

# Vehicle and Personal Safety Report

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**Prepared by the Western Australian Police Union of Workers**

**2012**

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## Introduction

Recent media attention surrounding the destruction of a police officer's personal vehicle whilst on duty<sup>1</sup> has ignited serious debate about not only the safety of the personal vehicles of police officers at work but also the safety of officers themselves as they traverse between their vehicle and their place of work.

The WA Police Union (the Union) has expressed its concern throughout the construction of the Perth Police Complex in Northbridge that the new station will have no secure on-site parking for its staff. The location of the complex, in the notorious nightclubbing district of Northbridge, is instrumental to the Union's argument about the provision of secure parking for police officers. Members have expressed concerns that their private property and personal safety are not protected from acts of retribution caused by the clients they encounter, with some members illustrating the point by indicating they have been "(t)hreatened by group of males who recognised me from working in Northbridge during the night", verbally abused and "followed to our vehicles after finishing duty around midnight".

However, those working at the Perth Police Station are not the only officers who have been subjected to actual or threatened offences to private vehicles or personal safety. Information collected from the Union's member survey entitled "Personal and Vehicle Security" illustrates that members from all districts across the state have experienced both real and perceived danger to themselves and their personal property, with some members experiencing more than one criminal offence.

The survey uncovered information about: the provision of secured parking for police officers; how secure officers felt their vehicle and personal property was whilst working certain shifts in certain districts; and how safe officers felt whilst commuting to and from work given the susceptibility for police officers to be the targets of retaliatory behaviours. Not only did the survey respondents supply some startling examples of damage to their personal property, the Union was also provided with accounts of verbal and physical harassment experienced by members as they commuted to and from work. As a result of the findings, the Union has developed a set of recommendations that the Agency must consider complying with, so that the safety and security of its staff is no longer compromised.

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, K. "Police officer's private car set on fire at Forrestfield station", *PerthNow*, 17 August 2012.

## **Background**

### **The Union's campaign for secure parking for police officers**

The Union has been campaigning for parking for police officers (in the Perth city area in particular) since the mid 1980s. In 2007, prior to the commencement of construction at the site of the new Perth Police Complex, the Union wrote letters to the Commissioner of Police requesting that the design process for the new station envisage secure parking for members' private vehicles, as it was noted that the area had no other sensible parking arrangements available for police officers. The Union had particular concern for members who completed their shifts after daylight hours and who had to walk to their vehicles which were, more often than not, parked in very busy and potentially violent areas of Perth.

Despite the Agency's assurances, contained within a response letter, that ample secure parking opportunities existed within the CBD, as well as CCTV and public transport options, the safety and security of police officers and their personal property across all districts continues to be a concern for the Union and its members.

### **Police Building Code**

The Police Building Code is a policy document developed by WA Police that outlines the technical (specifications) requirements for all WA Police stations. Encapsulated within the first version of the Code was a technical specification that outlined a minimum number of parking bays within the police vehicle parking compound for the total major shift staff numbers minus 20%. The 2006 version of the Police Building Code has rescinded this parking specification and, to the Union's knowledge, nothing similar has since been included.

## Survey overview and general summations

### The survey

The Union utilised the online questionnaire service, Survey Monkey, to obtain information from members relating to incidents that had occurred within the past 10 years, whilst the officer was on duty or commuting to work, to personal property and/or to the individual themselves. One thousand and eight people responded, with a total of 934 completing the survey. Some questions required the respondent to answer “yes” or “no”, some questions required the respondent to select an answer from a list of answers and other questions asked for elaboration and feedback.

### The respondents

Appendix A provides a breakdown of the age and gender of the respondents. Interesting to note is that the response rate of males and females closely mirrors the gender profile of police officers as a total (approximately 21% of all police officers are female<sup>2</sup>), and has not been weighted more heavily towards one gender.

### Metropolitan Area as compared to Regional WA

Of the respondents, 76.8% were from the Metropolitan Area and 23.2% were from Regional WA. The majority of the Metropolitan Area respondents were from the Central Metropolitan District (33.6%), whilst the majority of the respondents from Regional WA were from the Goldfields and Wheatbelt Districts (19.5% and 18.6% respectively).

### Modes of transport

Private vehicles and bicycles were cited as the main modes of transport utilised by police officers to commute to work, with the majority of officers (79.5%) using their private vehicle most frequently as a means to get to work. Public transport rated highly as a mode of transport utilised by Metropolitan officers to get to and from work, whilst not one Regional WA respondent surveyed indicated they used public transport – the lack of any type of public transport in Regional WA, or at the very least public transport that runs after regular “9 to 5” business hours, is likely to impact on this finding.

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<sup>2</sup> Western Australia Police, *Western Australia Police 2011 Annual Report*, Government of Western Australia, 2011.

## Survey findings – security on shift work

### Day shift

Fifty-two per cent of all respondents to the survey indicated they regularly worked a day shift. The facilities available for parking a vehicle whilst working a day shift were divided fairly equitably between secured, unsecured and general public parking. Even though it was noted by 183 respondents that the parking utilised featured full fencing, gates and swipe card access, eight officers observed that the secure parking bays available to them were limited in number and often full by the time officers arrived at work. When the bays were full, the only option available to officers was unsecured verge parking.

Whilst 410 of 520 respondents to the question parked their vehicles within 100 metres or less from their workplace, more than half (51.6%) of officers working dayshift felt either very insecure or insecure about leaving their vehicles whilst at work. Whilst the same percentage (51.16%) of officers felt either secure or very secure about walking to and from their vehicle, 20.5% reported feeling insecure commuting from their vehicle to work and back again. Given that a day shift commences any time between the hours of 6.00am and 10.30am, even working a 10 hour shift or continuous overtime, officers are more often than not leaving their place of work during daylight hours which could explain greater feelings of security.

The percentage of officers who answered that they regularly worked dayshift in the Metropolitan Area equalled their Regional WA counterparts (68.6% and 63.7% respectively). A greater percentage of Metropolitan officers reported security measures such as full fencing (94%), gates (83.2%) and swipe card access (80.5%) yet only 8.3% of Regional WA officers had more than 100 metres to traverse between their workplaces and their vehicles, as compared to 24.4% of Metropolitan officers.

### Afternoon shift

Just over 60% of all respondents to the survey indicated they regularly worked an afternoon shift. Even though 245 respondents noted that the security measures available in secured parking included full fencing, gates, CCTV surveillance and swipe card access, one officer commented that at their station, the “[security] system regularly faults and the rear gate remains open for anyone to enter” whilst another four officers reiterated that the parking was easily accessible to members of the public. Fences were observed as being easy to jump over, gates were often not secure and could be easily pushed open and officers did not generally feel their vehicle was secure, with one noting

that as a result of a compound's slow-to-close electric gates, their car "tyres were slashed whilst parked at a 'secure' carpark in Warwick".

The facilities available for parking a vehicle whilst working an afternoon shift were weighted (across all districts) more towards secured parking (41.5%) than unsecured parking (27.6%) and general public parking (30.9%). Regardless of where an officer had parked their vehicle, approximately 53% of respondents felt their vehicle was either very insecure or insecure whilst they were on duty, as compared to only 35.4% who felt their cars were secure or very secure whilst parked. Whilst 48% of regular afternoon shift workers felt either secure or very secure walking to and from their vehicle, 52% of officers did not feel they were protected and safe commuting to their vehicle, with 21.1% reporting they felt insecure.

The percentage of officers who answered that they regularly worked the afternoon shift in the Metropolitan Area again paralleled their Regional WA counterparts (79.1% and 71.8% respectively). Metropolitan officers reported security measures such as full fencing as much as Regional WA officers (91.7% as compared to 87.1%), but Regional WA officers were more likely to have gates (83.9% as compared to 75.2%) and swipe card access (80.6% as compared to 77.2%). Only 6.9% of Regional WA officers had more than 100 metres to traverse between their workplaces and their vehicles when working an afternoon shift, in comparison with 23.3% of their Metropolitan counterparts.

### **Night shift**

Forty per cent of all respondents to the survey indicated that they regularly worked a night shift. Almost half (48.8%) of the respondents to the question acknowledged that the facilities available to park their vehicle on night shift were secure (with an even split noting that other available parking was either unsecure or public parking), with officers indicating that the most common forms of security included full fencing, gates and swipe card access. The facilities available for parking a vehicle whilst working a night shift were again weighted (across all districts) more towards secure parking (48.8%) than unsecured (25.1%) and general public parking (26.2%).

Officers indicated that despite some security measures, "gates [were] often faulty and open... CCTV often faulty", "gates are not locked and can be pushed open", "fencing can be easily jumped", CCTV was often not recording and the "parking area is open and accessible by public via insecure fencing... rocks have been thrown at private and police cars from this public open space". In a similar trend

noted by regular day shift workers, parking space available to officers working night shift was limited and if all secure bays were full, the only option available to officers was public or verge parking.

More than 48% of respondents felt their vehicle was either very insecure or insecure whilst they were on duty, compared to 40.6% who felt their cars were secure or very secure whilst parked. Whilst half of the regular night shift workers felt either secure or very secure walking to and from their vehicle, half of officers did not feel they were protected and safe commuting to their vehicle, with 21.7% reporting they felt insecure.

The percentage of officers who answered that they regularly worked the night shift in the Metropolitan Area again paralleled their Regional WA counterparts (45.7% for the Metropolitan Area and interestingly, a slighter higher percentage for Regional WA who reported 48.2%). Both Metropolitan and Regional WA officers reported security measures such as full fencing, gates, CCTV and swipe card access yet these measures were less prevalent than when working day shift or afternoon shift and were reported more so for Regional WA than for the Metropolitan Area. A mere 2.5% of Regional WA officers had more than 100 metres to traverse between their workplaces and their vehicles when working a night shift, as compared to 22.7% of Metropolitan officers.



## Survey findings – criminal offences committed on private vehicles or personal property

### Damage to vehicle or other property

When asked “Whilst you were working has your vehicle or property been subject to criminal offences in the car park in the past 10 years?”, an overwhelming 32.5% of respondents replied in the affirmative. When asked if it was their vehicle or other form of property that had been damaged, 94.6% responded that it was their vehicle that had been subject to a criminal offence.

The breakdown of respondents who noted the year in which their vehicle was damaged is outlined in Appendix A. The range of makes and models varied, with the majority of vehicles representing the most popular makes of car in Australia.

Respondents were given the opportunity to describe the damage. The Union was overwhelmed with the 258 articulated responses. Most incidents were similar to one another and could be tabled accordingly but not exhaustively (see Appendix B). Some examples were particularly noteworthy.

“Large dent to rear panel. Vehicle appeared to have been punched or kicked.”

“All windows smashed, panelling scratched, chips and damage inside panel of two doors.”

“My vehicle was set alight outside of Fremantle Police station on my 2nd shift there.”

“Whilst working at Midland Police Station, day shift, vehicle parked outside station, damaged considerably by an unknown person, my vehicle and one other persons car was keyed from top to bottom with 'dog' etc over most panels. WA Police provided no assistance.”

“Front windscreen smashed with concrete block in Stirling Street behind Curtin house.”

“The person spilt coke all over the vehicle and urinated on the vehicle. The person was stopped by his partner prior to attacking the vehicle with a larger metal pole. The vehicle was washed by WAPOL member whilst on duty.”

“Wheel nuts loosened causing wheel to fall off.”

“Firebomb inside of vehicle, resulting in write off.”

“Paint stripper was thrown over my vehicle and another officer’s vehicle.”

“While prison workers were gardening, my vehicle was parked in the rear of station carpark, honkey nuts from a nearby tree were wedged in my right front tyre near my brake pads.”

“Offender used a paving brick to scratch the passenger side window (before throwing the brick through the front window of the police station). The car was parked at the front of the station at the time.”

“ "FUCK SLAG" was scratched into the back panel of the vehicle with a sharp object.”

“Rubbish bin tipped over vehicle/urinated on.”

“Vehicle was parked next to Wickham Police Station on gravel carpark. Offender did burnout next to vehicle causing rocks to smash two side windows and put a large amount of stone chips along the side of the vehicle.”

“Someone entered via an unfastened cover and placed a lit cigarette on the back seat causing a burnt hole.”

“Obscene stickers placed over paintwork.”

Two hundred and seventy three respondents provided a cost estimate of the damage to their vehicle, with average repairs costing \$943.59. Only 118 cases of damage to personal property were reported and in a mere 25 cases the offender was identified.

Approximately 84% of respondents to the question were working in the Metropolitan Area at the time of the incident. The Central Metropolitan District was the area which received most reports of criminal offences (51.7%), followed by the East Metropolitan District (17.5%). In Regional WA, the spread of criminal offences to officers’ vehicles was more even, with 30.2% of respondents from the

Pilbara District recording incidents, followed by the Kimberley District with 20.9% and the Goldfields Esperance District with 18.6%.

Interestingly, 47.1% of respondents to the question answered that the afternoon shift was the shift they were working when the incident occurred and not night shift (only 30.9% of respondents indicated that they were working a night shift when their vehicle was subject to a criminal offence).

At the time of the incident, 47.1% of officers indicated that their vehicle was parked less than 50 metres from their workplace. More than 84% of officers noted that at the time of the incident, their vehicle was in a car park they felt was either very insecure or insecure.

The Union also obtained information about what clothing was most often worn by the police officer as they travelled in between their car and place of work. Of the 315 respondents to the question, 15.6% wore their uniform, 33.7% wore part uniform and 50.8% wore plain clothes.

### **More than one incident of damage to vehicle or other property**

Respondents had the opportunity to indicate if their vehicle or personal property had been subject to more than the one criminal offence in the last 10 years and 31 officers answered in the affirmative. In approximately 90% of cases, it was an officer's vehicle that was damaged.

In reports of second incidents, more than 86% of those officers were working in the Metropolitan Area, where half of the respondents worked in the Central Metropolitan District. Only four reported incidents came from Regional WA. Unlike the first noted offence, the offences occurred most frequently whilst the officer was working a night shift (42.9%).

At the time of the incident, 62.9% of those who experienced a second offence indicated that their vehicle was parked less than 100 metres from their workplace. More than 81.5% of those officers noted that at the time of the incident, their vehicle was in a car park they felt was either very insecure or insecure. Five officers reported wearing their full uniform to traverse in between their vehicle and place of work, seven indicated they wore a part uniform whilst 15 officers noted they wore plain clothes.

Nineteen officers indicated that in the second instance, they did not report the damage and of the nine who did, only three offenders were identified. Noted damage that had occurred in the second offence included two incidents involving smashed windows, seven incidents involving the car body

being scratched, dented or keyed and three incidents of tyres being slashed. There were 26 officers who provided a cost estimate of the damage to their vehicle, with average repairs costing \$272.12.

## Survey findings – real or perceived threats to personal safety

Of the total respondents to the survey, 61 officers indicated that they had been personally subjected to criminal offences whilst walking between their vehicle (or other utilised mode of transport) and work. Officers had the opportunity to elaborate on their encounters and the following examples typify the experiences of verbal and physical harassment directed towards our members as they made their way to and from work:

“Imitation Firearm pointed and discharged at Officers from my Office and myself... occurred 24 Aug 2012.”

“Threatened by group of males who recognised me from working in Northbridge during the night.”

“Followed from exiting station and abused on way to personal vehicle on three separate occasions at two separate stations.”

“...myself and a female officer were followed to our vehicles after finishing duty around midnight. We had to walk to one vehicle and then both drive to the other person's vehicle as we felt threatened.”

“Whilst working in Central Metro District, was subject of an altercation with an offender in Northbridge whilst walking to car.”

“Twice... [on a] footpath punched... [on a] cycle way threatened with meat cleaver.”

“Attempted assault whilst working afternoon shift at Police Rail Unit Perth.”

“Walking to my car after afternoon shift from Fremantle police station. I chanced upon two men climbing a fence. One attacked me with a wooden stake. I had to defend myself by backing away and only due to the other offender did I escape injury. They were apprehended and I was worried about my safety ever since when working shifts and going home. I parked where I thought it was safe. It was within 1km of the station. Carparks close early so could not park my car there. Bikies had made regular threats to the station when I was there from 2002 to 2005. Safety for us and our vehicles was always an issue.”

“POI picked up for drink driving, was waiting for myself and partner outside the police station at the end of the shift, attempts made to fight police.”

“At the railway station I was spat at by a group of young blokes.”

“Bottles thrown [at me].”

“Heckled by a bailed outlaw motorcycle gang member.”

“While walking to the Station I was approached by an intoxicated female. The female began swearing aggressively. As I walked past her she grabbed my arm and pulled me back. I broke her grip and continued walking to the station.”

“...previously working at Gang Crime Squad at Curtin House we were frequently required to walk from work to catch the train or reach private vehicles parked elsewhere. On several occasions I walked past OMCG members, whom we had just released to freedom/bail. I felt very at risk from these people while off duty.”

“Numerous disorderly offences. Female attempting to burn vehicles and police station.”

“Assaulted while walking to private vehicle when shift completed.”

Many incidents were similar to one another and are tabled, by no means exhaustively, in Appendix C.

Many officers noted that, generally due to the time of day they were finishing their shifts, they would encounter disorderly, intoxicated members of the public as officers travelled to and from work. One hundred and sixty one respondents indicated that they had been followed walking to and from their vehicle, whilst 98 officers noted they had been specifically threatened whilst walking to and from work.

The answers to the question “Do you believe that either you or your vehicle has been targeted due to your employment as a police officer?” were most disconcerting to the Union. Whilst more than

half of respondents believed that neither they nor their vehicle had been targeted as a result of their employment as a police officer, 7.8% felt that they had been personally targeted, 18.4% believed that their vehicles had been targeted and 10.5% felt both they and their personal property had been targeted because they were a police officer.

## Analysis of survey findings

### Availability of secure parking

Despite officers reporting that the car parking available to them whilst working day, afternoon and night shift was most often deemed to be secure car parking, the majority of officers surveyed felt either insecure or very insecure about leaving their parked vehicle whilst on duty. The majority of officers surveyed most alarmingly indicated that they did not feel safe or secure commuting to and from their vehicle, even when the vehicle was parked within 50 metres of their work station.

Despite reports of numerous security measures, such as CCTV, gates, fences and swipe card access, more often than not, it was noted that these security measures were deficient, inadequate, malfunctioning and outdated. Gates were frequently left open or unlocked, after day light hours, there was little or no lighting, pedestrian walk-ways often ran alongside the on-site station car parks, fences were identified as being low and easily scaled. As several officers noted in their written response, if a member of the public wanted to access the staff parking areas at a station, it would not be difficult for them to do so. Fourteen officers also identified the lack of secure bays, with many commenting that a late arrival or shift changeover means a move to verge or other unsecured parking.

There is no uniformity across the stations with secured parking, as it must be acknowledged that some officers answered that they had access to very secure parking, with security guards, pin codes to rear gates and/or perimeter alarms. Whilst it was not within the scope of the survey to identify the age of each police station and thence the specific security precautions installed at each, given officers from newly built or refurbished stations such as XYZ participated in the survey, it cannot be assumed that the age of the building is the sole predictor when assessing security efforts.

### Does working a certain shift increase the likelihood of actual or threatened offences to private vehicles or personal safety?

The afternoon shift was the shift most regularly worked by the respondents to the survey. Interestingly, 47.1% of respondents to the question answered that the afternoon shift was the shift they were working when the incident occurred and not, as the Union suspected prior to the survey, night shift.

An afternoon shift can be rostered any time between 11.00am and 4.30pm. Working a 10 hour shift sees an officer finishing work any time between 9.00pm and 2.30am. These hours of the day see a



greater number of members of the public utilising facilities such as bars, pubs, night clubs and other licensed venues.

Despite the propensity for officers to feel more apprehensive about their vehicle and personal safety when working afternoon shift, it appears that regardless of the shift worked or proximity of parking to the police station or a car park's security measures, officers were not only subject to feelings of insecurity about leaving their vehicles whilst on duty but also to feelings of insecurity about commuting between their workplaces and their vehicles (or other modes of transport).

### **Does working in a certain district increase the likelihood of actual or threatened offences to private vehicles or personal safety?**

Despite the resounding response to the survey from Union members, it cannot be readily or simply deduced that working in a particular district increases the likelihood of actual or threatened offences to private vehicles or personal safety. Even though the findings indicated that of those who experienced a criminal offence, the majority of officers worked in the Metropolitan Area at the time of the incident, with the Central Metropolitan District receiving the most reports of criminal offences, a clearer snapshot of criminal offences that have occurred to all members across all stations needs to be taken to ascertain which districts, which stations, which members have been subject to specific incidents and why.

Notwithstanding this, the Union asserts that some of the districts with higher numbers of noted incidents could be explained by the fact the stations are:

- located within more densely populated areas that have a propensity for higher rates of crime;
- located in entertainment districts, where officers are more likely to deal with drug and/or alcohol affected disorderly members of the public;
- located in areas where no on-site parking is provided for personal vehicles, such as the Perth Police Station;
- located where public transport is not readily available or feasible to use, thereby necessitating the use of a personal vehicle.

### Resistance and disrespect towards police officers<sup>3</sup>

The very nature of policing is fraught with inherent dangers as police officers interact (often in conflict situations) with disgruntled, disorderly, potentially drug or alcohol affected members of the public on a daily basis, more so than most other professions. Whilst the majority of the research about interactions between police officers and members of the public focuses on citizen's experiences, attitudes and perspectives of law enforcement, it is noted that resistance toward police is conceptualised as, amongst others, verbal and physical aggression and "other overtly hostile acts"<sup>4</sup>. In conflict situations, it is purported that police are more likely to face resistant behaviours from citizens known to police<sup>5</sup>. Research strongly suggests that "suspects or situations that involve a propensity for aggressiveness (e.g. intoxicated suspects, situations involving conflict between citizens) are more likely to result in resistance displayed toward officers"<sup>6</sup>. This would indicate that police officers are inclined to be subject to hostile and aggressive acts of behaviour, not simply because they just are police officers but especially so when an officer has had to intervene in a conflict situation with members of the public who are intoxicated, antagonistic or have had previous dealings with police.

Aside from the literature, the Union's own members report time and time again of disrespectful, confrontational and often threatening behaviour by members of the public towards officers, even when the officer is not directly involved in an encounter with a civilian. Nothing could be more evident than the responses we received from the survey outlining the experiences of verbal harassment, disorderly behaviour and threats of physical violence.

Half of the respondents to the survey indicated that, at the time of the incident, they wore their uniform or part uniform as they walked between their vehicle and their station. One respondent to the survey affirmed this by noting that "[a]t times you get abused especially if you are in uniform or part uniform or are recognised." A uniform is the single greatest identifier of occupation<sup>7</sup>, none more evident than the crisp blue uniform worn by police. If disgruntled members of the public (with a proclivity for aggressiveness and who are resistant towards police officers) are able to identify police officers merely by their uniforms, there is the potential that they could retaliate by 'scoping'

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<sup>3</sup> RS Engel, "Explaining suspects' resistance and disrespect toward police", *Journal of Criminal Justice*, vol. 31, no. 5, 2003, pp. 475-492.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp.476-477.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 480.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> DJ Bell, "Police uniforms, attitudes and citizens", *Journal of Criminal Justice*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1982, pp. 45-55.

out police officers and their personal vehicles, especially if the officer is walking a distance between their vehicle and their place of work to an unsecured carpark.

From the survey responses, there are police officers who believe that they themselves had been personally targeted, that their vehicles had been targeted or both they and their personal property had been targeted as a direct result of the occupational group to which they belong.

## Recommendations

### Increasing security

For stations that offer sufficient on-site parking for staff, it is strongly recommended that contemporary security efforts be implemented or where they currently exist, be updated, modified or repaired. Arising from member responses from the survey, the following security measures must be implemented across all WA police stations that provide on-site parking:

- Fences at a height or design that cannot be readily climbed by members of the public;
- During hours of darkness or low light, lighting that is reliable, bright and illuminates the entire space of the car park;
- Gates that can only be accessed and opened by a secure pin number or swipe card, that open and close expeditiously, that are checked and maintained regularly;
- Modern CCTV that not only has a broad sweep of the car park with positioning at all access points to the carpark, but actually records events;
- Where practicable and particularly at major 24-hour police complexes, a full-time security guard should monitor the entrance/exit points to the car park.

It is recommended that an appropriate policy be developed by WA Police in conjunction with the Union that ensures the frequent and timely maintenance of these security measures by an external agency and not police officers themselves.

### Number of available secure parking bays

Members have indicated that there are simply not enough on-site secure parking bays for all police station staff. When it is not always desirable or feasible or safe to commute to work via public transport, or officers live too far away to walk or cycle, officers need the assurance that they have a marked bay where they can park their vehicle at their place of work. Unsecure road side or general public parking should not be an option for police officers, as the potential for their personal property to be readily identified or their personal safety to be threatened by members of the public is greater than those occupying other professions. It is recommended by the Union that the Agency cater for the noted strength at each station and ensure, where possible, that on-site car parking bays are provided. Where extra on-site secure parking is not available, the Agency must endeavour to secure car parking that is within 50 metres of the police station that possesses all of the aforementioned security precautions.

### **Secure parking for the future**

Whilst the Union understands that many police stations, both within the Metropolitan Area and in towns across Regional WA, may not have the capacity for changes to be made to the number of current on-site parking bays, the Union advocates changes for future police station design. It is recommended that the Police Building Code be amended to reflect the requirement that parking with all the aforementioned security measures is incorporated into the technical specifications that influence the building design and process.

The Agency has a responsibility to develop a workable Police Building Code in conjunction with the Union that incorporates a minimum number of bays for police officers with an additional percentage of bays to accommodate contingent situations where more vehicles at a station are necessary. The bays provided must meet the minimum safety provisions outlined above and where possible, are built on-site or adjacent to the station.

### **Rationale for the recommendations**

By providing parking that is

- secure, safe, modern and reliable,
- readily available to all police officers working at that station (that is, a sufficient capacity to accommodate strength plus a percentage extra),
- within a reasonable distance of the station, and
- enshrined in policy,

officers and their vehicles are less likely to be predisposed to retaliatory behaviours by resistant, disgruntled, disorderly members of the public. In ensuring the above, officers can be assured that whilst they work, any shift at any station, their vehicles and other personal property are as appropriately protected from malicious acts of damage as possible. When the officers finish their shift, particularly during hours after daylight in areas that are prone to violent occurrences, these secure parking provisions provide assurance that an officer can commute safely to and from their vehicle and place of work without being subject to actual or threatened acts of aggression from members of the public.

## Caveats

The Union invited all of its members to complete the survey by sending them a link contained within an emailed newsletter to their work email addresses. Despite a resounding number of responses, the Union is aware that a self-selection bias may exist. Participant's who have experienced incidents such as damage to their personal property and/or actual or perceived threats to their personal safety may be more likely to respond to this survey in order to express their opinions and experiences than those who have not had similar experiences.

Also, at any given time, hundreds of members across the state may be absent from work on annual or long service leave, sick leave, parental leave or leave without pay and are not able to remotely access their work email addresses. These officers would not have had afforded to them the opportunity to complete the survey, which may have unintentionally excluded important information from this research.

## Conclusion

The sentiment of the Union's survey was neatly summed up by a member who wrote as part of their response to the survey, "(d)o we always have to wait for something to happen before it's rectified?". The issue of available secure parking for police officers has besieged the Union for decades, with no satisfying resolution ever having been reached between the Agency and the Union about the provision of secure parking.

The Union proposes that security measures at all police stations must be assessed judiciously: where they exist they must be modified and updated; where they don't exist, they must be implemented; and a policy must be developed to ensure the timely maintenance of such security measures. It is vital that the number of secure parking bays is increased so that members are assured that, where the use of public transport or other modes of transport such as cycling are not feasible options, they have a place to park their vehicles whilst on duty that will be protected from potentially vindictive, retaliatory behaviours by members of the public.

It is the Union's greatest concern that it will only be a matter of time before a police officer is seriously injured by a malicious act, whether it is as a result of tampering of a personal vehicle or a targeted assault. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, WA Police will demonstrate to all of its stakeholders that the safety and security of all of their police officers is a concern worth addressing.

## Appendices

### Appendix A - number of offences that occurred in the last 10 years to police officers' vehicles

Year	Number of Offences
2012	50
2011	44
2010	46
2009	32
2008	30
2007	24
2006	14
2005	18
2004	25
2003	16
2002	13



**Appendix B - a snapshot of the damage to personal property within the last 10 years as noted by respondents**

<b>Damage</b>	<b>Number of correlating responses</b>
Scratched paint	83
Smashed windows	45
Body damage/dents	39
Egged/rock/brick/liquid applied to car	30
Locks tampered/damaged	19
Mirror damage	16
Items stolen from vehicle	16
Tyres let down/slashed	13
Antenna damage	12
Windscreen wipers stolen	8
Vandalism/graffiti	5
Stolen/damaged licence plate	5
Lights damaged	4
Vehicle set on fire	4
Damaged ignition	4
Wheel nuts removed	3
Car urinated on	3
Make badge stolen	3
Fuel cap damaged	2
Fuel tampered with	2

**Appendix C – a snapshot of incidents experienced by police officers within the last 10 years as noted by respondents**

<b>Incidents</b>	<b>Number of correlating responses</b>
Verbal abuse	17
Physical altercation/assault	11
Threats of physical abuse	11
Disorderly behaviour by member of the public	8
Harassment	7
Been followed	4