

A path to improving public and officer safety

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Introduction

Context

Nothing is more important or critical to us as a police service than the safety of all people and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. We cannot succeed in our vision to make Aotearoa the safest country unless we are doing everything we can to keep all New Zealanders safe. To do this, we must deliver policing services in a way that maintains and strengthens our ability to support and police communities with their consent.

Based upon the evidence collected throughout the ART evaluation process, ARTs are not a style of policing that all New Zealanders are comfortable with. On 9 June 2020, the Commissioner of Police announced that ARTs will not be a part of our model of policing in Aotearoa. The decision not to adopt ARTs permanently was made based on the preliminary findings from the trial evaluation, feedback received from the public during the trial, and consultation with community forum groups.

As the ART evaluation demonstrated, police frontline responders and the general public expect a high-level of early engagement regarding when, whether, and how Police should change the methods they use to support public safety. It was also evident that a robust evaluation structure and clear operating parameters are fundamental for trials of this nature, to ensure all New Zealanders, including Police employees, share the same understanding of the intent and expectations for operational delivery within communities.

Operating Environment

The policing operating environment in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to change and draw public attention. The ART trial was in response to a number of environmental changes including the events of 15 March 2019 (the Christchurch Terror attacks), the evolving and increasingly sophisticated nature of organised crime, the perceived (if not actual) increase in gang-related crime, and the prevalence of firearms across the country as evidenced through Gun Safe reporting.

The completion of the ART trial was quickly followed by the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Police officer in Minnesota. George Floyd's death and the Black Lives Matter movement heightened and lifted the level of emotional concern within the community regarding the delivery of policing services. This led to protests, media campaigns and peaceful demonstrations in Aotearoa and further afield. The coalescence of these events with the ART trial had a negative impact on police morale, and the extent to which police employees felt supported and trusted by the wider community.

Subsequently, on 19 June 2020, Constable Matthew Hunt was slain while on duty during a routine 3T. His partner was also shot. They were both unarmed. This was a huge tragedy for Constable Hunt's family, the New Zealand Police, and all New Zealanders who shared in this shock and grief.

Though the events of 15 March 2019, 25 May 2020, and 19 June 2020 were very separate and unrelated, they illustrate the complexity and competing challenges of the operating environment police face every day. These issues have become somewhat entangled with each other and with the ART trial in public and media discussion. Collectively, this has resulted in increasing support to do things differently as well as demonstrating the need to work more closely with the New Zealand public, to inform decisions about how we police.

Opportunity for Change

As the ART evaluation has demonstrated, a failure to engage the New Zealand public with tactical decisions that may affect their feelings of safety, or to actively demonstrate mitigation of potential risks to Māori, can lead to widespread criticism. There is also an obvious need to fully engage frontline officers in their capacity as members of the community and members of the New Zealand Police in the development of fit-for-purpose solutions that increase their feelings of safety.

The complexity of the opportunity for New Zealand Police is that health and safety obligations mean we must ensure our people are appropriately equipped (in the broadest sense of the word) for the environment in which we find ourselves operating. We must also bring an objective and balanced approach to this, recognising that the environment in which we operate is not unconnected with the style of policing we adopt within it, i.e. the style in which we present we can make the environment safer or less safe for all New Zealanders.

New Zealand Police is committed to utilising the valuable and difficult insights and lessons from recent incidents and the ART trial to understand what we could or should look to change. To achieve this in a holistic and deliberate way, the Commissioner approved the launch of the Frontline Safety Improvement Programme (FSIP). This has a specific focus on actions that could be taken to ensure frontline officers are safe and feel safe, so that they are able to keep communities safe.

The FSIP also encompasses a wider tactical and operational capability review and explores new opportunities to boost the safety of our frontline officers. The Commissioner has clearly articulated that any agreed deliverables from the FSIP must also help make communities safer and meet the expectations of New Zealanders about the way we police. It will be fundamental for New Zealand Police to regularly measure and monitor community and officer safety, to ensure it is preserved and enhanced as the result of any new frontline safety measures being introduced.

Frontline Safety Improvement Programme Launched

New Zealand Police wants to ensure that our people and the public are safe and feel safe. And we want to do that in a style of policing that New Zealanders expect and deserve. The FSIP has been designed to look at the capacity, capability and deployment of Police's resources, and the way that we police all communities across Aotearoa. The mission of the FSIP is:

Ensuring our frontline **are safe** by making sure they are trained, equipped, supported and recognised for the value they provide in **keeping our homes**, **roads and communities safe**.

FSIP is an evidence-based programme and will be informed by the needs of our people and communities through comprehensive stakeholder engagement. It leverages all existing knowledge including the ART evaluation and our Gun Safe and Tactical Reporting data, and is actively seeking more information and feedback through engagement with internal and external stakeholders including the Māori Focus Forum, Police Association, the Police Guild, and the IPCA.

The FSIP has seven programme principles which help guide the focus of, and approach to, this work:

- **Safety First**: Frontline officer safety is our priority, and ensuring everyone goes home safe to their whānau every day.
- Well-Equipped: Our frontline officers have the right skills, equipment and capability to be safe.
- **Wellbeing**: Wellbeing is at the centre of everything we do.
- **Informed & Adaptable**: Timely evidence-based information enabling adaptability in a dynamic operational environment.
- Recognition: We recognise the value that frontline specialists play in a critical response.
- **Engagement**: We have a proactive and authentic engagement approach to partnering with our stakeholders.
- **Trust and Confidence**: We police with the consent of our community, and operate in a way that builds internal and external trust and confidence.

Scope

The scope of the FSIP is significant in order to ensure it delivers the necessary changes across the organisation as well as looks at the areas of our business together, rather than in isolation. There are six workstreams and the high-level scope of each is detailed below. Throughout this work there will be parallel engagement with communities and their representatives, so that the concerns for frontline officer safety also align with community needs.

1. Training

The overall focus of the Training workstream is to ensure that the training we provide our frontline responders is continually refreshed, representing best practice and reflecting our operating environment and the expectations of communities. The key outputs are:

- Identifying and addressing any potential frontline training and capability gaps
- Reviewing and redesigning Police Integrated Tactical Training, incorporating more reality-based scenario training, and enhancing training in command and control
- Constantly monitoring the operating environment, and responding appropriately with training delivery

2. Valuing Frontline Responders (and their whānau)

The aim of the Valuing Frontline Responders (and their whānau) workstream is to ensure frontline responders can be safe, feel safe, and feel valued for the work they do.

This will be achieved through the implementation of a specialist frontline development programme, accompanied by a competency recognition framework, that ensures our people can be continuously upskilled and are fairly acknowledged for the services they deliver. The final element is ensuring our frontline responders' families get the support and information they need to stay informed, well, and keep safe.

The workstream will also review how Police supports frontline wellbeing and examine how Police safety culture can be further enhanced to encourage healthy and safe decision making. The key outputs of this component are:

- Review Police safety culture and how it supports frontline staff
- Identify opportunities and initiatives to enable people leaders to better support staff wellbeing
- Articulate and assess the national safety and wellness response model

3. Equipment and Capability

The overall focus of the Equipment and Capability workstream is to ensure that our frontline responders are equipped, and have access to equipment, that enables them to be safe and keep the public safe, in a constantly changing and risky operating environment.

Key outputs are:

- Review the current allocation of, and accessibility to, Police firearms and Tasers
- Audit of Police vehicles and the tactical equipment in the vehicles
- Establish how Police workgroups and roles can access Police helicopter (Eagle) footage so the benefits of the footage can be shared with all responders
- Establish the need and requirements for Police mobile command units
- Review international best practice Police weapon, and weapon storage systems (firearms and Tasers).

New Zealand Police will also review the current literature on body worn cameras to understand and consider the benefits of deploying this technology into the operational environment, in order to improve officer and community safety, and enhance transparency and legitimacy. Consideration will also be given to data and individual privacy, training, and economic implications of body worn cameras in New Zealand.

4. Command and Control Framework

The Command and Control workstream will deliver a command and control framework that will support our police commanders by enhancing their skills and knowledge to enable operational safety and effectiveness.

The key outputs are:

- Review the current Command and Control Framework to ensure it remains fit for purpose in our changing operational environment
- Define command and control roles, responsibilities, skills and knowledge
- Review and develop protocols for command transition
- Carry out Training Needs Analysis including developing competency levels and "command accreditation"

5. Response Model

The Response Model workstream's primary emphasis is to ensure that New Zealand Police continues to deliver an exceptional police service that is safe for our people and the community we serve.

The key output is to review our graduated response model with the intent to identify opportunities for service delivery enhancement. This includes exploring how we best utilise our deployment model to ensure the right responders are in the right place at the right time.

We will also review New Zealand Police's threat assessment methodology: Threat, Exposure, Necessity, Response (TENR) to ensure it remains fit for purpose, and its use enables our people to make safe, informed decisions. This will also include ensuring we have the right risk assessment tools in place to determine when it is appropriate for single crewed vehicles to respond to events.

6. Operational Safety Systems

The purpose of the Operational Safety Systems workstream is to enhance intelligence, safety and risk reporting platforms so that they are even more evidence-based, simple and effective for frontline policing. Key outputs include:

- Review approach to identifying and managing high risk criminal individuals, including ownership and monitoring
- Review dissemination of frontline intelligence (FLINT) products with a focus on frontline officer safety and risk mitigation opportunities
- Identify and implement operational risk management improvements
- Review approach to identifying, assessing and quantifying frontline risk.

We will also focus on system and mobility enhancements that will support frontline officer safety through:

- Reviewing and implementing intelligence and mobility safety improvements
- Reviewing use and utility of alert flags in police computer systems in order to emphasise frontline officer safety
- Improving DaS (Deployment and Safety application) mobility settings for frontline officer usage
- Reviewing workforce employee profile information and availability (skills, knowledge, experience, training etc.) so that skills and capabilities of frontline officers are more visible to supervisors when dealing with critical events.

We will also draw on new and existing intelligence and insights relating to our current environment, as well as national and international best practice, to inform safety improvements.

Stakeholder Engagement

In addition to the six workstreams above, a dedicated Partnerships and Engagement Manager role has been established. The Partnerships and Engagement Manager will lead meaningful internal engagement to understand how to enhance safety to frontline officers, while preserving or enhancing the safety of the broader community.

We are conscious of the need to engage with a wide range of external stakeholders around many aspects of the programme; in particular the Māori Focus Forum, Police Association, the Police Guild, and the IPCA are key stakeholders in decision-making around how we police. A key focus for the Partnerships and Engagement Manager is to ensure upfront collaborative engagement and consultation on changes that could impact communities, or create possible risks, such as our response model.

The public release of the ART and the pathway outlined in this paper is a key component of the transparent way New Zealand Police intends to approach stakeholder engagement. Over the coming months we will be utilising existing and new external community reference groups to make sure we are listening to and understanding their views and perspectives. This includes meaningful engagement with iwi and key community leaders. This dialogue will be significant and ongoing, as we work to ensure we are delivering the services that New Zealanders expect and deserve.

Indicative Timeframes

This programme reflects a significant and transformational piece of work. It is estimated to take around 12-24 months to develop and embed improved organisational outcomes. Throughout this period we will be delivering operational and training enhancements that have been heightened for prioritisation (discussed below) to ensure we remain fit-for-purpose for our operating environment in 2020 and beyond.

Frontline Safety Enhancements Already Delivered or Underway

Safety Reminder Videos

We have recently delivered three safety reminder videos to all frontline officers. These safety reminder videos will continue over the coming months focusing on a range of safety matters including undertaking risk assessments, collecting and using intelligence, using mobility tools and safely using tactical options and equipment. They are targeted at frontline start-of-shift line ups so they can be emphasised and discussed as a team and quickly operationalised to keep New Zealanders safer.

Training

A core focus for us is ensuring that our training programme reflects both the broad and specialised nature of our frontline officers' roles and the challenges they face in today's environment. To ensure we continue training the right people to the right level in order to keep New Zealanders safe, we have already made changes in our training for recruits and all frontline officers, with further enhancements underway.

A significant uplift of tactical training has been incorporated in the recruit programme, including greater levels of scenario-based cognitive training and de-escalation techniques. This creates a more realistic representation of the threats that a frontline officer may confront in the operational environment by placing them in high risk and high pressure training situations, such as being fired upon. As a result recruits can improve their cognitive thinking while under stress better equipping them to operate more effectively and safely in the controlled manner Police expects.

We are looking to roll out this advanced tactical training to all frontline officers as part of continuing education and refresher training. We have also significantly uplifted the firearms training undertaken by all our Level 1 Frontline Responders, including doubling the amount of live training and simulation training.

Enhanced Courses

In order to better recognise the value of our frontline responders, and build their capability, we are designing a graduated training programme. This will enable us to provide advanced frontline responders with specialised training, including formal recognition.

We are currently developing a Frontline Specialist Advanced Course. This is looking to provide tiered training for our Public Safety and Road Policing Teams to enhance their capability. The proof of concept is scheduled to be developed by the end of this year.

We are also developing a dedicated Command Course which focuses on ensuring we have frontline officers across the country with the capability to undertake the control and command of major critical incidents. This is aimed at Sergeant and Senior Sergeant level and is being developed for launch by the end of this year.

Equipment and Capability

We undertook a rapid review of our tactical capability and equipment holdings across the country, which led to a more appropriate distribution of firearms in Waitematā, Auckland City and Eastern Districts as well as some of our specialist units. A full stocktake is now being undertaken to ensure we have the right equipment in the right places to enable efficient and safe responses.

National Support Command Teams (Fly In Teams)

To provide enhanced capacity and capability which can be rapidly deployed in a major incident, we have identified a small group of frontline officers who have the capability to quickly slot into leadership and operational roles when needed. These frontline officers are based across the country and can be flown to an incident to support the initial response, thereby easing the pressure on the particular district to manage their business-as-usual activity. Training will soon commence to build the capability of this team.

Technology

We have significant technology enhancements underway to enhance frontline safety. This includes delivering a single frontline responder safety application which will reduce the current requirement for multiple log-ons across our various tools. We are also exploring the deployment of vehicle location technology to better monitor our operational assets to support the safety of our staff. We are also enhancing the way intelligence information is displayed so that our people can make quick and accurate risk assessments.

Next of Kin and Enhanced Whānau Support Systems

We are working with frontline staff and some extended family to understand how we can best provide the most appropriate response and support in the event a frontline officer is involved in a high risk incident.

Radio Communications

Police is playing a key role on the all of government Next Generation Critical Communications group which is focused on ensuring that Police and Emergency Services will be provided ever-green critical communications that far exceed the capability of radio communication, better enabling our people to keep themselves and their communities safe.

We are also reviewing the operating model for the two radio channels in Waitematä in order to improve frontline officer safety.

Operational Risk

In order to better manage our operational risk, we have a new frontline risk assessment under development which is focused on ensuring the right predictive information is presented to support decision-making in real time. Once finalised, risk information focused on high-risk offenders relevant to a particular location will be proactively communicated via mobility tools, providing real time information to frontline officers in the area.

We are also bringing together various streams of operational training relating to risk and developing a dedicated operational risk package. This may include desktop scenario training to help our people better recognise risk as well as enhancing our District Command Centres' focus as risk managers through active awareness of deployed officers.

Frontline Support Reference Groups

Comprehensive internal engagement is a critical enabler of the FSIP as it will ensure that district voices are heard through every aspect of programme delivery. To achieve this we have designed a Frontline Network, and have established an internal email address which welcomes all feedback, thoughts and suggestions from our people.

We have also put in place district-based champions which are representing the unique experiences and perspectives of their districts. Through this network of frontline supporters we will ensure that the voice of the frontline is heard and listened to and that any changes in the operational space are tested, implemented and evaluated.

External reference groups

Initial consultation has already commenced with the Police Association, the Police Guild, and the IPCA, and planning is underway for broader consultation with all stakeholders.

Opportunities to Enhance our Operational Capability

As evidenced by this ART Evaluation, our frontline officers would like us to continue building their capability so they can respond to incidents as effectively and efficiently as possible. They would also appreciate having access to specialist tactical capability in real time, as well as greater coaching and mentoring, to help them make New Zealanders safer. This requires Police to look broadly at enabling functions (such as training and how deployment decisions are made) as well as tactical opportunities that might be available to bolster capacity (for example, increasing the coverage of Police dogs).

The FSIP work will identify and deliver end-to-end enhancements across enabling functions, and insights will assist in thinking strategically about tactical opportunities to improve organisational agility and community safety.

Through our early engagement with frontline responders, they have highlighted a number of areas they recommend are explored in more detail to assess viability, benefits, and expected impact on community and officer safety. These initial suggestions are described below as either enabling functions or tactical opportunities. To achieve our vision of being the safest country, any viable enabling functions or tactical opportunities will need to be sustainable and able to be fully integrated within our operating model.

Enabling Functions

So far, three key areas of focus have been identified for further consideration:

- Training
- Strategic Workforce Management and Deployment
- Understanding the Services New Zealanders Expect

1. Training

Our frontline responders have identified three training areas for detailed work, and this is already underway within the FSIP work programme:

Increasing Baseline Training for New Recruits

Though recruit training has regularly been adjusted and enhanced to reflect operational requirements, we have not undertaken a step change for a number of years. It is crucial that our graduates are as well-equipped as possible to succeed from day one. Through the FSIP work, we have commenced enhancements to our recruit training (including an additional five days of tactical and firearms training) and are trialling more cognitive training. We are also exploring additional open hand tactic and street craft training, as well as for vehicle stops.

Some of the initial training for new recruits is currently delivered in district for efficiency and local tailoring, as well as to enable recruits to learn in a live environment. We will need to explore the benefits of some or all of this training being delivered at Police College, pre-graduation, to ensure consistency in standards and approaches. This would need to be balanced against the need for recruits to develop their confidence in interacting with the public, driving in an operational environment and in making real-time decisions – something difficult to completely replicate in a College environment.

• Enhance Tactical Training Across all Frontline Responders

Our fresher and tactical training for all responders needs to remain fit-for-purpose, and we must continue to lift our quality and standardisation across the country. This means new and advanced courses (such as one focused on Command and Control for Incident Controllers) tailored to today's operational challenges, and courses that better reflect the specialist yet broad nature of frontline responder roles. The FSIP already has some of this work underway. We will also need to consider training for our forward commanders and our senior operators that need to take frontline operational command such as during an active shooter scenario or building clearance.

• Explore Providing Different Tiers of Constabulary Responder Training

Some overseas jurisdictions have tiered responder models which provide advanced tactical and command training to specific frontline cohorts. We have a similar model with Level 1 and Level 2 responders (based on the level of operational risk they are likely to experience), and now need to take this further to advance training and recognition within our Level 1 responders (who attend most of our high-risk incidents). By providing advanced training and recognition to our Level 1 constables once they reach a certain level of tenure/experience, it is expected we would boost leadership capability and perhaps better retain frontline responders before they move into other specialist roles. This requires us to think holistically and deliberately about the career pathways and career planning we provide for strategic, tactical, and operational leaders and responders.

2. Strategic Workforce Management and Deployment

Our people recommend a greater focus on strategic workforce management and deployment in order to drive more effective service delivery. This may include enhancing our metro, provincial, and rural responses to ensure they remain appropriate for the operational and geographical contexts.

We have recently bolstered our national tasking and coordination process to help provide an enhanced evidence base to support district's tasking and coordination decisions. This helps to mitigate the risk evidenced in this ART Evaluation around self-deployment decisions that might not align with organisational priorities or community expectations.

We have also been asked to look at our broader deployment model, including the approach for all recruits to start as frontline responders on our public safety teams. It is considered that there may be opportunities to provide recruits with a greater breadth of experience across the organisation by starting some of them in other roles (such as in investigations or emergency communications).

3. Understanding the Services New Zealanders Expect

We are a learning organisation that tends to focus on areas for improvement when things have not gone as well as we might have hoped. Under the Commissioner's priority to Deliver the Services New Zealanders Expect and Deserve, we are increasing our understanding and focus on what good looks like, so that we can model these behaviours in all that we do. The FSIP work programme, as well as other initiatives underway, are helping us to better understand what drives our people and what communities expect from our services, so that we can adjust our systems, processes, and training to better support them.

Tactical Opportunities

The ART evaluation clearly showed that our frontline responders felt supported and safer when ART members were there to guide and assist them in high risk situations. This means we want to look at alternative ways to provide that same support to staff. So far, three key areas of focus have been identified for further consideration:

- Armed Offenders Squad coverage
- Integrated Offender Prevention Teams
- National Police Dog coverage

1. Armed Offenders Squad coverage

Our frontline responders reflect that they perceive increased risk when the response time for our Armed Offenders Squad (AOS) is not as quick as desired (though this needs to be fully analysed across metro, provincial, and rural locations). They have asked that we look at the coverage of our AOS across the country (including rostering, location, capability, and capacity), to ensure what we have in place provides timely support for the volume and nature of high-risk pre-planned and reactive events.

The AOS has modified its deployment model over time, particularly in recent years, to meet the needs of metro, provincial, and rural environments including becoming increasingly flexible in terms of pre-planned deployments. In order to provide better reactive support for high-risk incidents we need to ensure that AOS is proximate with tactical equipment close at hand. This is particularly important in provincial and rural environments where there currently less capacity and capability across our specialist squads, given relatively lower demand.

Frontline responders also ask that we reflect on the juggle between the business-as-usual roles and call outs our AOS need to manage, and the sustainability of this in today's environment from a welfare and economic perspective. Possible solutions include diversifying the business-as-usual groups that our AOS responders work in, ensuring greater numbers of AOS on shift to be available to respond when required, or the ability to have an AOS car when off duty to provide quicker response times.

2. Integrated Offender Prevention Teams

In certain locations we previously tested integrated offender prevention teams which had advanced tactical capability and a dedicated focus on high-risk offenders, crime targets, priorities and investigations. This type of model has:

- A focused approach that focuses on the highest operational risks.
- Trained and capable people always rostered on, significantly reducing deployment time.
- Deployment efficiencies (both cost and effectiveness) by not having to utilise resources that are on call but not always immediately available.

Some districts found that integrated teams supported better outcomes due to the mix of skillsets and tactical capabilities they provided. However, how these models could work in provincial and rural locations needs further investigation.

Our frontline responders have reinforced the need for flexibility and agility, as well as defined focus, in the use of these types of teams to ensure they respond to specific operational demands. One suggestion is rostering AOS-qualified staff within targeting teams so that the option to utilise their skillsets and capability is immediately available in the event of a critical incident or if the risk environment changes rapidly. Clear parameters, and flexibility within those, in which districts could operate would remain crucial to ensure the success and acceptance of this type of model. While providing flexibility, it would be necessary to clearly delineate between general frontline and AOS operations (given the higher level of command and risk assessment that is required).

3. National Police Dog Handler coverage

We recognise the specialist skillset that our Police dogs and dog handlers bring to our ability to resolve high-risk incidents. Frontline responders have encouraged us to explore lifting the coverage of Police dogs to ensure we have sufficient capacity and capability across the country to meet the needs of today's operating environment. In some locations, there are significant wait times which are exacerbated in rural locations if dog handlers are not on call overnight. Training Police dogs is relatively expensive for their tenure, and there may be opportunities for us to utilise the mindset and skillset that dog handlers bring in other ways (such as through mentoring and coaching) or through boosting capacity by including a Level 1 responder with each dog handler to make a multi-disciplined team.

Next Steps

The options and suggestions above are all subject to detailed investigation and consultation as the FSIP continues. Policing demands and public expectations vary across our metro, provincial, and rural locations and we need solutions and agility to meet all requirements. It is crucial that we take a deliberate and evidence-based approach to designing the right solutions by understanding our current strengths, weaknesses, risks, and opportunities. This analysis is already underway by the FSIP team.

Police recognises that, alongside any investigation of how to improve frontline safety through training, equipment and other measures, we need to continue evolving our style of policing to ensure that every interaction enhances and does not detract from the perceived legitimacy of what we do. Ultimately, we can only be successful when we have the trust and confidence of all parts of our community. This comes through the way we police. We recognise the fine balance between ensuring our people are appropriately prepared for the environment they face every day whilst, at the same time, ensuring the style in which we police is contributing to making that environment safer because it is appropriate and fair to all.

As this work progresses, any viable options identified will be consulted with our people, key stakeholders, and the public. Our aim is that we work together to find solutions which meet the needs of Police, partners, and communities to ensure everybody can be safe and feel safe on our roads, in their homes, and in communities.