



29 DEC 2021

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MINISTER FOR POLICE; ROAD SAFETY; DEFENCE INDUSTRY; VETERANS ISSUES

Our Ref: 70-28573
Your Ref: PER/CORC/1118 and 1121/2018

Ms Dawn Wright
Manager Listings
Office of the State Coroner
Level 10, Central Law Courts
501 Hay Street
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Ms Wright

Thank you for your correspondence of 28 October 2021 regarding the recommendations following Coroner Urquhart's inquest into the deaths of Mr Christopher Drage and Mr Trisjack Simpson.

The Western Australia Police Force advise a review of the relevant policies, procedures and training, pertinent to the three recommendations, was undertaken to determine the efficacy of implementing them. I am advised the WA Police Force position on each recommendation is as follows:

Recommendation 1:

That the Western Australian Police Force introduces a policy to the effect that, whenever possible, probationary constables performing operational duties should be partnered with a police officer with a post-probationary operational experience of at least one year.

A detailed memorandum was provided to the Coroner outlining the WA Police Force position on this proposed recommendation, with a copy provided to myself. The Coroner referred to the memorandum at paragraph 163 of his findings and acknowledged the issues with making a strict policy requiring at least one-year post-probationary experience. It is noted the recommendation was amended to include the caveat "whenever possible".

Subsequently, the WA Police Force advise an additional factor has been identified which makes such a policy change impractical, namely the recruitment of an additional 950 police officers over and above attrition rates, over a four-year period. The vast majority of these officers will enter the agency as a recruit and be required to complete a two-year probationary period (inclusive of 28 weeks of Recruit Training.) The effect of this will be rapidly increasing Probationer numbers. This situation will temporarily skew the ratio of Probationers to officers above 4th year Constable, hampering any implementation of the Coroner's recommendation.

The WA Police Force therefore believes the current policy for Probationary Deployment is appropriate and suitable to the WA Police Force needs and community expectations of service.

Recommendation 2

All police officers with operational duties in a defined area receive an induction upon being posted to the area for the first time that includes an identification of the boundaries and significant physical, demographic, cultural and socioeconomic features of that area.

The WA Police Force will conduct a review on a range of matters through focus groups involving police employees. The induction process will be incorporated into these sessions to help inform the organisational response to this recommendation. It is anticipated this process will be finalised in the first half of 2022.

Accordingly, the WA Police Force advise a further review, in light of this recommendation, will also be undertaken of the Induction Policy with a view to updating Induction Procedures, Guidelines, and associated documents.

Recommendation 3

In order to enhance and strengthen relationships between police and Aboriginal people, newly promoted 1st class constables and senior constables at metropolitan and regional police stations should undertake immersive, face-to-face cultural awareness training.

The WA Police Force holds a significant cohort of First Class and Senior Constables. The constant progression of officers to these ranks would create significant ongoing resourcing, logistics and service delivery implications, should a program of face-to-face training in immersive cultural awareness was introduced.

The WA Police Force developed a compulsory training component in Aboriginal Cultural Awareness, for all staff. This launched in July 2020, with 94% of the WA Police Force now qualified in this training. This online training includes presentations by Aboriginal people and senior members of the WA Police Force.

Further, the existing First Class and Senior Constable appointment assessments have been reviewed and updated. The new online appointment modules for both ranks include Aboriginal Cultural Awareness and Cultural Safety and were developed in consultation with the WA Police Force Aboriginal Affairs Division. It has been designed to further the messages within the Reconciliation Action Plan and WA Police Force strategies to improve cultural awareness and relationships with Indigenous communities. The WA Police Force anticipate the updated version being launched in conjunction with the launch of a new Learning Management System, in late-December 2021.

Throughout 2021, the WA Police Force developed training for new leadership groups, with a focus on contemporary topics impacting the WA Police Force and the community. These include:

- The New to Rank Sergeant program, which incorporates Aboriginal Cultural Awareness and Cultural Safety sessions developed in collaboration with the WA Police Force Aboriginal Affairs Division. These three-hour sessions are designed to enhance the ability of new leaders to better understand Aboriginal culture, history and past traumas, for improved application of their police skills and knowledge in the work environment. These sessions incorporate interactive learning which improves understanding and ability to provide support for the community, focusing on Aboriginal safety.
- The New to Rank Senior Sergeant program includes a 90-minute session with Professor Colleen Hayward, Head of Kurongkurl Katitjin, Edith Cowan University's Centre for Indigenous Education and Research, who provides an engaging session on Applied Cultural Leadership, underpinned by her personal and professional knowledge on this topic.
- The New to Rank Inspector and Superintendent program was held at end of July 2021. The two-hour Aboriginal and Cultural session provided an in-depth case study discussion on how the District Office and community stakeholders engaged and managed the community, following the death of a young Aboriginal male in Kalgoorlie. This provided first hand insights, learnings and opportunities for improved future engagement with Aboriginal communities within a district.

All training sessions focus on the importance of navigating cultural matters by building effective relationships, providing tangible actions to better engage with local Aboriginal communities, encompassing sensitivity and respect and to share lessons learnt from the WA Police Force Senior Executive where sound community engagement strategies were incorporated. These ongoing face-to-face training programs will continue to be delivered to new and emergent leaders, who are charged with guiding, enabling and supporting junior officers to better understand cultural issues and improve their engagement and relationships with Aboriginal communities.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to comment on the recommendations and I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



**HON PAUL PAPALIA CSC MLA
MINISTER FOR POLICE**

16 DEC 2021