

Questions taken on notice

Portfolio:	Police
Witness:	Acting Commissioner Nugent
Committee member:	Mr Danny O'Brien
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Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, Minister and team. Deputy Commissioner, can I start with you. Budget paper 3, page 285, has the police operations output. Can you tell me how many 24-hour stations have not offered counter services across the state for a period of 8 hours or more this current financial year?

Acting Comm. NUGENT: I might need to get back to you on the actual amount. It would be very few. This financial year there may have been, during lockdown last year, a number of police stations that did close counters. There were two components to that. Some were overnight shift, where a nearby station would remain open but a neighbouring station would close to enable us to support the COVID operations, the border operations particularly. If I can take that on notice to get back to you—

Mr D O'BRIEN: If you could come back to me on the data in particular, that would be good.

Answer:

Victoria Police maintained police van shifts and divisional patrols at business-as-usual levels throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. While there was some reduction in police station counter services, this was required to ensure van shifts were maintained while also resourcing other COVID related policing activities.

To support COVID related operations, including general compliance and enforcement operations, border closures with NSW and South Australia, and operations at the Victorian Metropolitan/Regional border, resources were redirected from across Victoria Police, including from police stations. In early 2022, Victoria Police's resource capacity was also significantly impacted by Omicron infections and associated isolation requirements.

These resource impacts led to the closure of some police station counters for periods of time or specific shifts. Twenty-one 24-hour police stations closed their station counters at some point during the 2021/22 financial year. Most often, the counter closures occurred during night shift to minimise the service delivery impact. Whenever a station counter was closed, nearby stations remained open to ensure members of the public could still access counter services. Signs were erected at stations where counters were closed directing members of the public to the nearest open station reception and providing details about what steps to take if the query related to an emergency.

Portfolio:	Police
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Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes, of course. Why has the Laverton station been closed for quite a number of months, when it is supposed to be a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week station?

Acting Comm. NUGENT: I am not aware that it is closed at the moment. It may have closed during COVID for the same purpose that the others were. I am not aware of it currently being closed at all.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I understand it has been closed to the public for some time.

Acting Comm. NUGENT: I can take that on notice and find that out. I am not aware of Laverton being closed to the public.

Answer:

Laverton Station has never been a 24-hour station. In 2014, an organisational review of Laverton Police Station concluded that the resources allocated to Laverton (1 Senior Sergeant / 2 Sergeants / 9 other ranks) would be more efficiently used within the Hobson's Bay Police Service Areas (PSA) and they were relocated accordingly in 2015-16.

A shop front service was retained at the Laverton site and response services for the PSA were provided from Altona and Williamstown police stations. When the Westgate Family Violence Unit (FVU) was established, they were located at the Laverton site. The FVU continued to operate from this location until their relocation to the Multi-Disciplinary Centre (MDC) at Hoppers Crossing in May 2018 along with the Westgate Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team.

Portfolio:	Police
Witness:	Minister Lisa Neville
Committee member:	Mr Sam Hibbins
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Relevant text:

Mr HIBBINS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister and the team, for appearing today. I want to ask about the systemic review of police oversight that is currently underway. Are you able to provide an update to the committee on the review and its time frames?

Ms NEVILLE: Look, I understand why you asking the question. Police are contributing to that process. It is quite a substantive process that is going on. There are a number of papers and discussion papers that are being, through legal services as well as through police, participated in. It really is a matter for the Attorney when that is brought forward and when we are in a position to be able to land that. I would say that police have fully cooperated and believe strongly in the need to continue to improve integrity measures both internally but also through that oversight. But I cannot give you that; I am sorry. That might be something that the Secretary can take on notice.

Mr HIBBINS: Okay. Thank you. My understanding is that legislation was supposed to be introduced this year. If that is still on track, that would be good to know as well. Obviously we are coming to the end of the parliamentary term as well.

Answer:

The Government committed to a systemic review of police oversight to acquit recommendation 61 of the *Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants* and the policy work arising from the 2018 IBAC Committee *Inquiry into the external oversight of police corruption and misconduct in Victoria*.

Recommendation 61 requires the Victorian Government, within two years, to undertake a review of institutional and legislative structures for the oversight of Victoria Police's exercise of powers.

The review has conducted approximately 50 targeted consultation meetings, received 39 written submissions, and received 134 anonymous survey responses from members of the public.

Public and targeted stakeholder consultations closed on 1 February 2022.

The Government is considering the stakeholder feedback and potential options for reform.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety intends to publish a consultation summary and next steps for police oversight reform shortly via Engage Victoria.

Portfolio:	Police
Witness:	Ms Rebecca Falkingham
Committee member:	Mr Sam Hibbins
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Relevant text:

Mr HIBBINS: Is there a total for the legal bill for Victoria Police that has been spent on the Lawyer X matter so far?

Ms FALKINGHAM: Mr Hibbins, we have released that publicly previously. I do not have it with me, but I am happy to bring it back to you on notice.

Answer:

The total spend for Victoria Police on corporate legal costs for the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants was \$45,935,457, as at 30 April 2022.

The 2018-19 and 2019-20 financial year figures have not changed from the previously reported data being \$34,243,163. The expenditure data for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years, as at 30 April 2022, is \$11,692,294.

Portfolio:	Police
Witness:	Minister Lisa Neville
Committee member:	Mr Sam Hibbins
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Relevant text:

Mr HIBBINS: Yes, of course. I want to ask nohw about a number of inclusion strategies that the police force have had. In the *Aboriginal Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan* I believe there was a target to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation to 1 per cent. Has that target been reached?

Ms NEVILLE: I would have to take that on notice. Do you have that, Rick?

Acting Comm. NUGENT: No. I know most of our plans are in the process of being updated. If you give me a moment, I can have a look. I think I might have some information on that.

Mr HIBBINS: Similarly with the CALD inclusion strategy as well, I think there was a target to improve CALD leadership to 1.6 per cent.

Ms NEVILLE: Is this in terms of interactions?

Mr HIBBINS: I am just reading from what was in the strategy and action plan. I will allow you to provide further detail.

Acting Comm. NUGENT: No, I will have to come back to you on those numbers.

Answer:

As at 31 March 2022:

- 0.55% of all Victoria Police employees identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. (VicPol's target was 1% by June 2021).
- 9.2% of Victoria Police Command are employees of CALD heritage. (VicPol's target was 1.6% by June 2021).

Please note, our people data systems provide for employees to identify their background. Identification of background is voluntary, and the reported numbers only reflect those employees who have chosen to identify.

Portfolio:	Police
Witness:	Acting Commissioner Nugent
Committee member:	Mr James Newbury
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Relevant text:

Mr NEWBURY: Thank you. Deputy Commissioner, can I take you to page 72, which shows combined required savings, if you add the two numbers on page 72, of \$34.1 million. What is Victoria Police expected to cut with that \$34.1 million?

Acting Comm. NUGENT: We, like all other agencies, are looking for efficiencies that enable us to be more effective in what we are doing. We have certainly, in support of some budget initiatives around this, looked at some functions that are no longer necessary. There are certainly some projects and some other types of activities we were undertaking within central commands that we have ceased to undertake a make a lot of savings. We had a Victoria Police Finance Board established, which is co-chaired by the Secretary of DTF and the Chief Commissioner. Underneath that we have a cost control board that really actually is focused on financial management and appropriate spending across all parts of policing. It is actually quite an effective model. We also have a Financial Sustainability Program Office, so we have undertaken a lot of savings through some of this work, and Byron might be able to take you through it a little bit further. Byron sits underneath the financial management—

Mr NEWBURY: Feel free to take it on notice, considering the time.

Answer:

The combined savings, announced in the 2019-20 and 2021-22 budgets respectively, reflect whole of government general efficiency dividends and efficiencies which have been applied to departmental budgets across the Government sector.

The required savings represent a small proportion of the total Victoria Police budget and do not impact on frontline police services.

Victoria Police has a strong focus on financial management and delivering efficient and effective services. In 2019-20 a Financial Sustainability Program was established to identify and implement various initiatives and efficiency measures to meet required savings.

This work continues to progress across several areas including general operating efficiencies, procurement and contract savings, and other non-frontline services spend such as consultancies and labour hire, non-essential training, and back-office administrative efficiencies.

Portfolio:	Police
Witness:	Minister Lisa Neville
Committee member:	Mrs Bev McArthur
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Relevant text:

Mrs McARTHUR: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister. Regarding mental health critical situations, what is the number of events recorded in the leaked database over each of the last four calendar years with psychiatric crisis as the reason? Perhaps you could take it on notice. And what is the number of mental health transfers attended by police in each of the last four calendar years? Perhaps that should be on notice as well. And on hospital guard shifts, how many hours were spent by operational police members in hospitals related to section 351 transfers over each of the last four calendar years? And finally, in each of the last four calendar years, how many people have taken long-term leave periods exceeding four weeks, and could you provide a breakdown of the types of leave also, so sick leave, personal leave et cetera?

Ms NEVILLE: I think if that information is available, we can do that. I would not want to be providing leaked data. That is not appropriate, **and we have a Crime Statistics Agency** now for that reason—they are the ones who actually work through that. **I do know that police attend a mental health incident about every 12 minutes**, I think it is—a bit less than family violence, which is about every 6 minutes. So it is a substantial part of their work. But the mental health royal commission also looked at this, and you will see through various legislation changes about who should be first responders in relation to mental health issues going forward and how they are managed at hospitals. I am not sure that some of that data is easily able to be obtained, but where it is, we will make sure that we provide that to you.

Answers:

Regarding mental health critical situations, what is the number of events recorded in the LEAP database over each of the last four calendar years with psychiatric crisis as the reason?

Number of s351 Mental Health Events in LEAP by Calendar Year *

*s351 is defined as Police involvement in Psychiatric Crises

Calendar Year					Five Year Avg
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
12082	13796	16159	19105	19125	16053.4

What is the number of mental health transfers attended by police in each of the last four calendar years?

Number of All Mental Health Events in LEAP by Calendar Year ^

Calendar Year					Five Year Avg
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
12763	14617	16995	20115	20248	16947.6

^ This is the number of Mental Health Forms submitted

On hospital guard shifts, how many hours were spent by operational police members in hospitals related to section 351 transfers over each of the last four calendar years?

Victoria Police does not capture data on “hospital guard shift” as a function of policing. Once police get to the hospital, there can be long wait times to handover custody of a person to an appropriately authorised clinician. Additionally, Victoria Police data does not detail the length of time taken for each specific component of the mental health transfer process. Victoria Police record the total time of police involvement.

In each of the last four calendar years, how many people have taken long-term leave periods exceeding four weeks, and could you provide a breakdown of the types of leave also, so sick leave, personal leave et cetera?

The figures below are provided for employees who have been continuously absent from the workplace for more than 20 days. Note that in any one year, people may have taken more than one block of leave exceeding four weeks – these people have been counted just once in that year.

All leave types have been included. Note that with the volume of data, showing individual leave types is not something that can be done quickly - with the current time constraints it is not achievable.

Year	Police Member	PSO	Recruits	VPS	Total
2018	4614	333	8	1346	6300
2019	4903	344	14	1441	6701
2020	3643	247	1	965	4856
2021	4511	286	4	1061	5862

Portfolio:	Police
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Committee member:	Mrs Bev McArthur
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Relevant text:

Mrs McARTHUR: Okay. Commissioner, what is the current status of the implementation of the relaunched police in schools program?

Acting Comm. NUGENT: So that is live now. That is part of our new neighbourhood policing framework and our model, which is a schools engagement program. Different schools in different communities have different needs, which is quite appropriate. So each area is then tailoring its program according to local needs. Some schools, as you could imagine, are in quite disadvantaged communities, others less so. So it is really understanding, in each of the local areas, what are the specific needs. How do we best support local communities and assist our youth from entering, in any way, into the criminal justice system?

Mrs McARTHUR: Okay. So how many schools have been visited since the announcement of the relaunch?

Acting Comm. NUGENT: I could take that one on notice, certainly, and get back to you. I do not have that.

Mrs McARTHUR: So do you have a target for the number of students to be exposed to the program over the next 12 months?

Acting Comm. NUGENT: Not that I am aware of, but I can get more information on what the program is going to entail. But again, it is tailored to the specific needs of that area to ensure that we have a local-based approach to some of their specific needs.

Answers:

Victoria Police is currently finalising our process for recording school visits as part of our Neighbourhood Policing model. However, direct feedback from police indicates that our members have conducted several hundred school visits already this year, with many police members visiting multiple schools each week. These engagements include delivery of over 100 cyber-safety sessions, involvement in the Fit2Drive road safety program, participation in the National Walk Safely to School Day and attendance at several hundred Blue Light events across the state. Additionally, police have had almost daily interactions with schools in response to emerging safety concerns including planned fights, drugs, graffiti and road/rail safety issues.

As noted by Acting Commissioner Nugent, this engagement is tailored to the needs of the school, hence there are no specific numerical targets for engagement. However, police are actively encouraged to engage with local schools to build trust and confidence in police and address local safety needs. Police engagement with schools will be monitored at a local level, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Policing model.