

Questions taken on notice

Portfolio:	Police
Witness:	Chief Commissioner of Police, Shane Patton APM
Committee member:	Mr Nick McGowan
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Relevant text:

Nick McGOWAN: Commissioner, a quick question on PSOs: how many stations at the moment do we not have staffed by PSOs across the metropolitan network?

Shane PATTON: Well, we have not officially withdrawn from any of the railway stations, so if there are any you are suggesting that are unstaffed, I would like to hear that. We are still committed to the current model, and there will of course be occasions where there will be shortfalls due to sick leave or the like, or unplanned leave, but I have not instructed nor withdrawn from any of our normal modelling.

Nick McGOWAN: I wrote to the minister some weeks ago, because I was concerned that at Ringwood East now for some months there have been no PSOs. There is a PSO hub there, but there are no PSOs at Ringwood East train station, and that has been the case now for months and months. Maybe you were not aware of it, but we have also gone through a spate of home invasions in that area. Whether they are related or not is another matter, but it is of grave concern that we continue not to have PSOs at Ringwood East train station.

Shane PATTON: Thanks, Mr McGowan. A couple of matters there: I have not been briefed that we have been withdrawn from any permanent rostering there, but I will certainly take that on notice and come back to you so that I can clarify that. Your comment about home invasions is not linked to railway stations at all. As you would be aware, PSOs remain on railway stations and in that immediate proximity, so they do not have any involvement with crime that is really external in residential areas.

Nick McGOWAN: We can engage in the conversation later; I suppose my concern was that there were certain individuals coming from other areas. If they know they can get off at the train station and it is not policed and there are no PSOs, they have got a thoroughfare right through to that area. That was my observation.

Shane PATTON: No, obviously crooks do use trains, and I do not disagree with you on that. But nonetheless if they are coming along the railway line, there are PSOs right along there – noting of course 6 pm to the last train – and it is about protecting and being a visible police presence and ensuring they are there for the commuters. But certainly, as I said, I have not been briefed on that, and I am not aware of any instruction to do that, so I will take that on notice and come back to you.

Nick McGOWAN: Thank you very much.

Answer:

PSOs have not been permanently withdrawn from any train stations across the metropolitan network. Services are being maintained in accordance with government policy commitments:

- Provision of 2-up PSO patrols of every railway station from 6pm to last train passing
- Provision of 2-up PSO patrols of 79 premium railway stations every Friday and Saturday night from 8pm to 6am in support of the Night Network initiative
- Provision of roving mobile patrol tasking of PSOs (introduced in 2018 and known as Integrated Transport Security Model or ITSM deployments) on all forms of public transport including bus, tram, train, and related infrastructure. ITSM deployments of PSOs are supported and supervised by police members and are mostly prioritised to respond and provide a visible deterrence to incidences of anti-social behaviour and crime which is occurring prior to 6pm (when PSOs commence their static patrols).

PSO rostering may be adjusted in response to resourcing challenges or situations where a static PSO presence cannot be delivered due to; infrastructure issues resulting from damage (including criminal), faults and other safety hazards rendering the site or PSO POD non-operational until ratified, or, at newly constructed PSO PODs awaiting final OHS sign-off. In these instances, ITSM deployments may be rostered to provide roving mobile patrols of a small number of clustered railway stations.

The PSO POD at Ringwood East Railway Station has not yet received OHS sign-off allowing personnel to utilise the facility and therefore there is currently no static PSO presence. Currently, PSOs are deployed to Ringwood East railway station daily via ITSM roving PSO foot patrols from 6pm and 2am and via other daytime PSO ITSM patrols where applicable. Transit police also continue to provide a response to incidents outside these hours, with police routinely conducting proactive patrols of the railway station during daytime hours.

Portfolio:	Police
Witness:	Chief Commissioner of Police, Shane Patton APM
Committee member:	Mr Aiv Puglielli
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Relevant text:

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Just turning now to police responding to people experiencing mental health crises, in the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System Victoria Police stated in evidence that Victoria Police respond to a mental health crisis every 12 minutes. That was then; can you provide the committee with a percentage of police responses that involve individuals experiencing a mental health crisis from the 2023–24 period and since?

Shane PATTON: Yes, thanks. During that period we responded to approximately 54,400 mental health call-outs, one call almost every 10 minutes. In 26,943 of those call-outs two or more vehicles responded, and 10,600 people were taken into the care and control of police to connect them with a mental health assessment, known as a mental health transfer.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. That evidence also stated that many call-outs require a health-based intervention rather than a law enforcement one. When can this committee expect to see this shift of the intervention model to a health-based one?

Shane PATTON: As I understand, that was recommendation 10 from the royal commission into mental health. I understand they are matters for government.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: No, this was the police assistant commissioner for the eastern region, Glenn Weir. That was in that evidence provided that this claim was made.

Shane PATTON: Yes. One of the recommendations from the royal commission – and assistant commissioner Weir gave evidence in that on behalf of Victoria Police. Victoria Police want to be involved as little as possible in relation to a response to mental health, and we recognise and appreciate it should be a health-led response and approach. As I understand, that is a matter that is currently being worked through by government as to when and how that can be implemented.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Another recommendation was that the *Victoria Police Manual* should be amended to reduce the incidence of individuals experiencing a mental health crisis being charged for conduct that occurs during a crisis. Has that occurred?

Shane PATTON: My belief is we have implemented every one of our recommendations that we have been able to. I would have to come back to you on that, but that is certainly our approach. When someone is having a mental health incident or episode, we want to treat them, care for them and get them treated appropriately. Nonetheless, we also are required to hold them to account where there is criminality involved. I will come back

to that. I will take that on notice, but I am fairly certain that we have amended and completed all of our recommendations.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you.

Answer

Victoria Police is not directly responsible for any recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (RCVMHS).

Further, there is no recommendation arising from the RCVMHS that requests that the *Victoria Police Manual* (VPM) be amended to reduce incidences of individuals experiencing a mental health crisis being charged for conduct occurring during that crisis.

The *VPM Care and control under the Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022* was released on 1 September 2023 to reflect updated legislation and provide guidance to members on police powers. Under this policy:

- Police officers must give due consideration to the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.
- Where an offence is occurring at the same time as a person is experiencing a mental health crisis, police officers must carefully consider the mental health needs of the person before making any decision on how to prioritise offending.
- Where the criteria for care and control is not met, but criminal offending is suspected, police and PSOs must follow standard procedures for crime reporting and investigation.