

# WA Police Union Review of the South East Metropolitan District Trial (Frontline 2020 Reform)

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## Introduction

The trial that was instigated in the South East Metropolitan Police District (SEMD) involved the largest number of Members ever engaged in a new style of rostering. Frontline policing was broken into three distinct areas:

- Response Teams (RT) based at Armadale and Cannington;
- District Control Centre (DCC) based at Cannington; and
- Local Policing Teams (LPT) based at Armadale, Belmont, Canning Vale, Cannington, Gosnells and Kensington.

WAPU Treasurer Mick Kelly (also a Sergeant at Cannington Police Station) and WAPU Field Officer Dave Lampard were chosen to represent Members in consultation with the SEMD Management Team.

The RT and DCC were to provide 24/7 coverage. RT members were rostered to work a six-week cycle of rotating shifts. The DCC was originally rostered on the same pattern but soon moved to a 12-hour shift roster that mirrored Members at the Police Communications Centre (POC). The LPT have been rostered to work day, afternoon and occasional evening shifts, 18 hours a day, 7 days a week.

This period also saw the amalgamation of the Armadale/Gosnells Branch of the Union with the Cannington Branch to form the South East Metropolitan (SEM) Branch. Members of those Branches raised concerns about rosters and resources with Sergeant Kelly and Mr Lampard.

The nature of shift work and the new management procedures made it very difficult for inclusion of Branch Officials in the initial development of the roster styles and implementation, as required by Clause 12 (5) (a) (i) of the 2011 Industrial Agreement. This will be rectified when the model rolls out to the three newly formed metropolitan districts.

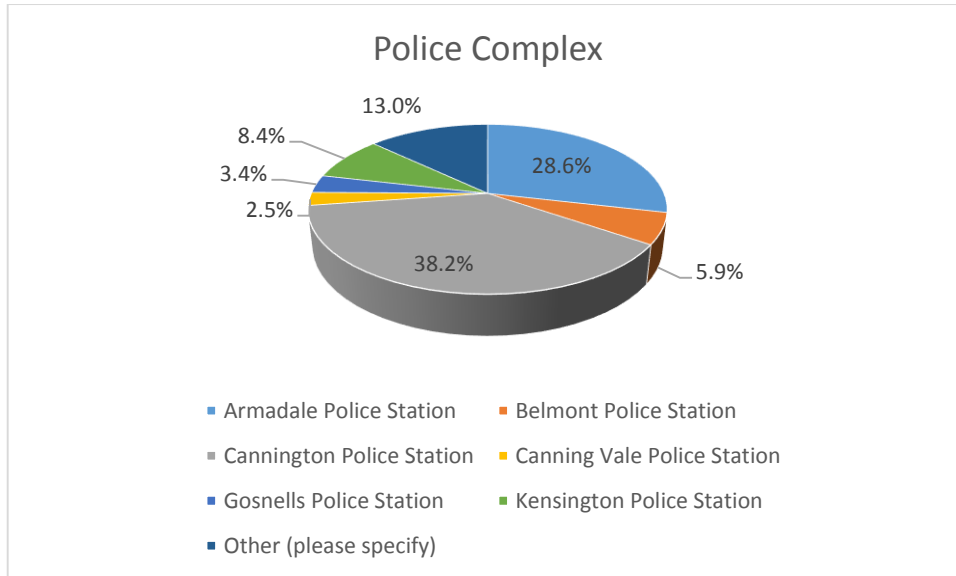
WAPU and Workplace Relations Branch have already commenced roster training for Branch Officials.

Since the introduction of flexible rostering arrangements at 24/7 police stations, WAPU has conducted Member surveys aimed at gauging the success of the roster type, whilst at the same time, identifying any shortcomings that would adversely affect our Members. WAPU ran a Member survey regarding the efficacy of the new SEMD format, especially the effects and impact of the new rosters. WAPU had 267 respondents to the survey, which ran for 16 days until Friday, 13 June 2014. There are approximately 500 police officers within the SEMD.

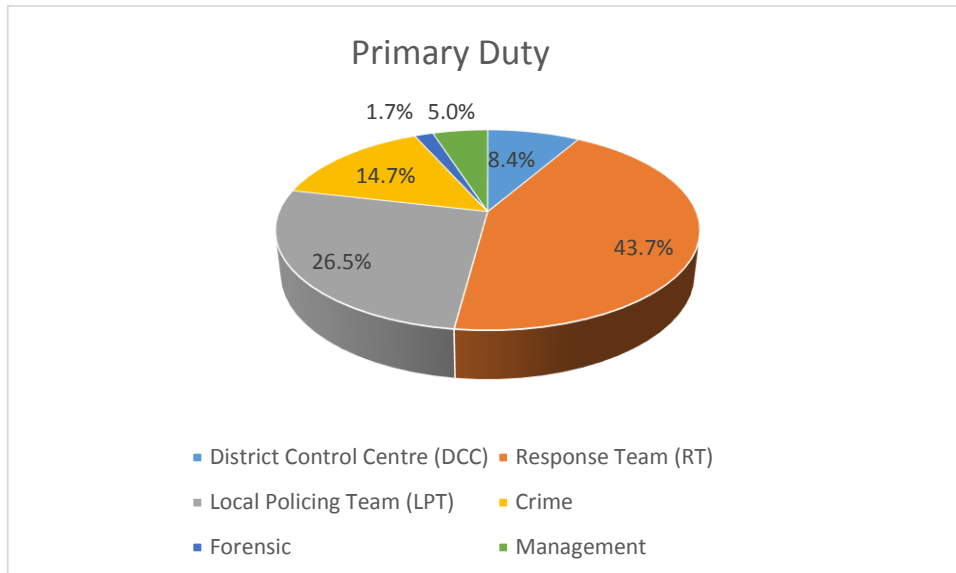
### **Demographics**

General respondent demographics:

- Approximately 79% (211 respondents) male, 21% female (56 respondents);
- 19.1% of respondents fell in the 41-45 year old category, with 16.85% in the 25-30 year old category and 15.73% in the 36-40 year old category;
- 28.84% are Constables, with an even split of percentages (25.84%) between Senior Constable and Sergeant rank;
- Respondents were split across the following physical police complexes:



- The respondents were broken down into the following primary duties:



- Of those who are attached to the LPT, the following functions are predominantly being performed:
  - Crime file enquiries – 91.94%
  - Community engagement – 88.71%
  - Service of processes – 82.26%
  - Execution of warrants – 75.81%
  - Other duties:
    - Front counter
    - Lock-up
    - Traffic

- The majority of respondents (being 64.93% or 137 respondents) were working 10-hour shifts, with 32.23% (or 68 respondents) working 8-hour shifts.

### Work/life balance

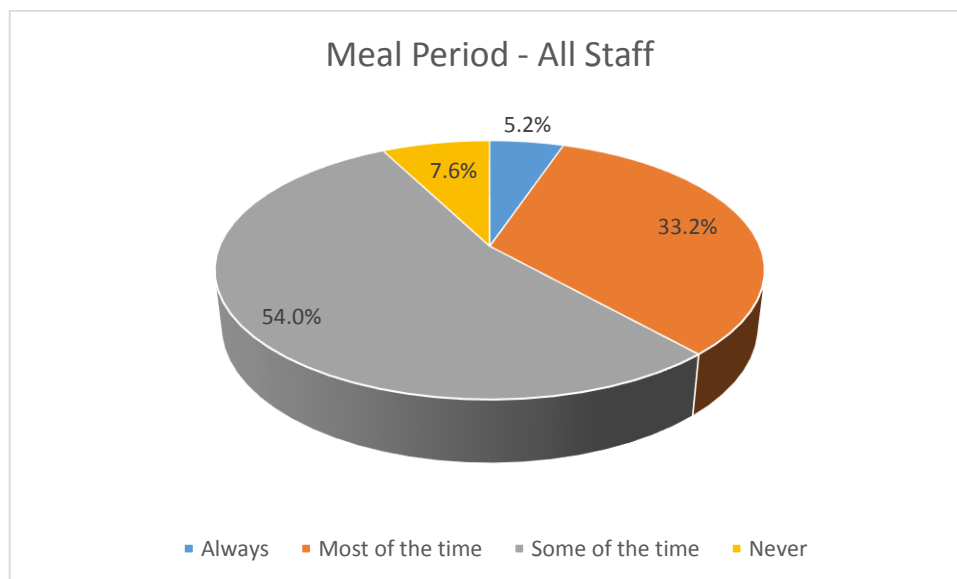
The majority of officers either commuted a round trip of 10-19 kilometres (25.34% or 56 respondents), 20-29 kilometres (21.72% or 48 respondents) or 50+ kilometres (20.81% or 46 respondents) between work and home.

44.70% of respondents were married/partnered with dependents, 27.19% of respondents were married/partnered with no dependents, 21.20% were single with no dependents and less than 7% were single with dependents. Of those with dependents, approximately 68% had children that were primary school aged, approximately 35% had children who were secondary school aged and just under 20% had tertiary aged children.

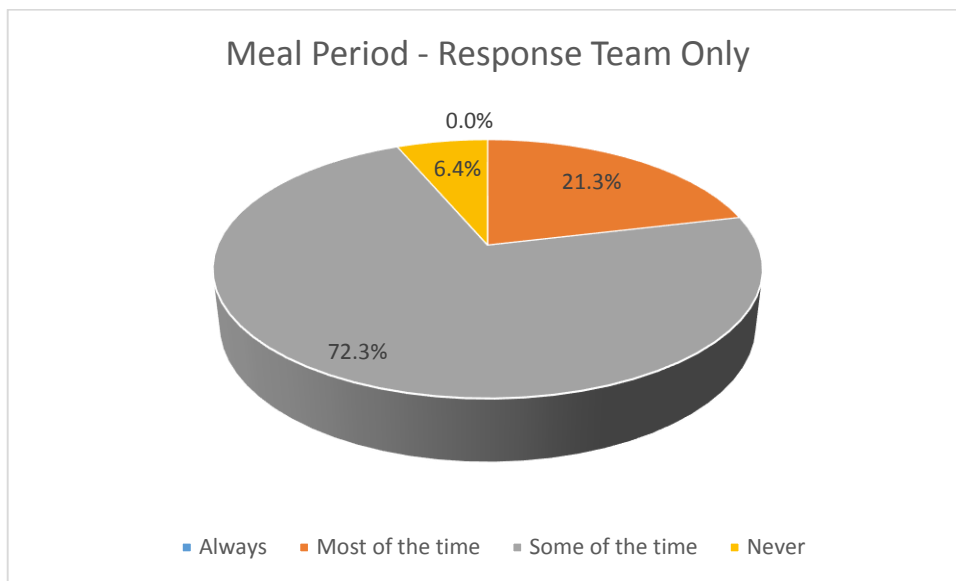
When asked if the roster officers worked was sufficiently flexible to meet work/life demands, 58.77% of respondents answered yes, whilst 41.23% answered no.

- Of those within the RT, 56% answered no.

Respondents were asked how often they were able to take their meal period in accordance with the Industrial Agreement. The following was noted:



Of those within the RT, the following was noted:



When asked if their meal period was regularly interrupted with requests to attend to other tasks, 72% said yes and 28% said no.

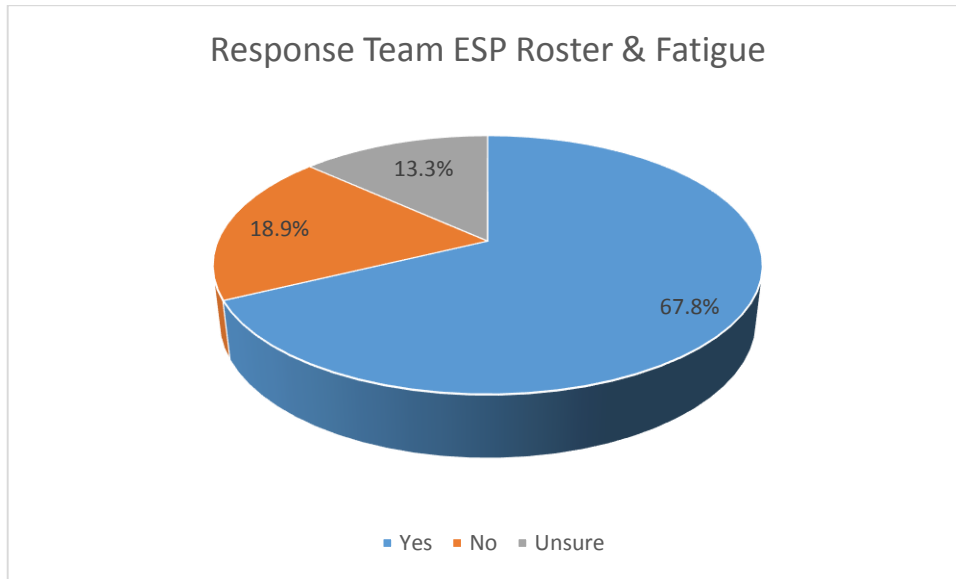
- Of those within the RT, 85% said yes.

### ESP Roster

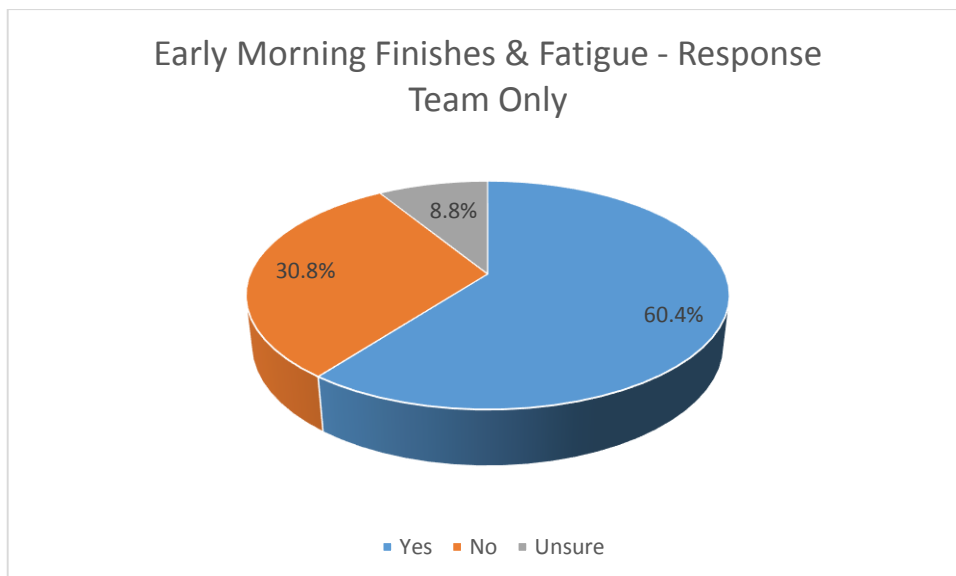
62% of respondents (132 officers) *did not* fully understand the industrial requirements of the ESP roster. However, 63% of respondents knew that a WAPU Branch Official had to be involved in the development of an ESP roster.

### ESP Roster & the RT

When asked if the current ESP roster for the RT creates fatigue, the following was noted:



A proposition was made that the preliminary view of the ESP RT roster indicated that an early morning finish on evening shift (between 0300 and 0500 hours) was likely to create significant issues when trying to obtain sufficient sleep. The following was noted:



### **Fatigue issues**

58% of respondents were able to obtain sleep prior to a night shift, with 42% unable to obtain any sleep.

Approximately 87% of respondents were able to go to bed between 0800-1000 hours after a night shift. Approximately 44% of respondents achieved 4-5 hours of sleep after a night shift, with 46% achieving 6-7 hours.

There was insufficient data presented in the survey returns to indicate that fatigue through sleep deprivation was a concerning factor in the DCC or LPT rosters. An anticipated factor was established regarding previous non-shift workers who had historically worked only 8-hour shifts now being rostered for four different rotating 5 x 10-hour shifts totaling 50 hours.

The RT roster works as such: 42 days in the shift cycle of 240 hours. 17 weekly leave days allocated. One block of five sequential weekly leave days, one block of four sequential weekly leave days, two blocks of three sequential weekly leave days, two blocks of two sequential weekly leave days and one single weekly leave day. This single weekly leave day rostered at the end of an 0500 hours finish and a day before a 2100 night shift start is the only weekly leave day that was roundly criticized in the survey. The OSH implications of such a weekly leave allocation will be explained later in this summary.

Officers are rostered for seven day shifts, seven afternoon shifts, three evening shifts and seven night shifts. Importantly, the structure of the roster allows 29 nights where a normally acceptable night's sleep can be achieved. There are 10 shifts made up of seven night shifts finishing at 0700 hours and three evening shifts finishing at 0500 hours where sleep debt is incurred. This amounts to 10 hours in the six-week cycle.

The only area where obtaining proper sleep is significantly interfered with occurs on the Sunday of the second rotation of the cycle. Being a single weekly leave day it is very difficult adjusting to a healthy sleep pattern. The evening shift finishes at 0500 hours on Sunday morning.

After 10 hours, officers will be tired and go to bed, probably waking at approximately 1300 to 1400 hours. With half of the daylight hours gone the Member is then confronted with trying to achieve proper sleep on the Sunday evening. This is further compounded on the Monday as the officer is required to commence a sequence of four x 10-hour night shifts. Unless sleep

is obtained prior to commencing the shift, officers will carry sleep debt into the rotation thus adversely impacting effectiveness, decision making and productivity.

This single weekly leave day is not recommended with legislative evidence and advice being situated at dot point four on page 17 of the WorkSafe Working Hours Code of Practice.

A majority of respondents commented that:

- The single weekly leave day between late shifts provided no respite;
- Finishing at 0500 on a Friday morning impacts on family responsibilities;
- Would prefer to change to a two block roster e.g. DSx2, ASx2, NSx2 WLx4;
- More staff needed on the RT north and south components;
- There is a need to reduce governance and red tape;
- Ensure that officers can take a 50 minute or two 25 minute meal breaks;
- Unable to cook or eat healthy food brought to work;
- Forced to eat unhealthy fast food on the road or do not eat at all;
- No availability of any Voluntary Self Selection of Shifts;
- Would like to give 12-hour shifts a trial;
- Not used to working 50 hours straight, especially at night;
- Roster should be posted for the six-week cycle or at the very least two weeks;
- Long commutes are problematic after a 10-hour late shift, especially with overtime;
- No opportunity for supervisors to exchange shifts for family reasons; and
- Officers with young families and working partners are struggling to juggle family responsibilities whilst maintaining adequate sleep.

### **Perceptions of the model**

WAPU proposed the following question, based on management feedback outlined in a recent

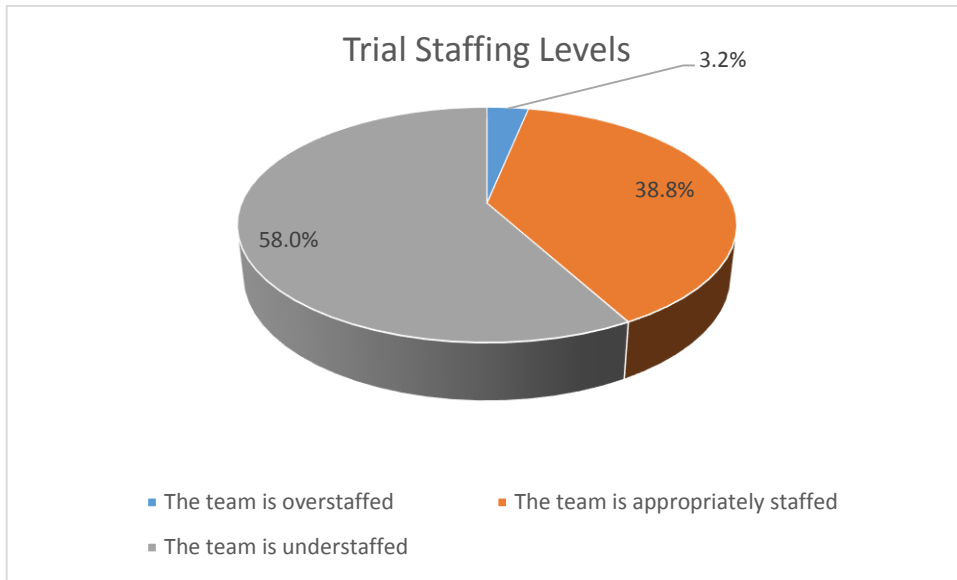
*From the Line:*

“The South East Metropolitan District Trial is being touted as a success, with WAPOL claiming the trial has reduced crime statistics, reduced demand on resources and ensured a timely control over resources. Do you feel that this is a true and sustainable representation of the trial model?”

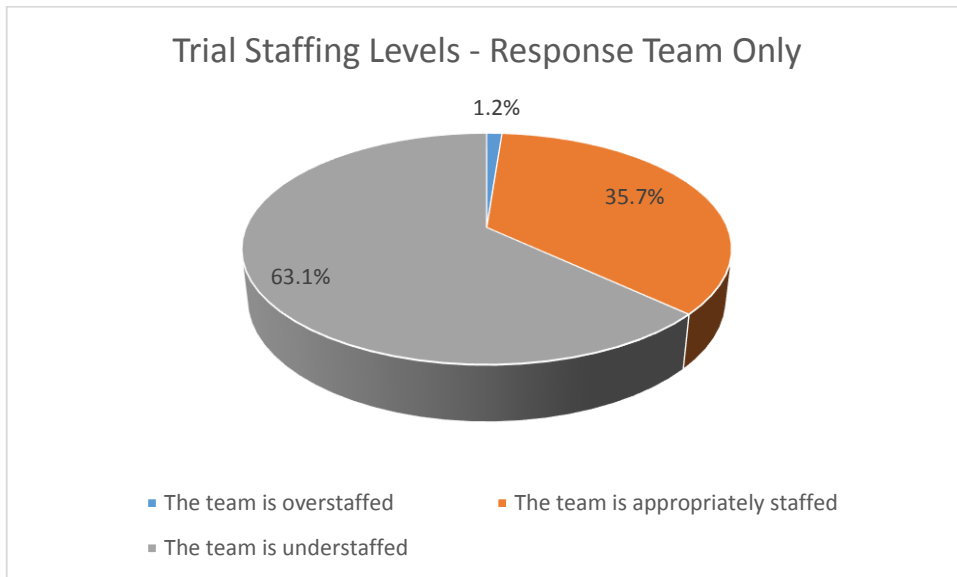


42% indicated no.  
28% indicated yes.  
30% were unsure.

When asked which of the following scenarios best described the trial staffing levels within the teams, the answers from all respondents were:



For those within the RT, the answers were:



The survey also asked if officers had sufficient time within their shifts to complete all necessary administrative tasks within a timely manner. 61% said no, 39% said yes.

- For those within the RT, 75% said no, and only 25% said yes.

The general trend of comments indicated that time to properly complete briefs was required and supervisors were hampered in conducting process supervision due to tasking responsibilities.

There was an exact even split (50% yes, 50% no) between respondents who indicated that they were (or were not) encouraged by management to suggest ways of improving policing in the SEMD.

### **Restrictions on the effectiveness of the model**

It is vital that WA Police move to address the lack of resources issue **prior** to the model being rolled out to the other three districts in order to prevent the anticipated pressure on service delivery. Taking proactive action will address the majority of Members' concerns and provide a model that is mutually beneficial for all stakeholders.

A majority of respondents commented that:

- Lack of sufficient equipment hampers the effectiveness of shift overlaps;
- Lack of available vehicles, especially secure vans;
- Insufficient office space at certain police stations;
- Officers are working with old, outdated and often broken equipment;
- Insufficient support staff to conduct front counter and back office support;
- There should be dedicated front counter and office staff AM and PM;
- Significant distances between tasking jobs (e.g. Mount Richon to Carlisle), improved analysis and use of AVL data should minimise this occurring; and
- RT requires an increased shift strength to allow more time to complete tasks appropriately.

### **Response Team: Best aspects**

Of 108 comments, the majority responded as follows:

- Improved coverage at peak periods, especially summer time;
- Financial benefit due to more shift penalties;
- Certainty with roster patterns assists family plans;

- Enjoy the extended weekly leave blocks;
- Team structure consisting of consistent supervisor; and
- Ability to have regular team musters and debriefs.

### **Response Team: Worst aspects**

Of 113 comments, the majority responded as follows:

- Fatigue due to inability to take a meal break;
- Lack of ability or protocol to change shifts for essential family issues, instead of weekly leave;
- Having to resort to taking an annual leave day for essential family issues;
- Posting the roster for only one week adds a portion of uncertainty;
- Hard to factor part-time staff into shifts;
- Junior staff may succumb to fatigue and crash if pushed too far, too soon;
- Fatigue due to the single weekly leave day and sleeping arrangements; and
- 0500 finishes in the week make balancing family responsibilities very difficult.

### **Positive feedback about the trial overall**

The overall sentiments expressed about the SEMD trial were:

- Supervisors who are able to perform supportive leadership are in turn able to create a productive, happy and efficient working environment;
- The LPT are able to apprehend more offenders;
- DCC is working ok but some staff need to reduce unnecessary demands on RT to get to the next task;
- LPT are attracting positive feedback from the victims and witnesses they deal with; and
- All three areas are now able to socialise together due to the consistency of the teams' structure.

### **Negative feedback about the trial overall**

68% of respondents provided some kind of negative feedback in the survey:

- Lack of structure in the administration and back room support to the RT and LPT;

- More emphasis should be applied to ensuring appropriate staffing levels to cover unavoidable absences such as Sick Leave, Annual Leave, Long Service Leave and Training;
- All LPTs should work the same way, OICs need to work this out to ensure consistency;
- LPTs having to travel up to 15 kilometres outside of the district for inquiries;
- The automatic switch off of air conditioners needs to be readjusted;
- Supervisors need to be made aware of available industrial clause that allows shift changes for essential family reasons;
- Accommodate part-time staff in all three areas, if possible;
- RT members do not have time to form relationships with the local community;
- RT members should not be bullied into attending the next job before properly finishing the task they are attending; and
- No provisions made for part-time staff or Voluntary Self Section of Shifts in the RT, LPT or DCC.

## Recommendations

### 1. Recommendations regarding fatigue

- WA Police management and WAPU representatives explore workable alternatives to the single weekly leave day between late shifts.
- During winter periods, 1700 hours evening shift start times should be used instead of 1900 hours, this will also allow early afternoon shifts to be rostered providing increased overlaps with day shift.
- Officers should be provided with the WA Police OSH Branch and BSS Fatigue Management Booklet that provides good advice on obtaining quality sleep on shift work.

### 2. Recommendations to increase resources

- Increase human resources in each metropolitan district from 500 to 550.
- Review availability of resources, particularly vehicles and equipment.
- Spend some of the Government required savings on more vehicles and equipment.
- Use displaced non-operational staff in administrative support roles.
- Review the ethics of the “badge of courage” in writing off minor tasks, which is upsetting some officers.

### 3. Recommendations for managing time to complete administrative tasks

- Review afternoon to evening shift overlaps with a view to allocating and managing time to complete compulsory processes.

### 4. Recommendations for the Response Team

- Increase human resources (police officers) in each RT from teams of 12 x 6 (72) to teams of 12 x 8 (96).
- Ensure each RT has an appropriate balance of senior personnel, to minimise occasions when junior officers have to work together.
- Put in place methods to ensure officers do achieve a meal break.

- Prepare a protocol that provides for essential shift exchange as provided by the 2011 Industrial Agreement Clause 12 (7) (f).
- Post rosters in fortnightly periods.
- Evaluate the protection of probationary Constables regarding emergency driving and over work.
- Make allowances for the inclusion of part-time staff and sharing of team spots.
- Change the winter evening shift start time to 1700 hours.
- As the rollout to the other districts continues, allowances for long commutes must be addressed. For instance, currently there is one officer who lives in Mullaloo travelling 64 kilometres each way whilst working at Armadale RT.

## Conclusion

Overall, any problems identified in the survey can be rectified with moderate modifications to the roster pattern, as well as additional equipment and human resourcing in the administrative support roles and RT (the details of which are covered in the Recommendations).

One area that has surfaced and will impact on the other three districts is available radio channels. Reducing channels from two to one for the districts could eventuate in an inability to provide regular, reliable communications, which has the potential to pose significant safety risks for our Members.

Changes to the rosters and increasing localised resources will have a positive impact our Members as they balance work/life demands, manage fatigue and attend to all of their duties.

All stakeholders must work together to do what's in the best interest of the community. Service delivery standards must not be compromised, with positive changes made today, benefitting all West Australians in the future.