



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

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Evaluation of Current ACT Policing

Submission 6

Weston Creek Community Council

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Your local voice

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The Secretary
Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety
ACT Legislative Assembly

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7 February 2020

Submission on the Evaluation of Current ACT Policing Arrangements

The Weston Creek Community Council welcomes the decision of the ACT Legislative Assembly to conduct an **evaluation of Current ACT Policing Arrangements** and is pleased to be invited to contribute.

Council notes that the Australian Federal Police provides policing services to the ACT under Section 23 of the *Australian Capital Territory Self-Government Act 1988* (Commonwealth).

Council understands the Policing Arrangement is supported by an annually negotiated Purchase Agreement between the ACT Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the AFP Commissioner and the Chief Police Officer for the ACT. This agreement details the outcomes, outputs, performance measures, targets and facilities to be provided and the powers and obligations of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Chief Police Officer for the ACT, and associated administrative arrangements. The main outcomes are **Reduce crime, Public safety and Community and partner engagement**.

Council has reviewed the terms of reference for the inquiry and feels it is uniquely placed to comment on the effectiveness of the arrangements as they apply within the Weston Creek and Molonglo areas of the ACT. Council's views are formed primarily from feedback from the community through regular public meetings, individual representations and the recently completed Community Survey as well as media reports. Council

summarises the overarching view the community has formed as the ACT Policing performance against reasonable expectations as not going really anywhere near meeting them.

Of particular concern is rising crime rates, slow response times, lack of visible presence in the Weston Creek and Molonglo areas and poor feedback to victims of crime or complainants on how their matter is progressing.

In addition, complaints about dangerous driving are growing and there are some recent high-speed injury crashes that may have been avoided with a greater visible policing presence deterring underlying behaviour. Many members of the community have expressed the view that this may be somewhat mitigated through the establishment of a permanent police presence in the area, rather than waiting for a patrol from Woden or further afield to become available.

A permanent police presence would also assist the public with some routine tasks such as lost and found items, documents certification or bail presentations.

Council is also disappointed and concerned that ACT Policing does not come under the jurisdiction of the recently introduced ACT Integrity Commission, rather staying under the Commonwealth arrangements. On the surface, the published arguments to retain the status quo do not provide the degree of confidence that a reasonable citizen would expect.

At an individual level, members of the Community who have engaged with members of ACT Policing often report they have been treated with professionalism and respect. They also report an ongoing refrain from members about how stretched they are against an ever-growing workload, such as burglary, acute mental health incidents and domestic violence. Senior ACT Policing members who have presented at Council's public meeting have diplomatically explained the resources they have available and the territory the need to cover when fielding questions about lack of visible presence and slow response times.

In summary our questions that we would like to see addressed by the committee are:

- Does the current Agreement provide appropriate resourcing to ensure an adequate level of servicing for the ACT Community, including the Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley areas? Or is the resourcing a matter that lies outside the Agreement?

- Does the ACT Policing Agreement provide a clarity of expectations? Are the performance standards framed in a way to ensure a standard of delivery the community would regard as reasonable?
- Is the lack of a permanent police presence in the Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley contributing to the current increasing crime rates? Would the establishment of such a presence be likely to have an impact?
- Is it time that the ACT as a self-governing Territory took a view that it had sufficient maturity to assume responsibility for the policing function and move towards establishing its own police service? Alternatively, is there an argument for a competitive tendering process with the potential for another Australian Police Force to deliver these services? Is there an appetite in the Assembly to negotiate with the Commonwealth for the *Australian Capital Territory Self-Government Act 1988* (Commonwealth) to be suitably amended if it is considered necessary?

Council would be comfortable to answer questions in relation to this Submission and appear before the Committee if requested to.

Tom Anderson
Chair
Weston Creek Community Council