



Police Federation
of Australia

The National Voice of Policing

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17 October 2011

The Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia
PO Box 6021
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Dear Committee Secretary

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO THE USE 'FLY-IN FLY-OUT WORKFORCE PRACTICES

IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) represents the professional and industrial interests of Australia's 56,000 police officers. As such we have a keen interest on the above inquiry.

We have examined the Committee's Terms of Reference and believe that the following sections of the Terms of Reference are relevant to police –

- *the effect of a non-resident FIFO/DIDO workforce on established communities, including community wellbeing, services and infrastructure;*
- *the impact on communities (of) sending large numbers of FIFO/DIDO workers to mine sites;*
- *provision of services, infrastructure and housing availability for FIFO/DIDO workforce employees;*
- *strategies to optimise FIFO/DIDO experience for employees and their families, communities and industry; and*
- *current initiatives and responses of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.*

In relation to the above five (5) ToR identified by us we make the following comments. Whilst we make these comments on behalf of police, they are likely also

to be relevant to other service providers in the affected communities including health professionals, school teachers and the like.

- Police officers do not have the luxury of being part of a FIFO/DIDO workforce.
- Current policing strategies are predicated on ‘community policing initiatives’ and as such, Police officers are expected to be domiciled in, and become part of, the community in which they serve.
- The role of the local police officer in a rural, regional or remote community is far more than simply a ‘law enforcer’. There are numerous examples of where police officers use their expertise to work on establishing strong community interaction through local community policing initiatives. This includes assisting to resolve local conflicts and engaging in crime prevention activities with local youth.
- In many FIFO/DIDO locations, the cost of housing, family essentials (groceries and other services) and other infrastructure is extremely expensive. This places a great financial burden on police officers and their families, as well as their respective state/territory police departments/governments. For example, the extra competition for housing, owned or rented, pushes up the price of housing for police officers and other service providers in the community.
- Where large sections of the community are FIFO/DIDO workforces, it becomes far more difficult to create a sense of community for those who are domiciled in such locations.
- By and large police officers cannot earn any-where near the amount of income that mine employees receive. It therefore becomes difficult at times for police departments/governments to retain these members as many seek higher incomes by resigning from the police service and taking up mine employment. We understand that some research has already been undertaken by some jurisdictions indicating that this will be a big issue over coming years as the mining boom continues.
- If there was a major change in the current FIFO/DIDO practices in remote mining towns to a more permanent population, it would require additional infrastructure and community services in those towns as the “permanent” population expands – this would mean a bigger police presence in those towns over time as the towns become a larger meeting point for social purposes – entertainment, medical services, domestic interaction, etc.
- If that was the case, then governments would need to be mindful that if incentives are going to be introduced to encourage population migration to regional centres over the medium to long term, the expansion of local communities over time must also include a built-in capacity, based on “scientific” or evidenced based methodology, to increase in community support infrastructure – including an appropriate increase in the police presence in those towns – over time.

The PFA would be happy to appear before the Committee to expand on this submission.

Mark Burgess
Chief Executive Officer