

IN-CONFIDENCE

Office of the Minister of Police

Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

The Minister of Police's Priorities

Proposal

- 1 This paper asks you to note my priorities for the Police Portfolio for the next three years. It sets out how the New Zealand Police (Police) will work to support Government priorities in the 54th New Zealand Parliament.

Relation to Government priorities

- 2 Restoring law and order and keeping New Zealanders safe is a priority for our government so that people feel safe in their homes and their communities. Our Public Service Targets provide a focus to drive more targeted and effective responses. The work outlined in this paper is intentional in its contribution to our two Law and Order Targets - to reduce violent crime and to reduce youth offending.
- 3 I have set a clear expectation that Police focuses on core policing activity and being visible on our streets and in our communities. Our government has supported this through our decision, expressed in the New Zealand First-National Coalition Agreement, to support the recruitment of 500 additional frontline police, including youth aid officers. As a government, we are also giving Police the tools to crack down on gang offending.
- 4 We know that these are complex issues and that for us to be successful will require more than a Police response. We are committed to strengthening our cross-sector response, especially to youth crime, targeting interventions to those in need and working to prevent serious and repeated offending. Police will continue to play a key role in ensuring we deliver on our Targets.

Executive Summary

- 5 My priorities for the Police portfolio during this parliamentary term, set out in my letter to the Prime Minister in January 2024 and communicated to the Commissioner of Police are:
 - 5.1 Disrupting gangs and organised crime;
 - 5.2 Tackling youth offending;
 - 5.3 Strengthening policing in our communities;
 - 5.4 Maintaining an effective, fiscally sustainable police service.
- 6 I have conveyed my priorities to the Prime Minister and my expectations on delivery of them to the Commissioner of Police. I am committed to working with my Ministerial

IN-CONFIDENCE

colleagues across the Coalition to ensure that these priorities are supported through legislative reform in the Justice sector and a shared understanding of how a refreshed focus on core Policing will impact other Ministerial portfolio areas. Similarly, Police will continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition process is in place where any changes impact current ways of working with agencies or sector organisations.

Background – Police Settings and Government Priorities

- 7 Police is one of three non-public service departments. The organisation and governance arrangements are described in the Policing Act 2008 (the Policing Act), but for the most part, standard public management legislation, such as the Public Finance Act 1989, the Public Service Act 2020, and the Official Information Act 1982 applies to Police.
- 8 Section 16 of the Policing Act sets out the relationship between the Minister of Police and the Commissioner of Police (the Commissioner). The Commissioner is responsible to the Minister of Police for:
 - 8.1 carrying out the functions and duties of the Police
 - 8.2 the general conduct of the Police
 - 8.3 the effective, efficient, and economical management of the Police
 - 8.4 tendering advice to the Minister of Police and other Ministers of the Crown
 - 8.5 giving effect to any lawful ministerial directions.
- 9 The Commissioner is not responsible to, and is required to act independently of, any Minister of the Crown (including any person acting on the instruction of a Minister of the Crown) regarding:
 - 9.1 the maintenance of order or enforcement of the law in relation to any individual or group of individuals;
 - 9.2 the investigation and prosecution of offences;
 - 9.3 decisions about individual Police employees.
- 10 In practice, this means that operational and deployment decisions, including the allocation of staff to support Police functions, are matters for the Commissioner to determine.
- 11 My focus as Minister of Police is on ensuring New Zealanders feel safe in their communities to participate and engage in public life free from the intimidation of gangs and confident that people will be held to account for offending. My mission is to enable and support Police to deliver on their core functions and ensure it has the tools it needs to give effect to these. I have outlined this commitment to the Commissioner in my letter of expectations and conveyed this to the Prime Minister in my letter outlining my priorities for the Police portfolio in this term of Government.

IN-CONFIDENCE

- 12 In its *Briefing to the Incoming Minister*, Police spoke to a challenging operating environment which is shaped by both local and international dynamics and technological changes. Police detailed how it has responded to these challenges over time and implications of this for the deployment of its people. I consider this, on balance, has become increasingly oriented toward the social domain as demand for responses to family harm and mental health incidents increases. As an organisation dependent on infrastructure and technology, historical underinvestment over many years has acted as a constraint on optimising Police performance.
- 13 Police operates within, and is part of, the Justice Sector, but also plays a key role in the national security system and the social sector. To deliver on our law and order objectives and to ensure our communities feel safe and are safe, I am committed to ensuring Police's roles and responsibilities are understood. It is critical that Police's operational insights, including about what works, contribute to our work to transform these systems and ensure they are working as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The challenges and the opportunities

- 14 In setting my priorities I have considered the range of challenges and opportunities facing the Police portfolio. These challenges include a concerning increase in the visible presence of gangs, the identification of a cohort of young people committing serious offences and increasing pressures on Police to respond to incidents involving mental health or family harm. These challenges are exacerbated by increasing cost pressures facing Police, legislative constraints and infrastructure demands. All of these factors have contributed to my decision on the priorities to refocus resourcing toward the delivery of core policing activity that will provide an effective and sustainable policing presence in our communities.
- 15 These challenges bring with them opportunities to support Police to deliver stronger outcomes that will support communities and safety for all New Zealanders. Improved legislative tools, a clear statement of priorities and expectations from Government and a clarity of focus within Police will ensure Government priorities can be delivered.
- 16 Police is effective at bringing together stakeholders across government and within communities to support shared goals of prevention of crime and harm. However, Police does not have all the right levers to pull and is often not the right agency to lead a response. We require our partners' leadership, expertise, resources, and commitment to enable Police to redirect resources back into our core business and be more visible in our communities. A social investment approach presents significant opportunities to direct resources to vulnerable groups that otherwise may require a Police response.

My four priorities

- 17 I have four key priorities:
- 17.1 Disrupting gangs and organised crime;
 - 17.2 Tackling youth offending;
 - 17.3 Strengthening policing in our communities;
 - 17.4 Maintaining an effective, fiscally sustainable police service.

IN-CONFIDENCE

Disrupting gangs and organised crime

- 18 I am committed to ensuring Police has the legislative tools and resources it needs to disrupt gangs and organised crime.

Legislating to provide additional powers for Police

- 19 I am prioritising work with the Justice Ministers to advance the legislative changes reflected in this Government's legislative programme and Coalition Agreements between the National and New Zealand First, and National and Act Parties (Gangs Legislation Amendment Bill, Firearms Prohibition Orders Bill, and amendments to the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Act 2009). These changes will provide Police with increased powers to disrupt gang activity. Police has provided critical advice about the operational capability it will require to give effect to the Government's intent and will continue to update this advice to reflect any changes as the legislation moves through the parliamentary process.

Giving effect to legislation and prioritising gang disruption operationally

- 20 I expect that Police will use the full force of the law and the tools and resources available to it to maintain a strong focus on gangs and organised crime. I will actively monitor progress and the impact of legislative changes in this area and will work with the Commissioner and Police to identify any other legislative or policy opportunities to help Police keep New Zealanders safe.
- 21 Police is now providing Government with regular updates on the progress it is making through existing initiatives and work that supports delivery against this priority. These include the Transnational Organised Crime Strategy and Annual Action Plan, Operation Cobalt, and the multiagency Resilience to Organised Crime in Communities work programme.
- 22 In addition, Police is now well advanced in plans to establish a new National Gangs Unit (the Unit) by mid-year to further support frontline teams. This will strengthen Police's capability and effectiveness in disrupting gangs at a community level and improve intelligence and insights into gangs across the country. An important focus of the Unit will be the identification and sharing of best practice responses to gang harm which, combined with operational intelligence will provide important data to support Government social investment outcomes and the work of local and government partners.
- 23 I am encouraged by Police's increasingly proactive and focused approach to ensure recent gang-related events have been strongly policed. The additional powers we are progressing through the legislative process, together with the increase of 500 additional frontline Police officers, will further enable Police to plan and deploy resources effectively in relation to gang events, such as gang runs. This support will provide Police with the tools and resources to further reduce the harmful impact of gang behaviour on our communities.

IN-CONFIDENCE

Tackling youth offending

- 24 As Minister of Police, I will closely monitor youth offending and support legislative changes to enable Police to tackle serious and repeat offending by children and young people. Police has a core role in preventing and responding to offending, including decisions on how and when to escalate system responses. Tackling youth offending is a priority for the Justice Sector, but also requires a collective response across justice and social sector agencies to address the actions of youth offenders and the underlying causes of offending. I will support the Minister for Children to lead work to provide young people with appropriate interventions and targeted support to leave a life of serious offending.
- 25 It is my expectation that children and young people will be held to account for criminal offending and given the support they need to turn their lives around. I share Police's frustration that the system is not currently addressing serious youth offending and I am confident Police will continue to focus on youth crime and support sector initiatives. The design and implementation of our Young Serious Offender category, Military-style Academies, and wider reforms to strengthen responses to children with serious and repeat offending, will contribute to better outcomes.
- 26 In this context, I note the expectation set out in our coalition agreement, to increase the number of trained Youth Aid officers. This will be advanced as part of work to increase the number of constabulary officers by 500.

Strengthening policing in our communities

- 27 I have made clear my expectation that there will be an increased visibility of Police and strengthening of its relationship with local communities. I consider this to be critical to effective policing and ensuring the public feels safe.

Training no fewer than 500 new officers

- 28 As part of the National – New Zealand First Coalition Agreement, we have committed to training no fewer than 500 additional constabulary officers by the end of 2025. Budget 24 will provide Police with new operating and capital funding to deliver on this commitment. The Associate Minister of Police intends to bring a paper to Cabinet shortly that sets out the purpose and outcomes the Government is seeking from this investment in frontline policing.
- 29 For some time Police's attraction and recruitment pipeline has been under pressure. The Associate Minister of Police and I have been advised that over recent months this has begun to shift, with the pipeline now looking much stronger. This shift is promising but to achieve the 500 additional constabulary officers will require Police to strengthen their attraction and recruitment processes. The Associate Minister of Police and I are committed to supporting Police to overcome any challenges they face to growing the recruitment pipeline.
- 30 Retention of existing staff will also be critical to delivering the 500 additional constabulary officers. This is a key area of focus for me, and I am working with Police to identify ways in which the Government can support efforts to retain existing

IN-CONFIDENCE

staff, as well as ways in which staff that have previously left Police can be given a pathway back into roles within the organisation.

- 31 Overall, additional police officers will strengthen policing in communities by focusing frontline policing on increased visibility; response, investigation, and resolution of offences; disrupting unlawful gang activity; and reducing youth offending.
- 32 The Associate Minister of Police has a delegation to assist me with this work. Once decisions are taken by Cabinet, we will monitor attrition rates and progress towards our target growth in constabulary officer numbers.

Freeing up Police time to refocus on core policing

- 33 While the deployment of Police resources is ultimately a decision for the Commissioner, the Commissioner has indicated he will focus on supporting frontline staff to prevent harm; respond to, investigate and solve crime; provide community reassurance; and improve feelings of safety for the public by being highly visible and focusing on issues of public concern.
- 34 Police will focus on areas of core policing and the things that only Police can do, while working with others to reduce the drivers of crime.
- 35 Police has work underway to implement this intent which includes:
 - 35.1 Working with Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora on the joint paper *People in Mental Distress Presenting via 111 – Transition to a Multi-agency Response*, considered by the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee on 8th May. Mental health-related events add significant demand on both our Emergency Communications Centre and frontline officers. The initiatives proposed in this paper are spread across multiple years and include more efficient triaging of calls and shorter attendance times for officers at emergency departments;
 - 35.2 Police is also progressing an internal mental health response practice change. This will include faster handover times at emergency departments, reducing the resources allocated to mental health welfare checks and tightening up our response to inappropriate requests for assistance from health services;
 - 35.3 Police has designed and evaluated an alternative approach to the current mandatory frontline police attendance at non-emergency family harm events. The outcomes have been positive with increased victim and whānau safety, improved response times, a more timely phone response rather than a delayed (or no) physical response, and strengthened partnerships through information being passed on to multi-agency responses with improved reporting. Almost three out of four callers confirmed that they no longer wanted police attendance following this engagement. Police is now looking at how it may progress a national rollout of the approach. In addition, Police is working with Te Puna Aonui considering how Police could potentially progress a multi-agency response to ensure the proposed shift in approach to non-emergency situations still ensures that those seeking assistance are able to access appropriate support that Police is not best placed to offer;

IN-CONFIDENCE

- 35.4 Some of the initiatives Police is exploring will inevitably result in expectations that other agencies will do more in their areas of specialty, allowing police officers to focus on law enforcement and crime prevention activities that only police can undertake. I am working with relevant Ministerial colleagues to identify and advance these opportunities.

Utilising the non-constabulary workforce to deliver operational outcomes

- 36 Police services are increasingly delivered by a mix of constabulary and non-constabulary staff. Police has, over time, increased the proportion of its non-constabulary workforce to perform a wide range of critical operational and operational support functions, such as emergency call-takers, intelligence analysts, prosecutors, cyber specialists, and forensic accountants. These roles enable constabulary staff to focus on the things only they can do in public facing roles, while ensuring Police has access to staff with specialist capability and skills necessary to face evolving crime challenges.
- 37 Police has advised that there is more scope in some areas to further free up constabulary staff by increasing non-sworn staffing of operational support functions. I intend to explore the potential for this as part of Police's work to improve its effectiveness and efficiency, in line with recommendations from the recent Independent Rapid Review (IRR) undertaken as part of Budget 24.

Maintaining an effective, fiscally sustainable Police service

- 38 I am keenly aware of the Government's fiscal constraints and was disappointed to see Police's financial position and cost pressures when I inherited the Police portfolio from the previous Government. I am committed to ensuring that Police can deliver on its core functions and provide excellent policing services to communities in the long term.
- 39 Police is undertaking work to provide me with a clearer picture of its cost drivers and performance measures and a long-term investment plan. This work will enable our government to ensure investment is being directed in the correct areas. I will stay apprised of Police's organisation-wide cost savings programme to ensure any impact on frontline service delivery is avoided.
- 40 Where review identifies a shift in focus or activity is required, any effective recalibration in specific areas may take some time (for example, the five-year transition plan proposed for mental health) and requires aligned strategies across portfolios. Police has commenced its review of its core functions based on the IRR and my stated Priorities for the Police portfolio. I intend to seek the support of Cabinet colleagues as Police undertakes this review work with the objective of enabling it to increase its focus on core services and functions while remaining fiscally sustainable.

Police's Collective Agreements

- 41 Police's people costs make up 72% of its baseline.

IN-CONFIDENCE

- 42 Police is currently in bargaining for Constabulary staff bands A-J. The process has now moved to Final Offer Arbitration (FOA) and Police is preparing for the hearing in late June 2024.
- 43 Alongside this process, Police received initiation for bargaining for Managers Grades 20-24 in May 2024. Bargaining is scheduled to take place over the next two quarters into 2024/25.

Infrastructure, systems and processes

- 44 Police has drawn to my attention a number of challenges and opportunities around the state of its infrastructure and systems. Given developments in technology, and regulatory requirements for the management and sharing of information, there are statutory obligations on Police and rising expectations from the public about the basic functionality, reliability and security of Police systems that must be addressed.
- 45 I intend to bring advice to Cabinet on the medium to long-term investment requirements to ensure Police is well placed both now and into the future. Police has initiated work to develop a long-term investment plan with the objective of setting options and choices to deliver a financially sustainable Police service supported by the infrastructure required to deliver efficient and effective services fit to meet the needs of our communities.
- 46 In terms of critical infrastructure, the Next Generation Critical Communications (NGCC) programme will deliver the Public Safety Network (PSN), replacing communications infrastructure, most of which is end of life for Police, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, St John, and Wellington Free Ambulance.
- 47 The NGCC programme is well advanced and represents a significant \$1.5 billion investment over 10 years to improve capability and responsiveness across all first responder services.

Financial Implications

- 48 The financial implications of this work programme will be subject to future Budget decisions consistent with the Government's Budget strategy and ongoing fiscal sustainability programme. No funding is being sought through this paper.

Legislative Implications

- 49 There are no new legislative implications associated with this paper. Future Government decisions in the Police portfolio may give rise to legislative change proposals within Police or other Justice sector portfolio areas.

Population Implications

- 50 While these priorities are not focussed on any specific community, ethnic group or gender, some groups may reasonably be expected to be disproportionately impacted. Māori and Pacific peoples, particularly Māori and Pacific men, are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, and Māori men make up a disproportionate share of gang membership and so will be more likely to be impacted by stronger enforcement

IN-CONFIDENCE

measures resulting from these priorities. Conversely Māori and Pacific peoples are also overrepresented as victims of crime and would therefore be expected to collectively experience greater benefit from initiatives that deter and prevent offending.

Human Rights

- 51 This proposal is consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Humans Rights Act 1993.

Use of external Resources

- 52 External resources have not been used in the development of the proposals in this paper. Any use of external resource for future work, including any external advisory groups, will be consistent with the Government's ongoing fiscal sustainability requirements.

Consultation

- 53 The following agencies have been consulted: Public Service Commission, The Treasury; the Ministry of Health, the Department of Corrections, Te Puna Aonui and Oranga Tamariki. The Ministry of Justice was unable to provide feedback within the timeframe available.

Proactive Release

- 54 I intend to release the Cabinet paper proactively within 30 business days of decisions being informed by Cabinet.

Recommendations

The Minister of Police recommends that the Committee:

- 1 note that the Minister of Police has informed the Prime Minister of his priorities for the Police portfolio:
 - 1.1 Disrupting gangs and organised crime;
 - 1.2 Tackling youth offending;
 - 1.3 Strengthening policing in our communities;
 - 1.4 Maintaining an effective, fiscally sustainable police service.

Approved for lodgement.

Hon Mark Mitchell
Minister of Police

IN-CONFIDENCE