



Police Federation  
of Australia

The National Voice of Policing

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## **Gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women's economic equality**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the *Gender Segregation in the Workplace and its Impact on Women's Economic Equality Inquiry*. The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) is the national body representing the professional and industrial interests of Australia's more than 61,000 police officers. The PFA has almost 99% membership density and is a federally registered organisation under the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009.

The PFA has long campaigned for greater representation of women in the police. Previous PFA submissions to government inquiries have outlined key barriers and challenges facing women and employers. The PFA has highlighted key policies and conditions necessary to support women including a paid parental leave scheme which ensures women and their babies health and wellbeing is prioritised and access to flexible and affordable childcare is made available.

PFA submissions to recent inquiries include:

- Fairer Paid Parental Leave Bill 2016 (December 2016)
- Economic Security of Women in Retirement (October 2015)
- Fairer Paid Parental Leave Amendment Bill 2015 (August 2015)

- Childcare and Early Learning Draft Report (September 2014)
- Public Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning (January 2014)
- Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review (January 2014)
- Paid Parental Leave Review (June 2013)

The above submissions can be publicly accessed from the submissions and publications area of the PFA website [www.pfa.org.au](http://www.pfa.org.au)

### *Police work*

For those individuals who choose a career as a police officer, the decision is not made lightly. Police work is both mentally and physically demanding but at the same time highly rewarding. It is an occupation which requires specialist training and experience to deal with often unpredictable, stressful and sometimes life threatening situations throughout the course of a shift. Police officers work shifts around the clock, weekends and public holidays to ensure the community is safe.

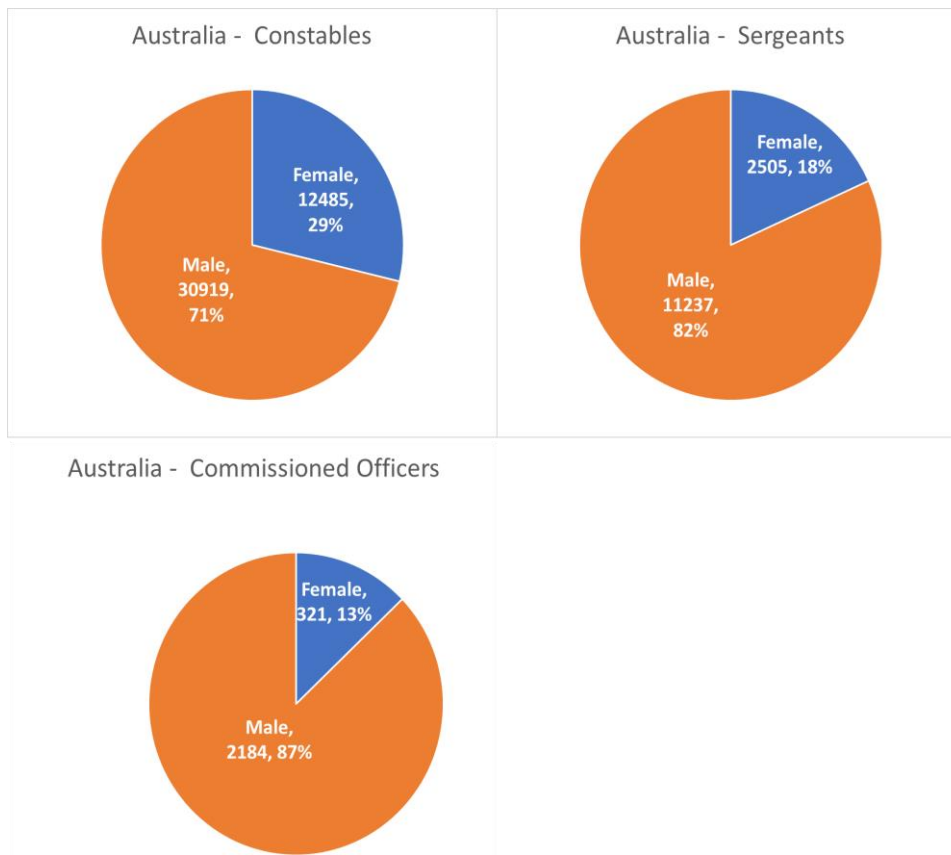
### *Women's representation*

While one hundred years of women in policing has been celebrated across the country increasing women's representation within police remains a challenging fact. The total number of female sworn police recorded nationally for the year 2015-2016 is estimated to be a little over one quarter (25.6%<sup>1</sup>). These figures may vary slightly depending on reporting mechanisms in place<sup>i</sup>. We are advised on average female police officers leave the force after only seven years in service and this figure is extremely low compared to national figures for most other occupations.

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<sup>1</sup> Police Force Annual Reports 2015-2016 and State databases.

### Sworn Police Numbers by Gender and Rank



Source: Police Annual Reports- Note: where FTE is the only data available these figures have been converted to headcount using the PFA Flexible Working Arrangements for Police Officers survey data on weekly working hours.

It is important that police services are reflective of the communities they serve. The advantages of women on the frontline are well documented. Currently, the community and Government are attempting to tackle issues of domestic violence. Our members are first responders in those situations. It is vital that all is done to increase female participation and have women on the frontline to assist victims of domestic violence. In the past, police jurisdictions have obtained exemption under equal opportunity legislation to ensure that they can deploy police women only in areas such as sexual assault and child abuse units. Police of childbearing age fulfil valuable roles including dealing with victims of sexual assault and child abuse. Community access to those police officers is critically important.

### *Gender segregation in police forces*

The PFA recognises that many of the significant factors driving gender segregation within the police are not specifically unique to policing but these driving factors are more pronounced in a policing environment due to a long-established male dominated workplace culture and job design and structure within policing combined with the non-standard working patterns, high risk and unpredictable work involved.

The nature and extent of occupational gender segregation and its key drivers within Australian police forces has been well documented recently. Independent reviews commissioned by both Victoria Police and South Australia Police into *Sex Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Predatory Behaviour* along with the 2016 report, *Cultural Change: Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian Federal Police* all clearly examine the unequal treatment of women within these police forces.

*“The significant occupational segregation in the AFP impacts on women’s career progression and their ability to reach leadership positions” ... “For women in the AFP in particular, the need to combine work with family, disproportionately impacts on their ability to progress through their career and access leadership opportunities. Unlike men, many women in the AFP believe they face a dual choice between a career and family...”<sup>2</sup>*

The PFA believes many of these findings in the above reports are representative of other police forces across Australia too.

### *Superannuation*

The PFA’s 2015 submission to the Senate inquiry for the *Economic Security for Women in Retirement* discussed the great variation in superannuation schemes across the states and the limited opportunity these schemes provide women to catch up on contributions after returning to full time work from part time work or broken employment.

The evidence the PFA provided in that submission emphasised the need to improve current superannuation schemes to allow women to receive equal reward in retirement as men. We acknowledge that from 1 July 2018 as per correspondence directly from the Treasurer the Hon Scott Morrison MP (dated 05 December 2016) to the PFA, flexibility will be improved in this area “by allowing the ‘catch up’ of unused portions of concessional contributions on a rolling five-year basis for individuals with balances under \$500,000”<sup>3</sup>. While this is an improvement, the PFA recognises that this change will not accommodate everyone.

In our view, removal or amendments to the concessional cap would mean a greater opportunity for female officers to make more substantial savings for their retirement years. The PFA recommends superannuation schemes be structured in a way which allow women to catch up over a life time or have concessional cap credits for the years of service when contributions are below the caps. This is but one of a suite of measures which could improve the financial security of women.

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<sup>2</sup> Broderick E, *Cultural Change: Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian Federal Police*, Report 2016, p8

<sup>3</sup> Treasurer The Hon Scott Morrison MP Ref:MC16-016581 Letter to Mr Mark Burgess dated 05/12/16

## *Paid parental leave*

Continuing to support a paid parental leave scheme which values women by not financially penalising them for starting a family is another key factor to increasing women's participation in the workforce. The PFA does not support the proposed reduction of paid parental leave outlined in the Fairer Paid Parental Leave Bill 2016. As a result of the submission we made to the recent inquiry the PFA was invited to appear at the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee Fairer Paid Parental Leave Bill public hearing on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017. Evidence provided to the committee centred on the positive impact paid parental leave has on female officers after the birth of a child, the family and wider community.

*The reason I feel so passionately about this issue is that I have been lucky enough to breastfeed all three of my children, and a huge factor in being able to do that has been the paid parental leave. If that was not available to me, I more than likely would have had to return to work when my work funded maternity leave ran out..... the thought of having to have that cease at potentially 4½ or five months of age, which is certainly well below any health recommendations, would have been extremely detrimental to her, to our family and to my wellbeing..... Having the paid parental leave has also allowed me to have time off with my two older children. We reduced their days at day care. My older child was able to switch from day care to sessional kindergarten and that in itself saved us a tremendous amount of money it saved us from going into financial hardship and it has also saved a significant amount in the childcare rebate. It has probably saved more in what was paid to us in the childcare rebate than my paid parental leave was. I see that as a huge win. Then there are the things you cannot put a price on the time I got to spend with my children, had I not had that leave available to me. <sup>4</sup>*

The following evidence also demonstrates the necessity to have adequate leave to recuperate from child birth and return to the demands of policing physically fit.

*....it has actually taken a long time for me to get back to my peak physical fitness. I have weighed myself when I am wearing my police equipment. I am not sure if you are aware that we have to wear our ballistic vest and it is extremely heavy. I weigh 60 kilos. I have weighed myself with my equipment on 72 kilos. I carry around 12 kilos of equipment for eight hours. That is a lot and it is a lot on a small frame. It obviously takes a lot of fitness to be able to do that if you are back at work full time. I also had a C section when I had my son. I went back and did my shooting requalification last week and I noticed that my equipment belt and my pants actually rubbed on my C section scar. If I had not had this amount of time to adequately recuperate after having that, I would have been at risk of probably damaging that site and that could render me non-operational. <sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth of Australia Committee Hansard Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee Fairer Paid Parental Leave Bill 2016

<sup>5</sup> Commonwealth of Australia Committee Hansard Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee Fairer Paid Parental Leave Bill 2016

The PFA believes any reduction to paid parental leave would be detrimental to women, children, families and the wider community. If Australia is to have equitable modern police forces, then highly experienced female officers are essential and every measure needs to be in place to facilitate their successful return to work.

### *Childcare*

Inadequate access to flexible and affordable childcare is another driving factor inhibiting women's increased workforce participation in police forces across the country. The demand for a flexible model of childcare was evidenced by the high registration rates of police initially willing to participate in the Government announced Nanny Pilot Programme. Unfortunately costs of care, once announced were prohibitive for the majority of our members and as a result the majority of members declined to proceed in the trial. (see also survey section further on for additional comments on childcare)

### *Recruitment standards bias against female applicants*

Some jurisdictions still apply traditional 'fit for duty' physical fitness tests along with a 'beep test' which inherently is bias against female applicants.<sup>6</sup> Recruitment standards vary across jurisdictions and need standardising and improving to ensure women are not discriminated against.

### *PFA Flexible Working Arrangements for Police Officers in Australia and New Zealand Survey*

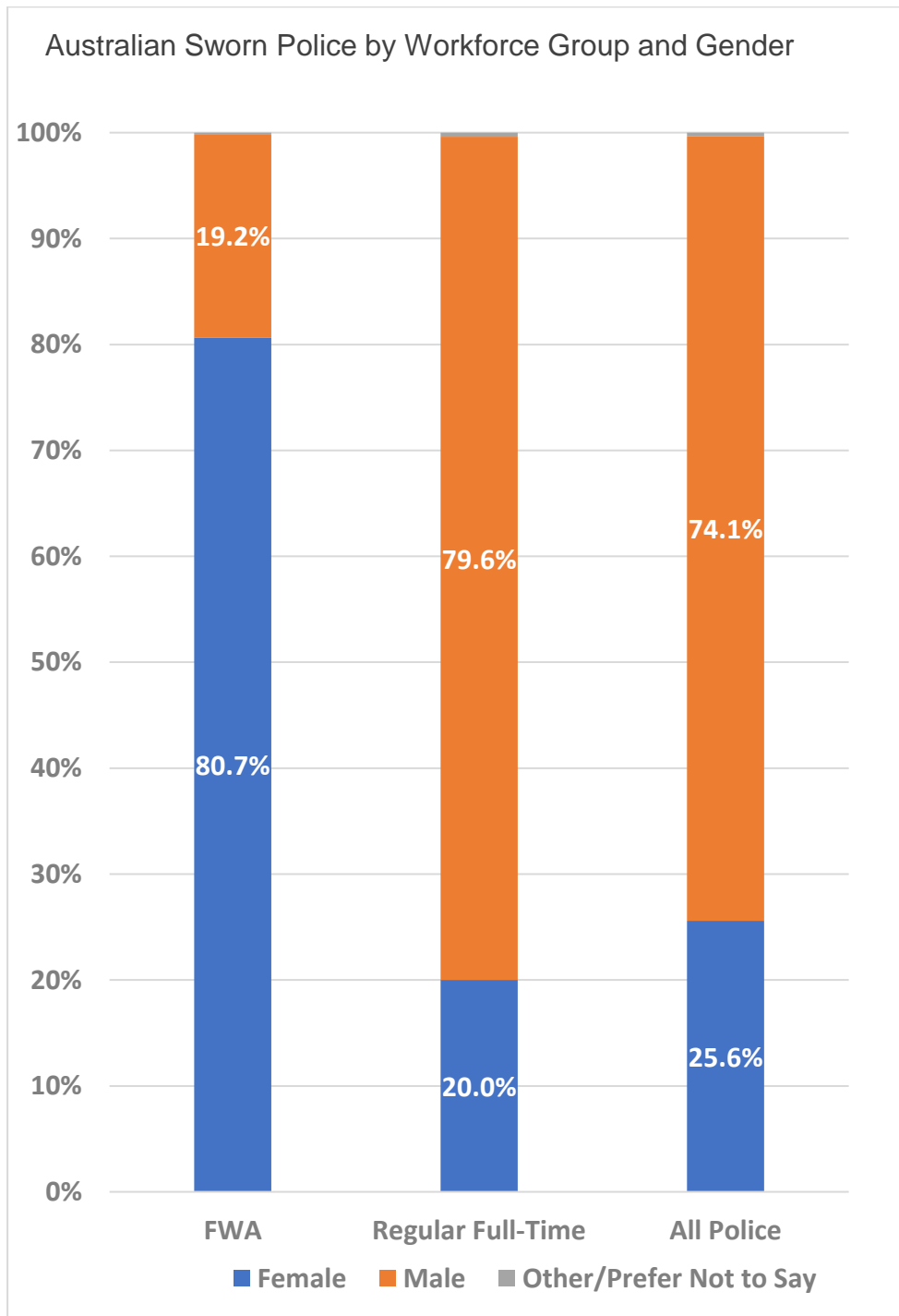
In October 2016, the PFA embarked on a comprehensive survey investigating the *Flexible Working Arrangements for Police Officers in Australia and New Zealand*. The survey was completed by over 11,400 officers 16.5% of all Australian and New Zealand sworn officers.

Preliminary unpublished survey findings show that there are likely to be over 5,500 police working under a flexible working arrangement with 80% being women. The rank of constable (85%) is over represented while sergeants and commissioned officers are under-represented in FWA's.

Around 70% of police on FWA's have between 5 and 19 years of service and over 87% are between the ages of 30 and 49 years old. This profile indicates the importance of parenting as a current reason for FWA's. (While our survey also points to a cultural shift occurring where more men are considering accessing flexible working arrangements for the future, it is predominantly women who are currently utilizing flexible working arrangements to balance work and family responsibilities).

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<sup>6</sup> South Australian Equal Opportunity Commission, Sex Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Predatory Behaviour in South Australia Police, Independent Review 2016, p49



Source: Unpublished PFA Police Work and Flexible Working Arrangements Draft Report 2017

The benefits of flexible working arrangements (FWA's) are significant and access to them is greatly appreciated, however the PFA survey also confirms that there are distinct patterns

of discrimination occurring across police forces in relation to those currently working a flexible working arrangement. While some discrimination types are, unintentional others are not and it is women mostly affected by both currently.

*(The below are extracts from the unpublished Police Work and Flexible Working Arrangements Draft Report)*

### **Access to training and promotion**

*Many respondents reported substantial problems regarding access to training. They believe because they are not full-timers they are consistently overlooked, not being considered for or offered training.*

*Just over half of all Australian police on FWA's think their access to training opportunities has been reduced as a result of the FWA. Around 70% of part time female constables in general duty policing experience reduced access to training.*

### **Factors affecting access to training**

*Training activities are often full-time, and may run over a week or longer, sometimes in another location. Those with parenting responsibilities may not be able to get additional childcare for that amount of time. Needing to be away from home for training disadvantages those with family responsibilities.*

*It is not always possible to change childcare arrangements. So, in order to attend, they may need their partner to take leave to provide extra care, or change or increase their own hours for the duration.*

*Managers may not allow roster changes, or may be unwilling to pay for additional hours required. Some respondents are told that as they work reduced hours, they are not eligible for training. Some choose to attend courses in their own time.*

*Those with short working hours and parenting responsibilities may not have enough time to commit to training.*

*Staffing pressures in some workplaces mean those with an FWA are reluctant to apply for training. Part-timers are sometimes expected to cover for those who are doing training.*

### **Suggested Strategies**

*Strategies to increase access to training for part-timers were suggested. These include:*

- *breaking up courses into smaller modules which are run over a longer period, allowing more flexible access for part-timers;*
- *more use of online training;*



- *giving enough advance notice of courses for employees to make changes in their childcare arrangements.*

### **Reduced promotional opportunities**

*The majority of respondents feel their promotion opportunities are reduced so much that they do not consider promotion possible. In their comments, police officers spoke to the difficulty of career progression and the types of barriers they face in gaining promotion. Some thought that some jobs had not been adapted to fit part time work and this limited opportunities. Others commented that although FWAs made promotion difficult, it was not impossible.*

*There is a consensus amongst respondents that full-timers receive preference for promotional positions. Many commented that senior positions are rarely advertised as part time.*

*It is possible to apply for a full-time position, then request to convert it to part-time, but most respondents felt that would make their application uncompetitive. The option of career progression can still be available for those who are willing to give up their FWA, however many respondents are either unable or unwilling to do that, despite knowing that their FWA puts them on a different career path from their colleagues.*

*Many respondents report that access to any higher duties relieving, training, and a range of different types of experience are effectively closed to them, without considering options to adapt those roles.*

*Some are offered such limited work as part timers that they are unable to progress their career. Their experience is often overlooked, whilst people very junior to them are offered promotional opportunities. Others worry that they may have become de-skilled.*

*Some have overcome the barriers to promotion for those with FWAs, but the process is often time-consuming and not straightforward. Nonetheless, some respondents comment that things are beginning to improve and employees with FWAs are receiving more encouragement to progress their career. Much of the variability relates to the practices of individual managers.*

### **Victimisation and Bullying**

*Australian police on FWAs experience high rates of victimisation or bullying as a result of their FWA. At least a third have experienced some form of victimisation or bullying. Most significantly, this is widespread and generalized across jurisdictions, gender, locations, full time and part time employees, types of duty and all ranks below commissioned officers.*

*Respondents employed on FWA's were asked, "Have you ever suffered from victimisation or bullying as a result of your FWA?" and given options of answering Yes, No or Prefer not to say. The estimated one third having experienced bullying is conservative based on the number answering No- in reality, many Preferring not to say would have also been bullied.*

*Both male and female police on FWAs in Australia experience bullying, but women more so than men (59% of men report never having been bullied vs 51% of women). Part timers on FWAs in Australia experience more bullying than full timers on FWAs (62% of full timers report never having been bullied vs 51% of part timers). There is not the same level of bullying for police with FWAs who mainly work full time office hours (11%).*

*Respondents relate bullying behaviours to a culture where police work is seen as an all-or-nothing proposition that takes precedence over everything else. Many report regularly being on the receiving end of derogatory or abusive comments.*

*Others commented on experiencing marginalisation and direct exclusion from social and or work-related activities.*

*Often those on FWA's are blamed for rostering and management problems in their workplace, including problems caused by inadequate staffing.*

*Complaints experienced by those on FWAs suggest that basic misunderstandings about FWAs are common – for instance needing to remind colleagues that part time workers are paid less than full timers, and that they may carry a relatively higher work load.*

*Others commented on obstructive and punitive behavior by some managers when they disagree with flexible working arrangements.*

## **Childcare**

*Just over 40% of police currently on FWAs in Australia would accept regular full time work if paid childcare options were available. (This is a significant number, however remembering this is not a complete indication of the total demand for childcare across the entire workforce which we know to be very high also). The majority emphasised how much they value the chance to care for their children, and appreciate FWAs because they allow them to do so. Police officers face very specific issues in managing childcare because of the 24/7 and shift based work patterns. Problems with childcare cause significant stress for some officers.*

## **Costs**

*The cost of childcare is a barrier to returning to full time work for many parents.*

*Some would prefer to work more hours, but cannot do so because of the cost of childcare. Childcare is made more expensive because of long and unsociable hours.*

### **Experiences with childcare**

**Family care** – *fills many gaps in childcare availability, but respondents who use family care often try hard not to over-burden family members. However, some have no family back-up, and are completely reliant on paid childcare.*

**Home-based care** – *(nanny or au pair) is a popular concept for night shifts and early starts, but few actually said they used it. Many commented on its cost – especially the “Nanny Pilot Scheme”*

**Centre based care** - *The inflexibility of centre based childcare, and the issue of having a child in care for long periods of time, often with significant travel time as well, makes centre-based childcare a less acceptable option for some parents. Childcare centres do not have the capacity to provide care to match rotating shifts, so parents need to pay for care that they do not use to keep their place. The absolute requirement to collect children on time is very stressful when overtime may need to be done often without warning. Another example of the need for flexible care is for court attendance. 24-hour care is wanted by some parents, but the logistics are challenging and the costs are much higher than for standard childcare hours.*

**Care for school aged children** - *Out of school hours' care has more restricted hours than childcare, and so the time when children go to school can be unexpectedly much more difficult for parents than when they are using childcare. The difficulty of dealing with this, and with school drop-offs and pickups and other extracurricular activities of children keeps some parents from returning to fulltime work, if they have no other supports to assist them.*

### **Specific childcare issues for police**

**Night shift** – *rosters requiring frequent night shift are very difficult, whatever childcare arrangements are used. Night shift is a common reason to prefer home-based care. Yet even when childcare is available for the shift itself, the parent still needs time to recover.*

**Difficulties accessing childcare** – *Places in childcare centres can be difficult to find in regional or remote areas, and options may be limited or non-existent. Lack of availability of childcare prevents some respondents from returning to full time work.*

## *Summary*

A number of police commissioners around the country have signalled their commitment toward fifty-fifty quotas of women in policing and the PFA supports this goal, but we believe that this will not be achieved unless there are appropriate mechanisms within policing to encourage and allow those female members to remain in policing.

Appropriate policies need to be in place in relation to paid parental leave, childcare, superannuation, unbiased recruitment and access to flexible working arrangements to ensure female members are afforded every opportunity to participate in a fulfilling career within policing.

Evidence presented suggests that appropriate policies in the above areas would greatly assist female officers who wish to work in frontline policing roles, a benefit not just to policing but the wider community. Having female officers within roles 24/7 365 days a year would ensure Australia moves toward having equitable modern police forces representative of the community they serve and where women's skills and experience are highly valued.

The PFA would be happy to provide further information to the Committee if that was required.

Sincerely yours

Mark Burgess APM  
Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>i</sup> The Productivity Commission's Annual Government Services report – Police Services Chapter 6 attachment tables 6A.18 does not record the number of **sworn** female police but combines police staff, sworn and unsworn figures together by gender. This does not give an entirely accurate reading of the number of women in frontline policing. Note also police force annual reports also vary a great deal in their reporting of police numbers making accurate comparisons across jurisdictions difficult.