to the drug dealing activity undertaken nearby.'<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Deputy Commissioner Madden, NSW Police, Evidence, 18 May 2004, p53

<sup>348</sup> *ibid*

<sup>349</sup> *ibid*, p54

<sup>350</sup> Superintendent Smith, NSW Police, Evidence, 25 May 2004, p19

<sup>351</sup> Submission 50, Redfern Legal Centre, p3

**4.121** Several submission makers also highlighted the high incidence of robberies in the Redfern area. For example in its submission the Vine and Hugo Action Group details a range of crimes frequently committed in their neighbourhood, including robberies:

We get burgled like many other people living in Sydney – these seem to be primarily opportunistic crimes, we have been robbed and mugged, some at knife point. A bag-snatching almost seems minor. We've had distraught cab drivers, who have just been robbed, knocking on our doors for help. We've had visitors who've arrived from the airport early in the morning, only to have their cab driver robbed at knife point while they sit helpless in the back seat. Not surprisingly, booking a cab is no guarantee that it will turn up.<sup>352</sup>

**4.122** The high robbery rate in the Redfern LAC was also discussed by Sergeant Huxtable in his submission:

Redfern has more street robberies than any other command in NSW. Since I arrived at Redfern in January 2001 there have been 2744 robberies, this is more than the combined total of the Southern Region and Western Region. In the first three months of this year there have been 162 people robbed at Redfern. This is more than the total of Bankstown, Mr Druitt, Cabramatta and Green Valley combined.<sup>353</sup>

**4.123** Sergeant Huxtable emphasised that the available figures only reflect reported crimes and speculated that some victims may choose to leave the area quickly rather than stay and report the crime:

The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) estimate that 48% of robberies go unreported. I believe that that is a conservative figure for the Redfern Command. Why? Many robberies are perpetrated on victims who are heading to and are near the Redfern Railway Station and once robbed choose to dust themselves off and continue home and get away from the area rather than wait for police to attend as they have little to no description of the offender/s due to the speed and ferocity of the attack and the stress that it brings.<sup>354</sup>

**4.124** Mr Steven Gale, a local resident, also noted in the context of crime in general that many incidents go unreported:

Policing in this area is of prime importance for all residents. The area has a notoriously high rate of crime. Over the last ten years it has been my experience as a resident in the area around the Block (Bounded by Eveleigh, Vine, Louis and Lawson Streets) has been one of increasing levels of crime, drug abuse and antisocial behaviour. In my opinion less than half of all crime is reported. I state this on the basis of the amount of crime I am told about by victims and the amount that actually gets reported by the same victims...The police obviously cannot act upon crime that is not reported. However, the crime that goes unreported generally does so as people often perceive that there is no point in reporting crime for the reason that there is nothing the police can do. This in itself is a self defeating circle.<sup>355</sup>

<sup>352</sup> Submission 27, Vine and Hugo Action Group, p8

<sup>353</sup> Submission 29, Sergeant Huxtable, p3

<sup>354</sup> *ibid*, p5

<sup>355</sup> Submission 13, Mr Steven Gale, pp1-2

**4.125** Sergeant Huxtable also argued that another reason why the robbery figures may not be accurate is due to the legal definitions of various types of robberies:

A typical steal from the person offence involves the offender running to the victim, usually female, from behind and snatching her handbag and running on. Such an incident would be recorded by police as a Steal from the Person. Steal from the Person offences are recorded as a stealing and are separate to robberies. ... Often they will drag the victim along the ground and punch and kick the victim. So the progression from a steal from the person offence to robbery is slender. The recording of steal from the person offences as a stealing, in the same category of shoplifting, is inappropriate. ...

In the first three months of this year there have been 133 steal from the person offences in the Redfern LAC. In addition to the 162 robberies there is a combined total of 295. If the BOCSAR reporting figures are accurate there is possible total of 437 people robbed in the first three months of this year (14 a day) in the Redfern LAC. When one robbery offender was arrested in 2003 he admitted to robbing on average five people per day.<sup>356</sup>

**4.126** Deputy Commissioner Madden described the State-wide strategies employed by the Redfern LAC to deal with robberies as follows:

Many of these offences occur in and around the Block area so we are looking at roads that pass what is known as the Block. These are significant and in fact they were so much so earlier last year that we created Operation Castings, which was a specific operation where local area command staff worked with the metropolitan robbery unit to focus on robberies that were occurring on taxi drivers. That operation went for a few months and resulted in a number of arrests of people who were responsible for conducting that form of crime. ...

In terms of the responses by the command to the crimes that exist, there are organizational strategies which are then adopted and changed to suit local area command. The first organizational priority is what we refer to as high visibility policing, so we are actually referring to uniformed police, marked cars in and around the areas of trouble, so wherever we can we put uniformed police because not only does it deter offenders, but it also gives that reassurance and the people of New South Wales deserve that in terms of having constant reassurance of police presence.

We also have partnerships with councils and others in terms of CCTV. So again I am referring to the use of State-wide strategies that are then deployed in the local area commands. For instance, if you take a crime prevention officer at Redfern, there is an organizational commitment to environmental design. That is, we try and design through change in buildings, locations, lighting, design crime out of areas and the local crime prevention officer works with the councils and works in terms of safety audits to look at areas around Redfern where they can design out potential for crime, so, alleyways that are poorly lit or other things that they can get to actually try and reduce that problem. ...

One of the best strategies we have adopted is Operation Concertinas, which commenced in June 2003, which is the provision of additional officers, eight additional officers from neighbouring commands, specifically in Redfern to target

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<sup>356</sup> Submission 29, Sergeant Huxtable, p6

robberies and high visibility policing around the top of the Block area and in the Block area.<sup>357</sup>

**4.127** Deputy Commissioner Madden noted that repeat offenders and repeat locations where robberies occur are targeted by police:

We target repeat offenders, repeat victims and repeat locations. Under the repeat offenders title we use a program called Suspect Target Management Plan. That is based on the principle that a small number of offenders are responsible for a large amount of crime that exists. The STMP allows officers to go through, again, certain criteria, to identify high risk offenders, those people who are continuing to perpetrate crime and they are then targeted by the command. Indeed, Redfern has adopted the STMP the HRO strategy and has at least seven offenders as we speak who are targeted by teams within their command because they are prolific offenders.

As indicated, we then move into the areas of repeat victims, where we give advice and counsel and then locations, by saturating those areas with police or using high visibility policing. There are Vikings, there are arrangements with the metropolitan robbery unit, there is support given by the State crime command. Indeed, there has been something like 26 requests for assistance to the State crime command in a little over eighteen months, which have been responded to on all but one occasion, which was withdrawn.<sup>358</sup>

**4.128** The Committee heard views expressed that the resources dedicated to investigating robberies at the Redfern LAC are insufficient. For example, Mr Reitano described the current resources allocated to deal with robberies as follows:

At the moment we have four police officers out of the 19 who are allocated to investigate robberies. That is four on paper, however, when you have a look, one at the moment is on annual leave and the other one is on leave at court. As of today, we have one officer who is investigating robberies at Redfern and he is a very junior officer. ...One officer who is specifically allocated to investigate robberies at the moment at Redfern. To show you just how disproportionate that is, in the first six days of June, Redfern has had 16 robberies, including a serial robber, who is going around robbing elderly people.<sup>359</sup>

**4.129** As noted in paragraph 4.48, Sergeant Huxtable expressed the view that the only way to reduce crime in Redfern in the short term is to increase police numbers. In relation to robberies, he argued that:

The investigation of robbery and drug supply is a specialised and time-consuming endeavour and as such requires experienced investigators who have adequate time to devote to the problem. In many other commands the experienced detectives investigate robberies. In Redfern they are investigated by junior uniformed police.<sup>360</sup>

**4.130** Senior Constable Shannon White shares the view that the Redfern LAC is insufficiently staffed to tackle robberies:

<sup>357</sup> Deputy Commissioner Madden, NSW Police, Evidence, 18 May 2004, pp53-54

<sup>358</sup> *ibid*, p54

<sup>359</sup> Sergeant Reitano, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p4

<sup>360</sup> Submission 29, Sergeant Huxtable, p18

Unfortunately, Redfern continually have the most amount of robberies per month, yet an understaffed office, mainly comprising of junior staff are trying to manage and solve this problem. Compared to City Central Local Area Command, Redfern do not have a hope in hell of trying to manage the robbery problem. City Central have a robbery unit comprising of 8 officers with a Detective Sergeant in charge and at least 4 of the officers designated detectives. At present the Redfern Robbery Unit consists of 4 officers, two Detective Senior Constables, one who is on leave, and two officers with less than three years experience each. As you can see this is a common thread at Redfern. Lack of staff and lack of experience.<sup>361</sup>

**4.131** Sergeant Reitano advised the Committee that the Redfern Branch of the Police Association has called for the establishment of 'a full-time robbery unit at Redfern LAC, comprising a minimum of eight police officers to investigate the disproportionate number of robbery and steal from person offences that were occurring in the LAC.'<sup>362</sup> Mr Reitano spoke of the need for a specially resourced robbery unit as follows:

...What Redfern desperately needs is a properly resourced robbery unit. Our figures for robbery are absolutely abysmal. We have had 16 in six days. We are headed towards 100 for this month. Last month we had about 60. Other LACs have approached the problem in a different way. They have employed a specialist approach, for example, Operation Nitsana out at Liverpool... They have been able to reduce their robberies down to about 30 a month. They have got four people full time investigating robberies.

What we need is a minimum of eight, preferably investigators, plainclothes officers, ordinary detectives, dedicated full time to investigating robberies in the Redfern LAC. The units need to be set up either along the lines of Nitsana or along the lines of another unit that is operating at City Central, which has had six officers and an analyst going for quite some time. They have been able to reduce robberies down to approximately 30 or so per month. Redfern has never had a proper full-time unit dedicated solely to investigating robberies. We have always had piecemeal units, either one, two or three officers, and it is just not enough.<sup>363</sup>

**4.132** Mr Reitano also advised that the Redfern Branch has called for Operation Concertinas to be made a permanent operation, with a minimum of 30 full-time staff.<sup>364</sup> Operation Concertinas was described in the Government's submission as follows:

Redfern LAC has been running Operation Concertinas since mid 2003 as a part of its crime reduction strategies. The Operation is part of the Redfern Intelligence Response Team which has 22 officers under the command of a team leader and also includes a drug team (6) and High Visibility Policing Unit (5).

Concertinas consists of eight police officers seconded from other LACs in the Inner Metropolitan Region. Officers are seconded for a three month period. The main activity of Operation Concertinas is HVP with a proactive focus, specifically targeting robbery, steal from person, drug related crime and anti-social behaviour in the area close to Redfern Station. Concertinas has also been involved in covert activities. Up to

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<sup>361</sup> Submission 82, Senior Constable Shannon White, p2

<sup>362</sup> Sergeant Reitano, Police Association of NSW, Evidence, 8 June 2004, p3

<sup>363</sup> *ibid*, pp4-5

<sup>364</sup> *ibid*, p3

mid March 2004, Concertinas conducted 30 operations with 199 charges and submitted 405 intelligence reports. Concertinas is not a permanent operation.<sup>365</sup>

- 4.133** The Committee is concerned at the level of robbery crime in Redfern and Waterloo, particularly around Redfern Railway Station and the Block. The Committee is also concerned about the level of resources dedicated to tackling robbery crime. There is inconsistency, however, in the views expressed by individual officers stationed at Redfern LAC and the senior management, and the Committee has been unable to ascertain the real extent of the need for additional resources.
- 4.134** The Minister's initiatives included two that relate to resources dedicated to investigating robberies. First, the Minister announced that Operation Concertinas 'is to be retained', and the number of officers assigned to the operation is to be increased by 12 to a total of 20 officers 'to ensure ongoing high visibility policing'.<sup>366</sup> Second, the Minister announced that an additional six criminal investigators will be provided to the Redfern LAC, to better target serious drug and robbery crime, for a minimum of six months.<sup>367</sup>
- 4.135** The Committee supports the allocation of additional resources to areas that have an identified need. The Committee notes that the Minister's announcement regarding Operation Concertinas falls short of making it a permanent operation. The Committee also notes that the six additional officers provided to the Redfern LAC to target robberies (and drug crime) are seconded rather than permanent positions. The Committee believes that the Minister's 6 month review of the initiatives should incorporate an assessment as to whether sufficient resources are dedicated to robberies, with regard to crime statistics and the views of the officers working to target robberies.

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### Recommendation 17

That the Minister for Police, as part of the six month review of the initiatives announced on 16 July 2004, should incorporate an assessment as to whether sufficient resources at the Redfern Local Area Command are dedicated to robberies, with regard to crime statistics and the views of the officers working to target robberies.

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### Conclusion

- 4.136** In this Chapter the Committee has addressed a number of important issues relating to policing strategies and resources in Redfern and Waterloo, which were raised in evidence. In the second stage of the Inquiry we will be addressing a number of broader policing issues, including the relationship between police and the Aboriginal community, police strategies to deal with drug-related crime and coordination between police and other agencies.

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<sup>365</sup> Submission 55, NSW Government, 268

<sup>366</sup> Hon J Watkins MP, 'Enhanced Policing in Redfern 2004, 32 Strategies and initiatives to improve policing in Redfern Local Area Command', 16 July 2004, Item 4

<sup>367</sup> *ibid*, Item 10

- 4.137** The Committee has been able to include in this Chapter a brief discussion of the package of initiatives announced by the Minister for Police on 16 July 2004. The Committee has had only a short amount of time to examine these initiatives. The Committee is of the view that, in addition to the six month review of the initiatives announced by the Minister, an 18 month review should also be undertaken. An 18 month review would enable the initiatives to be in place for a sufficient amount of time to gauge their effectiveness. As part of the 18 month review the matters addressed in Recommendations 13, 14, 16 and 17 should be examined.

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**Recommendation 18**

That the Minister for Police, in addition to the six month review of the initiatives announced on 16 July 2004, undertake an 18 month review of the initiatives. As part of the 18 month review the matters addressed in Recommendations 13, 14, 16 and 17 should be examined.

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- 4.138** The Committee notes that it has not yet received the Strike Force *Coburn* report. The Minister has advised that he has sought the advice of the Coroner and the Crown Solicitor concerning the release of the report. The Committee is of the view that it is in the public interest for the report to be released as soon as possible. The Committee notes that it may be necessary that relevant parts of the report relating to the Coroner's inquiry into the death of TJ Hickey, or sensitive operational matters, be kept confidential.

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**Recommendation 19**

That the Minister for Police release the final report of Strike Force *Coburn* as soon as possible with, if necessary, parts relating to the Coroner's Inquiry into the death of TJ Hickey or to sensitive operational matters, kept confidential.

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