

# TRANSCRIPT

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into Anti-Vilification Protections

Melbourne—Thursday, 25 June 2020

*(via videoconference)*

#### MEMBERS

Ms Natalie Suleyman—Chair

Mr James Newbury—Deputy Chair

Ms Christine Couzens

Ms Emma Kealy

Ms Michaela Settle

Mr David Southwick

Mr Meng Heang Tak

#### WITNESS

Assistant Commissioner Luke Cornelius, Victoria Police.

**The CHAIR:** I declare open the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee public hearing for the Inquiry into Anti-Vilification Protections in Victoria. Please ensure your mobile phones have been switched to silent and the background noise is minimised.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting here today. I pay my respects to their elders past and present and the Aboriginal elders of the communities who may be here today.

All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975*, and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Assembly standing orders. Therefore any information you provide during the hearing is protected by law. However, any comments repeated outside the hearing may not be protected. Any deliberate false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament. All evidence is being recorded and you will receive a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

Today I welcome Assistant Commissioner Luke Cornelius from Victoria Police to provide a maximum of 10 minutes to ensure that we have plenty to discuss at the conclusion of the presentation. The members will be able to have some questions. So thank you very much, Assistant Commissioner, for joining us this morning.

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Thank you, Ms Suleyman, and good morning to you and your fellow committee members and also to all those watching. I too acknowledge that we have come together on the traditional land and waters of the traditional owners, all the peoples of the Kulin nations and, particularly where I am from, the peoples of the Wurundjeri nation. I acknowledge their custodianship of the land and waters on which we meet over many generations.

Thank you very much for the opportunity for Victoria Police to give evidence at your inquiry today. I thought I would begin just by outlining the context within which Victoria Police understands that it delivers its policing services in relation to anti-vilification and also speak to the breadth of work that we do in order to give effect to our intent and our understanding of our mission. So to begin, Victoria Police acknowledges that we police within a community that has long been enriched by the diversity and cultures of people who have come together in community to call Victoria their home. Our neighbours and the people, our community, that we police with come from all over the world and represent a wide variety of cultures, beliefs and lifestyle choices. Now, we as your police celebrate this diversity, and there is no doubt in our mind that our reputation as one of the world's most livable cities and one of the most livable communities across Victoria is because of the rich cultural fabric of our community. In our service to that wonderful community Victoria Police very much has the role to keep people safe, to make sure they feel safe, and we recognise that we have a key role in ensuring Victoria remains a safe place for people who make this their home, to conduct their business, their work and their study.

So we take great pride in what we do, we value our relationships. We recognise, though, that there are times when particular peoples and groups within our community need very specifically our help and support so that they can fulfil the aspirations that they aspire to as members of our community. Of particular note at the moment of course—and this unfortunately at times is a perennial issue—is we are acutely aware of widespread media reports about an escalation in vilification and discrimination and prejudice being directed towards particular members of our community, at the moment Chinese or Asian Australians or students and peoples who have come to our community to study or conduct business. I say this at times is a perennial issue because many of us will recall—I think it was about 10 years ago—we had a very similar issue in relation to Indian Australians and students from India who were coming from overseas to study in our tertiary institutions. There was a very strong perception that those students were being the subject of targeted attack on the basis of race and that opportunities were being taken to subject those peoples to vilification. This generated on our part in Victoria Police a very significant response both at the national and international level, and we find ourselves facing a similar situation in relation to Chinese students and Chinese Australians at the moment.

From our perspective, a policing perspective, any behaviours, incidents or actions that create fear for international students or people who have come from across the globe to conduct their business here, we

certainly understand that vilification and prejudice directed towards those peoples strikes at the heart of who we are. Our economy and our reputation stand to be seriously damaged if we do not effectively address vilification and prejudice directed towards people who come from across the globe to make their lives here. So there is a critical need on our part to respond swiftly and effectively to ensure that Victoria is a safe place for everyone.

So what do we do to try and give effect to this intent? Our focus is on reducing prejudice-motivated crime and increasing community confidence to report prejudice-motivated crimes. We do this by working in partnership with the community—we seek to treat victims with dignity and respect—and of course through the application of the victims of crime charter. We respond to reports of prejudice-motivated crime in a timely and professional manner. We look to support the victims, and we are also very conscious of the need to be victim led in our response and the choices we make about possible prosecution and enforcement pathways. We also look to thoroughly investigate all reports of prejudice-motivated crime, and we are looking of course to maximise offender accountability through that process.

Now, the question is: how do we evidence our approach, our efforts, in that regard? I have provided two slides for committee members' information, and I will refer, if I may, to the first slide. That slide sets out the data in relation to offences that we have investigated under the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act*, and that looks at reports that have been made to us and prosecutions we have undertaken since 1 April 2015, over the past five years. You will note over those five years there is a gradual downward trend. You will also note the numbers of reports that we have investigated specifically under that Act are very small. Indeed, in the most recent reporting period to 31 March 2020 we have had four offences in relation to inciting racial contempt, revulsion and ridicule—section 24—and only one offence in relation to inciting racial hatred and threatening harm. These numbers are very low, and it begs the question: why are they low, and why do we in police think that this is the case?

Well, we think it probably comes down to a couple of key reasons. The first is that we think there is significant under-reporting in this space, and so we remain committed to constantly engaging the community through peak councils and local communities in relation to the pathways for making reports to us about these criminal offences. I think the other piece that is driving it is that the standard for prosecutions under this Act are very high, and the test in relation to intent is a challenging test to satisfy in terms of us discharging our prosecutorial burden in terms of proving intention. And I suspect that the difficulties that we have encountered in prosecuting these offences because of evidential challenges in that regard have had a chilling effect on us bringing prosecutions under this legislation. I will speak a little bit further then about the alternate approaches we take to address that.

I do just want to also touch on some of the work we do specifically with students who come to us from all over the world and the at-times prejudice-motivated crime that they face. We work right across Victoria in every region very closely with each of our tertiary institutions, particularly universities and peak student bodies, to help international students understand their rights and also their responsibilities but also particularly to emphasise with them that police are here to help them, that we certainly will take prejudice-motivated crime very seriously and that we will investigate it for them. So we have active and ongoing engagement with all of our tertiary institutions in relation to providing that support and reaching out to students to ensure that they are aware that if they are facing these issues, they can come to us for help. I would also highlight that in relation to our broader strategic response and our organisational framework we have very extensive SOPs (standard operating procedures). Our Victoria Police Manual sets out very specifically the expectations that we have of our members in relation to how they are to handle and deal with reports of religious and racial intolerance and also prejudice-motivated crime more generally. We actively have set in place a process to ensure we capture information about the reporting of crime of that nature to us. We have an education curriculum that both grounds our recruits but also covers with our managers—and particularly our brief authorises—the statutory framework and the options that we have in relation to maximising offender accountability for this conduct. We also have active and ongoing media and corporate communications, both internally and also through community channels, to maximise the awareness of pathways in relation to police working with victims to hold offenders to account in this space. The challenge for us, though, in this space remains this issue about under-reporting. I have already highlighted that we have had very low numbers since the introduction of the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act* in 2001 of successful cases in relation to prosecutions brought under this legislation.

I might now take you to slide 2, which has been provided for the committee's information. Now, slide 2 sets out offences recorded with a modus operandi code in relation to prejudice-motivated crimes. This is where we have brought charges against individuals who have committed more commonly understood offences, such as assault, such as property damage and such as a range of other offences, where there is an element of prejudice-related motivation. And what we do there is we look to capture that as part of the MO (modus operandi) of the offender, and we also seek to have that behaviour considered by a judicial authority upon a finding of guilt so that that can be taken into account for sentencing purposes as an aggravating factor.

You can see there that the number of matters over the years and over the months has certainly remained at a much more significant number than what you will see with prosecutions specifically brought under the religious and racial intolerance legislation. For example, in March 2020 we saw just on 90 matters where prejudice-motivated crime was identified as an MO. We have seen just over 70 matters where race and ethnicity or religion was identified as being a potential aggravating factor. What we seek to do with these cases is certainly bring these issues to the attention of the court in order to maximise the offender accountability around that aggravating factor, and we have found considerably more success in achieving offender accountability through this pathway than we have been able to achieve through the religious and racial intolerance legislation.

Again, there are a number of factors which we think suppress these numbers. Under-reporting is a key piece, but the other piece is victim sentiment. One of the features of racial vilification and prejudice-motivated crime is that the victim feels very dislocated by the behaviour, feels their place in our community devalued and is of course very concerned about how they are going to be perceived and how the courts might deal with the matter. Some victims do say to us that they do not want to play the race card. Now, we do everything we can to reassure them of both our support and the criminal justice system's support for offenders to be held to account in relation to prejudice-motivated behaviour. But in the end we do need to pay regard to the wishes of victims, and so we certainly take into account the views of the victim in terms of the enforcement and prosecution pathway that we select. These are factors that I think do play into the figures that I am presenting to you today.

I might just also indicate that there are a range of non-criminal pathways that we pursue as well to secure accountability. Some of you might recall earlier this year there was an incident that occurred in the small Mallee town of Beulah, where a local couple displayed a Nazi-era reproduction flag. There was quite rightly widespread outrage about that, and we were of course called upon to take action. We worked with the local council in order to have the flag taken down after discussions between ourselves and council representatives. Infringement notices for offensive behaviour were initially considered, and we also looked at the offence but determined that the matter did not meet the criteria of an offence under the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act*. Again, it goes to that issue about the threshold. In the end it was building regulations that provided the basis for us to have the flag removed. This is just one example of how we actively pursue all of the options that are open to us in order to achieve an outcome that will address community concerns and hold individuals who are seeking to propagate these malicious and inappropriate views in our community to account.

We also find this in the case of interactions on public transport. Now, of course where we have independent corroborating evidence—we are often now supported with evidence through mobile phones and the like, video evidence—we can certainly take action. But absent that corroborating evidence, and when it does come down to the word of one person against another, we often struggle to meet that intention threshold in relation to the RRTA prosecutions. And if a choate offence is not committed—that is, an assault or another offence that would otherwise be prosecutable—we will then look at other options available to us. So there are provisions under public transport legislation that we can use to, again, hold offenders to account in that space.

The key piece for us, though, ultimately, is we recognise that there remains a great deal of work to be done by all agencies in promoting the pathways to hold people who would cause others in our community harm through prejudice-motivated behaviour, crime in particular, and also vilification and incitement of hatred, because it does strike at the core of who we are as a community. And we absolutely need to stand with the most vulnerable in this space and be prepared to recover their place in the community with them and hold those to account who would diminish and harm their standing in our community.

The piece for us is about our ongoing work with other agencies to achieve this as well. We have an ongoing relationship with VEOHRC in this space and an MOU that has been in place for some time. We would certainly be looking to revisit that MOU in light of the work of this committee. But the key piece for us is there

are opportunities that we can pursue, not just in the criminal justice system but also in the civil jurisdiction and also through our partner agencies, and one of the key relationships that we have in this space is with VEOHRC. So there are opportunities for us to cross-refer, for example—that is, to report matters to VEOHRC so that civil action can be taken by VEOHRC, and vice versa, for VEOHRC to report matters to us so that we can pursue matters through the criminal justice system. There remain open to us any number of opportunities for us to continue to improve our work in that space. That, Ms Suleyman, brings me to the end of my statement, and I am very happy to take questions.

**Ms COUZENS:** Thank you, Luke, for your presentation and certainly all the work that you and VicPol are doing. We really do appreciate that and appreciate your time this morning.

During your presentation you talked a lot about people coming in from all over the world to live in Australia and in particular Victoria, but you did not mention the First Nations people, who, you know, for more than 200 years have experienced vilification. So I am just wondering what you are doing in terms of working in that community and whether they are reflected in the data sheet that you have provided to us today?

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Certainly they are reflected in the data. Please accept my apologies for not specifically—

**Ms COUZENS:** It is not a criticism. I just wanted to point that out.

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** [Zoom dropout] First Nations. We certainly seek to work through our PALOs (Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers) and our ACLOs (Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers) in assisting First Nations peoples in engaging with us and bringing their concerns to us, and the ACLOs and the PALOs play a critical role in helping First Nations people to navigate the criminal justice system with us, particularly where they are the victims but also where they may find themselves being the subject of the criminal justice system. We do take prejudice-motivated and race-related crimes committed against First Nations people very seriously, as we do for any crime that is directed to people on the basis of a protected attribute.

The key piece for us, too, is that we hold ourselves to account and are accountable too through the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and the Aboriginal Justice Forum as well, and that is where we certainly are held to account and give undertakings in relation to how we can better support victims, particularly First Nations peoples who are victims. My reference to the victims charter in the presentation is certainly reflective of our concern in relation to the commitments and the obligations we have in relation to supporting victims generally, and also a key part of that is the support that we are required to extend to First Nations people who may be victims of crime. Our ACLOs and PALOs are the primary means by which we are able to provide that local support that helps victims step through the criminal justice system.

**Ms COUZENS:** So I mean, we have heard that when people suffer vilification, often they are not reporting those crimes because they do not think anything can happen. Where you might have some idea that there is vilification going on in a community, do you put things in place to help deal with that?

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Yes, we do. So we have regular and ongoing contact with both local and peak community representative bodies, whether they are, if you like, in the multicultural space but also our contacts with local First Nations communities. Where we get information and intelligence about behaviours that are prejudice- or race-based we will certainly look to task a local policing response and also look to reach out to the people who are being targeted by that behaviour so that we can understand what the behaviour looks like but also identify who the offenders are so that we can then hold them to account.

I would be the first, though, to say that we have a great deal more work to do in relation to building confidence on the part of many peoples—First Nations peoples but also people from CALD communities and more recently arrived communities—because of a long history of a troubled relationship with police. So, Victoria Police certainly does have a strong focus on looking to build confidence among vulnerable communities so that those communities can understand that we are there for them and that when they come to us for help we will absolutely give them the help that they are looking for.

**Ms COUZENS:** In terms of data collection, we have heard from some that the data collection is not accurate because it is not reported as vilification or hate crime. Do you see there is a role for Victoria Police to improve its data collection or at least attempt to improve that?

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** We have very clear policy in relation to capturing the data, and so when a crime report is taken we have very specific requirements in relation to capturing what I have already referred to as the MO, or the modus operandi, information, particularly capturing the aggravating factors. The other thing too is that we do collect data that is relevant to particular vulnerabilities that the victim may have, including whether it is a protected attribute and whether there is a cultural or a race-based background that might heighten that vulnerability and so trigger some obligations that we have under the victims' charter legislation.

But the reporting piece remains a concern for us, which is why we remain committed to an ongoing program of education not only of our recruits but also of our supervisors and more experienced members. The data I have shown you in the two tables, to my mind, underscores two key things. One is under-reporting, but the other is the need for us to improve our focus and our attention to data capture. We have the tools in place to capture the data; it is certainly down to us to keep working on having those requirements carried through by our members.

**Ms COUZENS:** Thank you, Luke, I appreciate your time.

**Ms SETTLE:** Thank you, Luke. I would also like to acknowledge the work that you all do. I will make a comment first, which is that this committee heard from the local council in relation to the Beulah flag, and they made the comment that it was the patience of the local police officer who spent hours talking to the people involved that really solved the problem. So he should be commended for that—apparently he did really extraordinary work.

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Thank you.

**Ms SETTLE:** And if you could pass that on; I think it is important that he is acknowledged for that.

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Yes, thank you.

**Ms SETTLE:** One of the things that we have heard from a variety of stakeholders is about the idea of third-party reporting. In light of the things that we have discussed around under-reporting, if there were recognised organisations, perhaps, that could report on behalf of individuals, I would be interested if you think that would have a positive impact.

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Look, I am all for third-party entities assisting victims in coming to us and walking with them, if you like, as the matter is handled by us. I mean, that sort of approach always gives us an invaluable insight into where the victim is coming from and what we need to do to support the victim, particularly if the victim has some attributes or vulnerabilities that make it more difficult for that individual to secure the outcomes that they ought. But in the end it does come down to us having a victim and it does come down to us having a victim who is able to give evidence. We do everything we can to support our victims through that process and, ultimately, we do need to have prosecutable evidence. We cannot prosecute a case via a third party.

So I think that the role for third entities is a critical one in terms of helping us to better support victims and, to be frank, also to hold us to account in relation to the quality of our support as we go through that process. We are certainly open to exploring what that looks like, and one of the key entities actually that does work with us in that regard already is VEOHRC. VEOHRC has taken the opportunity to have a look at our work in this space, and they continue to reinforce the need for ongoing education of our members. But I think there are certainly some opportunities for us to continue to work more closely with VEOHRC in relation to what I call the cross-referral and cross-reporting of matters. VEOHRC, at times, has certainly been able to assist us in understanding the needs of victims when matters have come to us via that VEOHRC pathway.

**Mr SOUTHWICK:** Michaela stole my thunder in more specifically thanking the member from Beulah, who did a fantastic job, so also pass that on. And thank you also, Luke, for the work that you do and Victoria Police does. As others have said, it is a tireless job and you do a wonderful job.

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Thank you.

**Mr SOUTHWICK:** I have a couple of questions. We have mentioned a fair bit on the statistics and the gathering of that information. More specifically, things like reporting of hate graffiti incidents and that type of thing and especially when they are reported to Victoria Police—and we know that there are community

agencies that do some work around that—your thoughts on specifically those offences being recorded but also reported through the crime statistics numbers. There have been a number that have suggested that that should be done. What is your view on that?

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** To a certain extent we are bound by the national counting rules, as they are called, in relation to crime statistics, and so we are bound by that framework. As I have already indicated, it is certainly open to us to track prejudice and race-related aggravating factors through our LEAP records and our record keeping that way. So it is certainly open to us, Mr Southwick, to report on racially motivated property damage, for example, because we do have that information searchable and available to us so long as our members tick the box, which is why we need to stress the education piece. The other piece is having that information actually is invaluable to us in terms of our local police tasking and in terms of understanding what is driving, for example, the crime of property damage. So we are talking about graffiti here.

I myself have policed in southern metro as well as now in north-west metro and have worked closely with CSG (Community Security Group) and other community-based capabilities, for example, in the Jewish community. We have been able to work very closely with those community-based entities to both understand the incidence of crime and also by working in partnership with community get a line of sight on who might be doing it, so that we can then put a stop to it and hold them to account. So the point I am making is data is part of the puzzle. But the other key piece is that ongoing openness on our part to work with local community entities to understand the prevalence and nature of harm, and then in a joint approach come up with both a policing and a community-based approach which is going to put an end to that behaviour and that harm.

**Mr SOUTHWICK:** On another matter, more so in terms of the laws as they currently stand, and you are obviously limited to only being able to carry out what you are able to do, how much do you believe your members' hands are tied in effectively being able to pursue some of the reported incidents? I kind of refer to incidents where there may be pre-emptive elements. I think of, say, that Blood & Honour concert that was reported as wanting to take place, and I know police are investigating but I also am aware that it was very hard for you to actually pursue something in that incident.

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Look, Mr Southwick, we will work with the legislation any government gives us. Our primary intent is always focused on achieving public safety and around making sure the whole community feels safe. So whenever we become aware of activities, whether they are events, protests or entities which might cause harm to others in our community, we will look to pull every lever that is available to us to mitigate the risk of harm that might be caused by that event, protest or entity. We find that early warning, pre-emption, early intervention invariably lead to the most effective outcomes. It is much more effective for us to prevent these sorts of activities rather than trying to interdict them after they are in full play. That is always our intent when it comes to us, where we become aware of events that might cause harm, working through how we might mitigate that harm.

I think there are numerous instances in our jurisdiction where Victoria Police have been able to work across government and with local communities to get ahead of those harms. In many respects our measure of success in that space is the fact that we actually do not see those harms coming to fruition. It is pretty hard to measure something that does not happen, but I can certainly say to you that we put a lot of effort into preventing these sorts of issues, and as I say, we use every avenue that is open to us to achieve that. When it comes down to particular protests and counter protests, that can be challenging for us, but again it does come down to us having very effective intelligence and it does come down to intervention at the earliest opportunity and pre-emption. They are approaches and processes that we put in play in relation to very many of the demonstrations and public events that occur in our city on a weekly basis.

**Mr SOUTHWICK:** Are there any gaps that you can see? I mean, obviously, you have said the bar is pretty high in terms of being able to prosecute some of the vilification laws as they stand. Where do you see some of the gaps, particularly if you have had conversations, as I am sure you would have with other states and other jurisdictions, in terms of being able to uphold the law and—well, not so much even the law, but just to ensure that there is tolerance and people behaving themselves in this regard?

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Well, certainly in other jurisdictions protests and events may be the subject of a permit arrangement. We do not have those arrangements here. Instead we rely first and foremost on provisions available to us potentially under the *Control of Weapons Act*, under the *Summary Offences Act*, in

relation to breaches of the peace or possible breaches of the peace and then more generally the common law as it relates to a breach of the peace. We do find that under the breach of peace provisions we do have a fair degree of room to move in relation to opportunities for pre-emption. I guess the difficulty that we face in that space at times is that we do have to wait for the behaviour to become pretty proximate to an actual breach of the peace before we can take action, and we are required to give warnings. Now, we have got to a point, in terms of our tactics, where we will get proximate, we will give a rapid warning and there will be a rapid and effective policing response to take that potential harm out of the equation. I will be frank, in relation to the events that occurred on Australia Day and in relation to a number of other major events we certainly did take early and swift action in relation to counter protesters, who we had very clear information about in relation to their intent to disrupt those events and to provoke breaches of the peace. We were able to take effective action and we were able to avoid any harms that would have flowed from the breach of peace that we understood those people were intending to undertake.

**Mr SOUTHWICK:** Thank you. One last question, if I may. We have seen some horrific attacks happening within schools and obviously the stabbing and tragic death a few days back. Where we are seeing these situations between various groups, various ethnic groups, what can be done from a policing perspective to get on top of that? We have heard that education is the important one, but from a policing perspective, to ensure the safety of kids at these schools, where are the gaps there?

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Look, the most critical piece for us, Mr Southwick, is to work with community, and particularly to work with communities around their capability and to build their capability so that the response can be community led. Because unless we have a community-based capability and a community-led approach in relation to addressing the underlying drivers of the behaviours that we are seeing, we are always going to be playing catch-up and we are always going to be the catcher in the rye. From a policing perspective we are most effective when we are in the prevention space, and we are in the most effective space when we are able to engage with community to identify early the risks of harm and through community to get on top of those. I cannot talk specifically about that particular case of course, but what I can say is I have been amazed by the Pacifika community response. I have been greatly encouraged by the support from VMC and other community-based entities who have worked with local community, the family and with us to address an effective response not only to this tragedy but also actually to build the capability going forward. I am very encouraged by what we are seeing emerging in that space, and it provides a great model actually for us to get ahead of this harm more generally.

The other observation I would make is: at one level it is an oversimplification to say that what we have seen over the past week and half is race based. It is pretty clear to us that gang culture, knife culture, social media—and I am talking about the impact not only of local social media but international social media—is clearly impacting on the minds and the behaviours of young people. The emergence of a culture of violence, that early resort to the use of weapons and that approach around defining self in terms of pointing to the other and using that as a basis for characterising the other as being less than human and therefore, if you like, rendering it permissible in the mind of that person to cause serious harm to them, that fundamentally is what we have got to tackle here. What we are seeing is not so much a race-based piece but it actually goes to a much more deep-seated and poisonous cultural piece which is impacting on the minds of many of our young people, particularly disengaged and disadvantaged young people, which is why first and foremost our response in this space needs to be community led and community based. It is about police with all of the other agencies coming together to both build that capability and then walk alongside community in terms of finding longer term solutions.

**Mr SOUTHWICK:** Thank you, very much, Assistant Commissioner.

**The CHAIR:** Any further questions, members? We are sort of coming to a conclusion of our time. I take it no. Assistant Commissioner, can I thank you so much for taking the time to present to us today. It was a thorough submission, and in particular I thank all you members that work each and every day. You are doing a fantastic job. In particular out in the west I was really impressed to see Victoria Police members working with the Pacifika community, hand in hand with agencies, local council and various other stakeholders. I think you are spot on, and I really would like to thank each and every member. Happy First Responders Day to all your members, and again thank you so much taking the time to be with us today.

**Asst Comm. CORNELIUS:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you very much to all your members.

**Witness withdrew.**