

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

Question No. 114

Senator Humphries asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2010:

Reports in *The Canberra Times* (Nino Bucci, *ACT Policing looking for local solutions to officer turnover*, 24.9.10). The report suggests there is a high staff turnover with one in three leaving within four years.

- a) What are the reasons behind such a high turnover?
- b) How long has this been a problem?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- a-b) It is important to note that Community Policing in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) is unique when compared with other jurisdictions. ACT Policing provides Community Policing Services for the people of Canberra. Direction setting for the manner in which those services are delivered to the ACT Government are set out in the ACT Policing Arrangement (the Arrangement), covering the provision of Police services in the ACT for a period of five years. Further articulation of specific areas of focus is contained in the annual Purchase Agreement which is an arrangement between the ACT Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police and the Chief Police Officer for the ACT. In addition to identifying those goods and services purchased by the ACT through budget appropriations, the Agreement specifies the policing outcomes, outputs, performance measures, targets and facilities to be provided by the ACT and the powers and obligations of the ACT Minister and the Chief Police Officer.

ACT Policing is a business unit of the Australian Federal Police (AFP). Staff within both ACT Policing and the broader AFP can apply for and be considered for positions available in both business areas. When referring to 'staff turnover' figures it is important not to confuse such data with that of 'staff attrition'. ACT Policing uses the term 'staff turnover' when referring to staff transfers between ACT Policing and the broader AFP. The term 'attrition' is used by ACT Policing when referring to members who have voluntarily separated from the organisation through resignation or retirement. ACT Policing attrition rates are incorporated into the current annual sworn police member attrition rate of 1.97%.

As a result of this unique arrangement, comparisons with other jurisdictional police services cannot be made as a means of determining whether turnover rates are comparable. To provide any kind of meaningful comparisons, internal transfer rates between business units across other jurisdictional police services would have to be determined. This data is not readily available.

The AFP provides a diverse range of career paths and opportunities for members. Some members take these opportunities and a lot of these members will return to ACT Policing, particularly after overseas deployments. These transfers are offset by ACT Policing through the engagement of new recruits and transfers back from other areas of the AFP. This process is tightly controlled and ACT Policing is engaged in all stages of the process.

Staff turnover in ACT Policing is not high. Current staff turnover rates have remained relatively stable for the past ten years.

The rate of staff turnover in ACT Policing is closely managed and aligned using a workforce planning model. The model enables the ACT Policing Executive to maintain an accurate picture of current workforce numbers, experience levels and skills and to implement mitigation strategies to manage attrition rates.

The regular infusion of new officers enables ACT Policing to maintain organisational functionality and provide a range of career opportunities. This arrangement allows for the rejuvenation of the ranks as the new appointees to our workforce bring considerable experience and skills with them.