

TPAV JOURNAL

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FEBRUARY 2024



Looking AHEAD



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VICTORIA

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Hume heroes

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VICTORIA**

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Farewell to a community hero

PG. 20

IN THIS ISSUE

10 years on from the Middle Park blast

Last month marked the 10-year anniversary
of the Middle Park gas explosion that seriously
injured three police officers, including then
Constable Varli Blake, who suffered serious burns
that impacted 72 per cent of her body.

We speak to Varli about the challenges and
triumphs she's experienced in life and in her work
and how a touching note from a stranger at a
suburban shopping centre helped to get her
through the toughest times.

She offers an insight into her proudest day,
her darkest day and her every day and most
importantly, what the future holds.

Staying classy for mens health

After mastering Movember in previous years with
themes including the Australian fast bowler and
Magnum PI, 'Hume's heroes' have done it again,
this time members from Hume traded blue for
burgundy to pay homage to San Diego's most
respected mo, Ron Burgundy. They even stopped
by TPAV during a fun run to raise money for men's
health. See the pictures inside.

Farewell to a community hero

South Australian Brevet Sergeant Jason Doig
'loved his town, loved his people and wanted
them to be safe'. Sadly, as he was out protecting
that community, Brevet Sergeant Doig was fatally
shot after responding to reports that a dog had
been shot in state's south-east. The 53-year-old
was farewelled at a packed Adelaide Convention
Centre auditorium in December.

Inside, we hear from Jason's family and friends
about the type of person and police officer he
was, and why his death will leave an unfillable
void in the community he loved being a part of.

Having your say

In this edition of the Journal, we feature the
results of the most recent member sentiment
survey, in which members had the opportunity to
have their say on how we're performing against
their expectations. The results of the survey, which
are broken down into specific areas of service
offered by TPAV, helps to shape and improve our
advocacy and support services for members in
the future.



Cover image:
Detective Senior Constable Varli Blake

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Karl David

Building a legacy on two wheels

As the President of TPAV, a Board member of our preferred police charity, Police Legacy Victoria and a friend and former colleague to many passionate motorcycle riders, the annual Wall to Wall Ride is a highlight on the annual policing calendar.

What it stands for and what it achieves every year shouldn't be underestimated. It certainly isn't by me.

Started in 2011 by former TPAV President Brian Rix, NSW Assistant Commissioner Michael Corboy and colleagues from WA and coordinated by the Police Federation of Australia, the ride has gone from strength to strength, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for our police legatees along the way.

In September, over 300 riders consisting of police members, police veterans and community members, set off from the St Kilda Road Police Memorial and

headed to the National Police Memorial in Canberra, to pay their respects to our fallen colleagues and to raise money for the charity that looks after the families of those lost members – Police Legacy.

The National and Victorian Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance Committees, together with our generous event sponsor, BankVic, presented a cheque to Victoria Police Legacy Board members for \$41,923. That's money that will go directly to help the families of our members who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Looking after the families of our fallen colleagues is something we pride ourselves on. It's why TPAV has chosen Victoria Police Legacy as our preferred charity and why, since its inception, TPAV has played a leading role in coordinating the Wall to Wall Ride.

I would like to extend my thanks to the riders who participated in the 2023 ride for their dedication and commitment to honouring the memories of our fallen.

We look forward to this year's ride and watching you add to the incredible legacy you've created.



“

Looking after the families of our fallen colleagues is something we pride ourselves on.





SECRETARY'S REPORT by Wayne Gatt

WORKING FOR A BETTER

TER FUTURE

2023 for The Police Association and for you, our members, was a year dedicated, quite rightly, to enterprise bargaining. It dominated the efforts of this organisation and particularly in the final months, the energy and efforts of our members, as we collectively pressed for a better future.

More than 40% of members identified unpaid work in their top three concerns.

We sit now at the critical point of a four-year cycle, which overwhelms what we consider our business as usual operations, as we concentrate our efforts on taking our profession forward and developing and improving your rights and entitlements.

Ordinarily in my December Secretary's Message to you, I would have wrapped up the year that has been and reflected on the challenges we'd faced and the progress we'd made. But, given the dynamic situation we found ourselves in, with industrial action firing and our focus firmly locked on navigating the bargaining process to deliver the best possible outcome, that took a back seat.

A BREAKTHROUGH

And, that's representative of our current focus, which remains very much on looking forward, not looking back. The pathway to the future took a large step forward in December when, after three weeks of intense industrial action, a breakthrough was reached in discussions with the government.

openly about how to facilitate each others' objectives and deal with the problems that are being experienced in workplaces. This work is now well underway, with a project working group currently speaking to members in police stations to ascertain the type of rostering models that will adequately address the issues that our members want addressed and rectified.

The genesis for rostering change and nine-hour shifts was born out of the overwhelming and repeated calls from you, our members, to correct the range of issues that have plagued policing over successive agreements. The intensification of unpaid work, unpaid overtime, insufficient correspondence time, unpredictable rosters, the need for greater work life balance, the need to reduce injury from burnout experienced at unprecedented levels and the need for our members' profession to keep pace with changes in the broader workforce in a post COVID environment.

What you told us

These issues were clearly articulated in the feedback you provided us in the lead up to this EBA.

95 per cent of you told us you support alternative service delivery options

More than 40 per cent identified unpaid work in their **top three concerns**

80 per cent said they perform **unpaid work**

95 per cent said they believe they should be **paid for handover**

Almost **50 per cent** raised concerns **regarding single rest days**

Nearly **90 per cent** stated that their roster had changed with **less than 12 hours notice**

And, **76 per cent** of you supported **better shift patterns**

Effectively, our ability to secure a commitment from the government to develop and implement 9 x 9 rosters, marked a significant shift in the bargaining approach taken by the government to that point.

From day one, we have said to members that the best outcomes are achieved when the parties sit down at the table and talk meaningfully and



66

The pathway to success for this magnitude of change is unprecedented, but the benefits to members and to Victoria Police will be, too.



An organisation that doesn't listen to, and endeavour to meet the needs of its workforce, will ultimately fail to attract and retain people to its profession in a sustainable way, nor deliver on its ultimate mission to keep the community safe.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the weeks ahead, we'll be able to share with you, jointly with Victoria Police, the detail of what the project team has delivered.

Of course, enterprise bargaining is not just about rostering. Once 9 x 9 rostering has been dealt with properly, we will be in a position to work to deliver pay rises and other important changes to our members.

Our aim is to wrap this process up as quickly as possible, to ensure a seamless transition into a new agreement.

I want to reaffirm and reassure you that your elected Delegates continue to be brought into our decision making and our confidence in this time. In fact, it would be fair to say that we have been more open, more frequent and more transparent in our communications with your elected representatives than we have been in any other round of bargaining before.

Your Delegates have been involved in briefings every fortnight, sometimes even more regularly than that. They have a strong commitment to helping us make the best possible decisions, armed with all of the information at hand and with your best interests front of mind.

The good thing about talking to people at the coalface like your Delegates and directly with members at stations, is that you get an unfiltered insight into what they're thinking and how they're feeling. We know that the negotiation pathway that we have adopted this time around has been different and challenging for some to understand. We know that for some of you it has been frustrating, and some have not agreed with our decision making at times.

But the complexities of industrial relations requires unions to think carefully about how and what decisions they make and take on behalf of members at any given time. This is why it has been so important to speak so often with your Delegates and your Board, because when complex issues are navigated and negotiated, insight and context counts. The big picture can only be clearly seen when the finer points of detail are appreciated.

Almost always when a member raises an issue of concern with us, the detail in the answer they're provided with (if they're willing to listen to it) satisfies them that

our thought processes and actions are not ad hoc, but rather driven by sound reasoning and strategy.

TRUST IN YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

It would be wonderful if we could have meetings with 18,000 members, so that you could all be as fully informed as these elected representatives. But, those of you on our members' Facebook page will see why that is not possible or practicable. So, trust becomes a factor here.

Trust that the important decisions we make are taken with careful thought for your best interests – the only filter that matters. Trust that your representatives are doing what you have elected them to do, to bring your views, questions and concerns to the table. And trust in yourselves as a collective, knowing that in every year or round of bargaining, there have been times when members have felt challenged, stretched or overwhelmed by the process and the benefits that are being sought, but that ultimately the strength of our collective prevails.

The year ahead has started the way 2023 ended – firmly focused on your future through the enterprise bargaining process.

Don't forget that some of the changes we're seeking, including those to rostering in this round of bargaining, when implemented, could quite possibly be some of the most important changes for police workers introduced in a generation.

It stands to reason that the process to get there is not easy or straightforward. The pathway to success for this magnitude of change is unprecedented, but the benefits to members and to Victoria Police will be, too.

VICTORIANS - YOU'RE PAYING TOO MUCH FOR YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE



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Have you thought about a skin check?

In another important reminder about the benefits of regular skin checks, recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data found that nearly one in three (30.8%) Australians living with cancer had skin cancer.



And with at least 2 in 3 Australians to be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime, skin checks are an important tool in early detection. Especially given most skin cancers can be successfully treated if found early.

But where should you go to get your skin checked, and is it covered by private health or Medicare? It's a question that Police Health get a lot, so we'd like to provide some help about this important topic.

Where should I go to get a skin check?

Melanoma Institute Australia (MIA) advises to see your GP first for skin checks because GPs are medically trained to make diagnosis on anything suspicious, and will refer you to a specialist, such as a Dermatologist, if required.

A Dermatologist is a doctor with significant additional training that specialises in diagnosing and treating skin diseases, which includes skin cancer.

This approach shortens the time from diagnosis to intervention, which is extremely important.

MIA also suggests seeing your GP because they are familiar with your history, can talk to you about risk factors and family history, and treat some skin cancers.

Skin checks done through your GP, as recommended, are claimable through Medicare rather than through private health insurance.

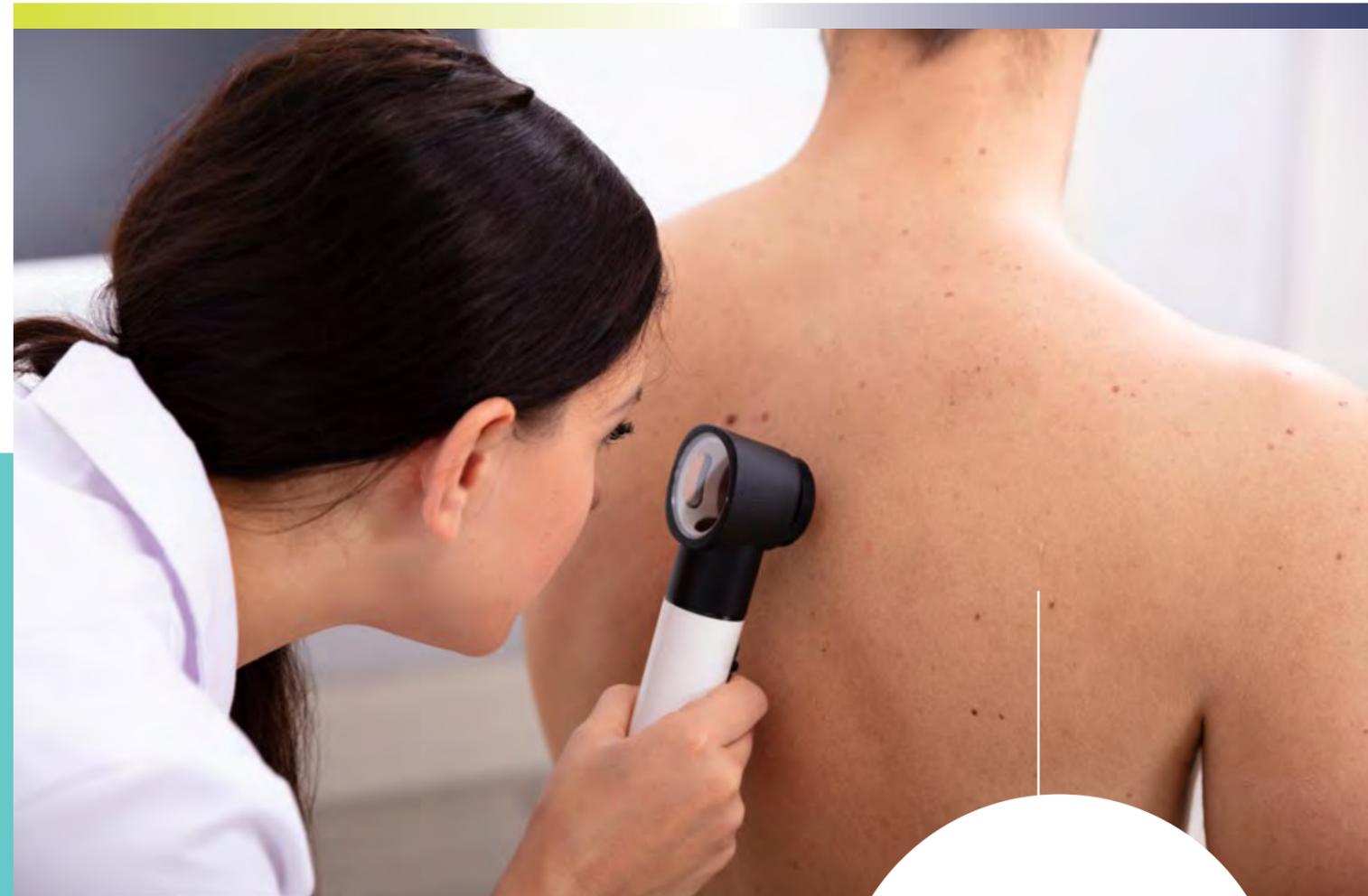
Private health and private skin check clinics

In recent years more private clinics specialising in skin checks have begun to pop up. These clinics offer a variety of services and fee arrangements, and have differing levels of expertise.

The Cancer Council warns that before deciding to go to a skin clinic, it's important to find out about the services offered and the expertise of the employees.

Because of the inconsistent nature of these skin clinics, MIA advises that initial skin checks are best done by your GP. Police Health does not pay benefits towards consults at skin clinics.

Instead, we urge members to see their GP for a skin check, and ask whether a surveillance and management plan is recommended based on your individual risk factors.



Many police are at greater risk of skin cancer given their jobs see them outdoors in the Aussie sun more often.

Why you should think about getting a skin check

Many police are at greater risk of skin cancer given their jobs see them outdoors in the Aussie sun more often, so regular skin checks play a crucial role in prevention by aiding in the early detection of skin cancer and other dermatological issues.

Skin cancer, including melanoma, is a common and potentially deadly condition, especially in countries with high sun exposure like Australia. Skin checks allow healthcare professionals to identify suspicious moles, lesions, or abnormalities that might indicate the presence of skin cancer.

Early detection enables timely treatment, significantly increasing the chances of successful outcomes and reducing the need for invasive interventions.

By undergoing routine skin checks, individuals can proactively safeguard their health, reduce the risk of skin cancer, and ensure their long-term wellbeing.

Early detection enables timely treatment, significantly increasing the chances of successful outcomes and reducing the need for invasive interventions.

Health-related articles are intended for general information only and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your doctor. The views expressed in articles are not necessarily those of Police Health.

Recovery, resilience & fighting fear

with a little bit of vitriol

Varli Blake's life changed course in one catastrophic moment. Her recovery and re-emergence into everyday life in the decade since, while momentous, has been far more incremental and measured.



An unwavering strength

Resilience, positivity and being proactive in her own recovery are virtues that have seen Varli succeed, where others may have crumbled under the injustice and sheer misfortune of their situation.

She speaks matter-of-factly about the explosion that changed her, but with emotion and insight about the people, incidents, doubts, personal triumphs and growing sense of normality and acceptance that have shaped her life in the years that followed.

"I remember everything that happened ... it has obviously had a massive impact on me. I get more emotional though talking about my family, and what I put them through at the time," she said.



I had two choices, I could either get on with life and live it or be in the foetal position at home and just hate life. To me there was no choice.



"I'm a pretty strong person, I've always been pretty independent, but without people on my side – family, friends, colleagues, the organisation, welfare officers, getting me back at the pace I was comfortable at going ... well, it was everything."

She frames her adult life in three phases – her proudest day, her darkest day and her every day.

Varli had wanted to become a police officer long before she graduated from the academy in 2013, aged 32. That sense of anticipation and the realisation of a dream long held, made for her proudest day.

"It was awesome to me at the time, I was pretty proud, my family was there and they were proud," she said.

"It was a good day, the sun was shining, we were outside. I had wanted to be a police officer for about ten years before I joined, but I hadn't worked up the courage."

Now was her time.

She was initially posted to Wonthaggi to be closer to her mum who was battling cancer, then transferred to the busy policing hub of South Melbourne on the fringe of the CBD.

She had been there for five-and-a-half weeks when on 4 January 2014, her darkest day arrived without warning.

It was a routine call on a routine shift.

A woman had phoned from Sale with a warning that her son was threatening

suicide. He was at his unit in Hambleton Street, Middle Park and he needed help.

"It was a welfare check. He had threatened suicide on Facebook, he had just broken up with his girlfriend. It's a pretty common scenario," Varli said.

Things can change so quickly

"We go there, his car's there but we can't get in. We get the Sergeant to come down and try to open the door. He can't get it open, so we get the fireies and they get a ladder, go up to the first floor and get in through a sliding door and they let us in.

"We go through and there he is on the bed with a gas bottle hooked up to



a CPAP mask. So, Tony (Sergeant Tony Scully) turns it off and walks out of the room and Emma (first Constable Emma Quick) follows and they are both in the lounge room and I was still in the bedroom.

"I heard a bang and I think it was the bedroom door slamming. That is to me, the point where it started, then I see the flames coming all around the room."

"It was like slow motion, I just watched the flames go all around the room and behind me. I ran to the door and tried the door but the pressure held it shut. At that moment, I thought there was someone on the other side holding it shut. I ran over to the window and all I could see was roof tiles, then ran back to the door and it opened. I ran down the stairs fast and there was six people standing there and they are looking at me and I was saying 'give me water, I need water' because I just felt really hot."

"Emma came running over to me and she was really hot, and we were saying to each other 'is your face okay' and we both said 'yes'.



Varli crosses the finish line in the San Remo Channel Challenge.

"I was just sitting in the garden bed having the hose poured on me and then the ambulance came and I started to get the shakes ... they were trying to put a drip in me and the ambulance officer was freaking out a bit.

"At this point I was starting to get a bit scared."

Lucky to survive

The next thing Varli remembers is waking up in the ICU of The Alfred Hospital with the pain of the burns and skin grafts that had been performed in the previous 48 hours while she had been placed in an induced coma.

In all, 72 per cent of her body was impacted by burns and grafts.

Varli would spend the next two weeks in ICU, almost completely bandaged and unable to communicate with her family members who had maintained an almost 24-hour-a-day vigil at her bedside.

One day, her brother-in-law brought in her Ipod and put on her favourites

playlist, which connected to the song she was last listening to, her favourite song 'Vitriol' by 'Bluejuice'.

"I just started moving my feet to the beat, because that's the only part of my body that I could move."

The opening words of the song are a fitting precursor to the fight that lay ahead.

'Good luck and don't dare give up ... give it a little bit of vitriol'.

Her feet then became her tools of communication.

"I started moving my feet a certain amount of times to signal a letter, in accordance with the number of the letter of the alphabet, three taps for 'C', 6 for 'F' etc."

"I remember my older sister was with me and I used my feet to ask her, 'Am I going to die?'"

"When I got to the last word, she came really close to me and said 'no sweetheart, you're not going to die'"

I started moving my feet a certain amount of times to signal a letter, in accordance with the number of the letter of the alphabet, three taps for 'C', 6 for 'F' etc."

The realisation

After being moved onto the ward, Varli recalls the first time she became aware that her physical appearance had changed.

"The physio came in and she had a shaved head, and my younger sister said, 'Oh, look at you two, you've got the same hairdo' and I didn't know and I just started crying."

"It's just those little things that are part of who you are."

Within a matter of weeks, thanks largely to the unwavering help and support of her family, Varli was back home in the Windsor apartment she shared with her sister (and her older sister and her three-month-old nephew, who were in Melbourne from WA at the time).

"I couldn't have done it without my family, I'm really thankful for them more than anything."

Varli's 'every day' is harder to categorise. Some days over the past ten years have had a significant impact, both positively and negatively, on who she is today.

She recalls an incident at Chadstone shopping centre about four months into her recovery with great clarity, because it arrived at one of her most vulnerable points.

It was one of the first times she had ventured out into the community in a heavily populated place without her protective mask.

"We go to the food court and there are people staring and pointing and whatever, and my mum and sister were telling them to mind their own business. After we order our sandwiches, this 18 or 19-year-old kid comes around and he pulls out a receipt and writes something on it, folds it and gives it to the girl who was serving us and asks her to deliver it to us.

"We had no idea what it would say and we were thinking the worst. Then, we open it and it says 'you are beautiful' with a smiley face on it.

"Something so simple had a massive impact on me. My sister and I just cried and cried on the spot. It's just such a nice thing to do, especially from such a young kid and he obviously just knew that I'd be struggling and he gave me confidence that day when I needed it."



Varli with her sisters, Bianca (left) and Courtney (centre)

I think that I was worried for so long that if I was in a good head space, I wouldn't want to risk someone changing that by not keeping myself covered up.



Facing her demons

But, Varli's confidence hasn't necessarily charted a linear progression. It's been punctuated by common bouts of self-consciousness and fear, that at times are easier to allay than to face.

"In general everyday life, it's only been two and a half years since I've had the confidence to wear shorts out again in

public. I'd spent summers out in pants or a long skirt, it's uncomfortable. It's a long time to be hot. But now, I don't care, I just wear them.

"Wearing shorts again was a big deal!"

While milestones like this may take time, they always seem to be conquered.

"I think that I was worried for so long that if I was in a good head space, I wouldn't want to risk someone changing that by not keeping myself covered up. So, I would be uncomfortable, so that I wouldn't have to deal with somebody possibly affecting me."

Last year, she upped the anti again, completing the San Remo Channel Challenge which comprises a 600-metre swim and a two-kilometre run.

"I'd signed up to do it the year before but chickened out at the last minute. But, then I thought f..k it, I'm doing it, I don't care."

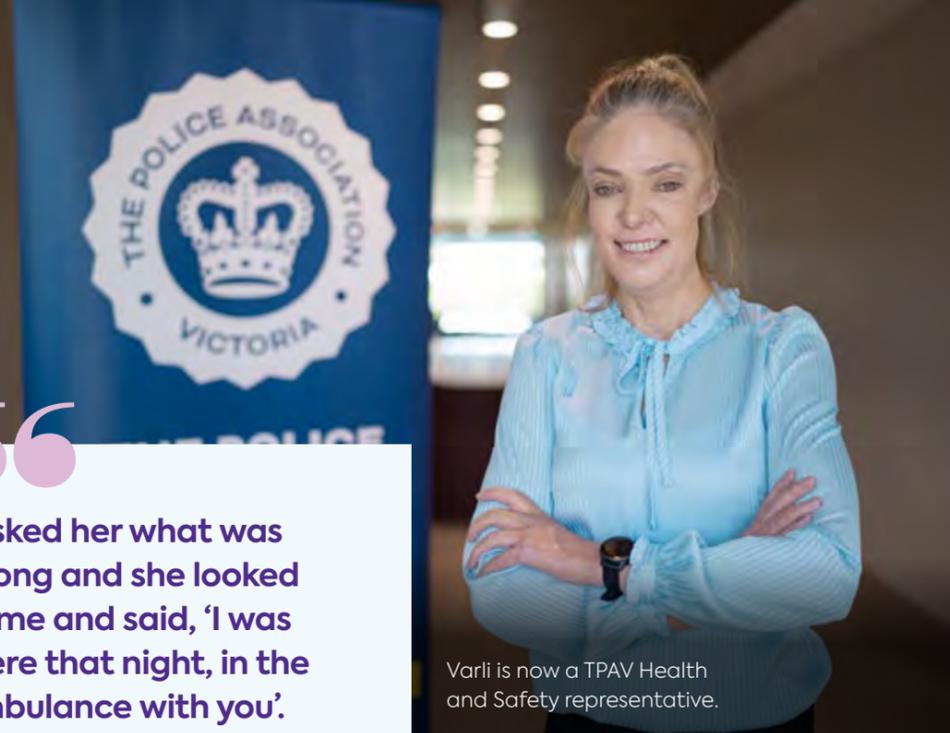
"I wore my bathers for it and that was a big deal, because there were people there watching and after that I felt a heap better.

"Did people notice? Maybe. It's in your mind, but I don't think people care so much."

Her re-introduction to work – which began gradually back at South Melbourne, 15 months into her recovery – was less confronting by comparison.

"People said to me 'oh, if I was in your position I don't know if I could come back to work'. But, what else was I going to do? I mean, everyone in this organisation at the time knew what had happened to me, I didn't have to explain it to anyone, which made everything easier."

"I was also just really lucky that the bosses I had, the welfare people I had



Varli is now a TPAV Health and Safety representative.

were fantastic and TPAV were great for my family as well, they just took care of things without any fuss.”

Seeking out help

Throughout the early stages of her recovery, Varli prioritised her mental health by proactively engaging with welfare services when she needed them, rather than waiting for them to call her.

“If I was having a really bad day, I would ring them, you’ve got to, because things can change so quickly and it doesn’t necessarily work on a timeline.”

“Just having people available to talk to, when I needed them, was important.”

She worked at the Crime Desk at Port Phillip and moved on to Major Crime Scene for a few years, before deciding to chase the work aspiration that had been put on hold since that fateful night in Middle Park – to become a detective.

“I thought that I always wanted to be a detective, so I should get back on track with what I wanted. So, I did.”

She completed detective training school and embarked on a stint at the Drug Response Unit in Prahran.

That posting led to one particularly serendipitous meeting.

Varli was part of a team that had raided a clandestine drug laboratory. When she and her colleagues began complaining of headaches, potentially caused by the chemicals they’d been exposed to, they called an ambulance to attend and check them over.

“A few minutes after one of the ambos finished our check up, the lift doors in front of me opened and there she was, crying. I asked her what was wrong and she looked at me and said, ‘I was there that night, in the ambulance with you.’”

“We spoke for about ten minutes and I think it made her feel a bit better to see me back working, after not knowing what



I asked her what was wrong and she looked at me and said, ‘I was there that night, in the ambulance with you’.

had happened to me after the last time she saw me about six years earlier.”

Reaching her goals

For the past three years, Varli has worked as a detective at the Bass Coast Crime Investigation Unit and now lives in the region.

“The lifestyle is fantastic. I’m at the beach, so I go home, get the dogs, go for a walk along the beach, it’s great. You can’t beat that.”

She’s also recently become the station’s Health and Safety Representative.

“The role came up and I thought I’d do it. I’d really like to help and try to change things for the better and that’s ultimately what it’s about. If I can just ease a load somewhere and provide some help, that would be great. Because at times when I was recovering and I needed help, someone would step up and sort it all out and it just relieves that sort of pressure and I hope I can do that too.

“I want to be able to do something, I don’t want to just be a name on a sheet, I want to be someone who helps.”

A decade on from her darkest day, Varli is stronger, both mentally and physically and she’s happy. But, she’s honest about the impact it’s had, and continues to have on her.

Resilient, stubborn and motivated

“Physically, as far as my face is concerned, I still sometimes feel shit about it, it’s a constant reminder every day when I look in the mirror. I still don’t have as much confidence as I used to have, but I certainly don’t shy away from things either. I can’t change it.”

Then, there’s the traumatic mental legacy of the explosion itself.

“Still today, I feel like I’m quite hyper-vigilant a lot, which I hate. I hate loud noises, I’m pretty jumpy, loud noises just seem to go straight through me.”

But she’s certainly not defined by these insecurities and increasingly, not as impeded by them.

“I had two choices, I could either get on with life and live it or be in the foetal position at home and just hate life. To me there was no choice.

“You have to be positive and live your life and I am ... I’ve learned I’m resilient, stubborn and motivated.”

And, she’s ready to confront life’s next challenge with the same attitude that has gotten her here.

‘Good luck and don’t dare give up ... give it a little bit of vitriol!’

2023 by the numbers

It’s been another busy year in policing and that’s reflected in the extraordinary number of engagements TPAV has fielded and responded to this year.

To give you a sense of what the past 12 months have looked like from inside TPAV, we’ve put together this 2023 snapshot.

From first contact with our members Support Centre, through to resolution provided by experts in each of our departments, the figures that define 2023 are staggering.

How we connected with you...

24,008

Incoming phone calls



Incoming emails

29,043



470+

Workplace visits



137

Home visits

Workplace training

55

Delegates and ADs trained



191

HSRs and DHSRs trained

Connected through social media

1,581

Buy Swap Sell Rent group items listed



28,384

Members group comments

Members assisted with...

1,906

WorkCover



1,715

Wellbeing



5,156

Rights & entitlements at work



1,884

Legal & discipline



513

Members group assisted via DM



879

Members group posts





A senseless loss felt far and wide



Vale Sergeant Jason Doig

Just before midnight on 16 November, South Australian police suffered the tragic loss of Brevet Sergeant Jason Doig, who was shot dead while responding to reports a dog had been shot at a property in the state's south-east.

A 26-year-old man has been charged with Brevet Sergeant Doig's murder and the attempted murder of Sergeant Michael Hutchinson, who was also shot during the incident, but survived.

Tributes flowed for the universally respected 53-year-old, who loved his town and its people and wanted them to be safe.



Police Association members and the South Australian community offered their final goodbyes to fallen police officer Brevet Sergeant Jason Doig at a state funeral on 4 December.

By Nicholas Damiani

In a packed Adelaide Convention Centre auditorium, Superintendent Campbell Hill spoke of his time working alongside Jason, a dedicated Limestone Coast LSA member.

"Jason's death has been met with an outpouring of sorrow extended not just from Lucindale ... but widely across South Australia and, indeed, our nation," Superintendent Hill said.

"He is a much-loved member of the Lucindale community. There's nobody I can find who can ever pinpoint a time when he has spoken ill about anybody.

"Everybody who came into contact with tales of his exploits in the air, sea or land, it was almost a bit of a one-man special operations team if you asked him.

"And his role as a police officer was (only) half of it ... he led such a rich life outside of his work."

Superintendent Hill touched on an affectionate cartoon he had seen, which depicted Jason's life perfectly.

"It was of a man, seemingly Jason, dressed in scuba gear, riding a bicycle, off a high-diving board, into a swimming pool," he said.

"Everything all at once – which seemed to be his style.

"And (then), as a police officer, we've heard so much about his fair approach, his dependability.

"He loved his town, he loved his people and he wanted them to be safe.

“**He loved his town, he loved his people and he wanted them to be safe.**”





“

His approach and dedication is something our younger country police officers and, indeed, all of our younger police officers should aspire to.”

“His approach and dedication is something our younger country police officers and, indeed, all of our younger police officers should aspire to.”

Acting Commissioner Linda Williams told how the grief of losing Jason was especially devastating and widespread given that he was also a pillar of his local community.

“It was this team-first attitude and willingness to travel to assist (colleagues) that saw him attend the incident on that fateful night in November,” she said.

Brett Doig also eulogised his brother, saying that Jason “at 53, was not done yet”.

“His dedication to the community he served, and to the close friendships that he made, will be acutely evident to anyone who was fortunate enough to cross paths with him,” Brett said.

“He gave his knowledge and his time freely, and without any expectations.

“We, as a family, felt Jason’s care, generosity, love and thoughtfulness continue on, from his colleagues at SAPOL, as we try to navigate the most difficult of experiences.

“It is evident how (deep) Jason’s impact has been on those around him, by the way his policing family have shared with us their incredible care and compassion.

“I and my family could not be more appreciative.

“The various communities he served have also shown us how huge an influence he has had on them, by their amazing tributes and vigils.”

At the conclusion of the service, six officers lifted Jason’s coffin onto their shoulders and carried it out of the auditorium. Police Association members formed a 1.1km guard of honour along North Terrace and King William Street to pay their final respects to a man who was more than a colleague to so many.

Police Association Victoria President Karl David offered the following tribute to Brevet Sergeant Doig, on behalf of all TPAV members:

The loss of Brevet Sergeant Jason Doig who was tragically killed on duty trying to protect his community, serves as another poignant reminder of the fragility of our thin blue line right across the country.

Brevet Sergeant Doig’s death follows similar tragedies in WA and Queensland to have befallen the Australian police family within the past 12 months.

The Victorian police family mourns Brevet Sergeant Doig’s senseless passing and extends its heartfelt condolences and solidarity to the entire SA police community as well as to Jason’s family and friends.

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📍 Peninsula on the Bay, 435 Nepean Highway, Frankston VIC 3199





YOUR SAY

on our performance

SURVEY RESULTS

TPAV exists to serve its members. Only members can judge the level of support, advocacy and career advancement that TPAV provides, where it is excelling and where work needs to be done to satisfy expectations.

While your feedback is received and acted upon constantly, the best way to get a snapshot of how members, as a contingent, assess the services TPAV offers is through a member-wide survey.

The 2023 Member Feedback Survey, conducted by TPAV's Research & Advocacy team, asked participating members in a range of ranks, roles and ages to judge how TPAV has performed in

delivering its fundamental services over the past two years.

The results of that survey will inform how we can better operate to fulfil the expectations of members in the future.

We thank all members who participated in the survey.

MOST PROMINENT ISSUES FACING VICTORIA POLICE

The top issues facing Victoria Police identified by members were:



13%
Too much paperwork



12%
Issues with leadership or management in the force



13%
Insufficient police numbers

LEGAL AND DISCIPLINE ASSISTANCE

TPAV assists members through a range of formal processes including performance management, discipline matters, and criminal proceedings. This assistance spans a number of sections of the organisation.

58%
Respondents are most satisfied with the level of information they receive about TPAV's legal services

51%
are satisfied by the quality of TPAV's preferred legal practitioners

50%
are satisfied with the legal representation cost fund

56%
of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the disciplinary advice

Each of these categories demonstrate an increase in levels of satisfaction since the 2021 Member Feedback Survey.

THREATS AND ASSAULTS AGAINST POLICE AND PSO

In the past year:

42%
of members have been attacked by an offender

20%
of members have been injured by an offender

69%
Police and PSOs have been threatened by an offender

MEMBERS VALUE THE ROLE OF TPAV

The majority of members are satisfied with TPAV's performance. Members overwhelmingly indicated that membership of TPAV gives them peace of mind with respect to pay and conditions. Members detailed feeling protected against unreasonable demands.



The report notes the following with respect to why our members maintain their membership with TPAV:

Members also expressed collective-based sentiments, referencing for instance, **'solidarity'** a **'philosophical belief in the power of unions'**, the need for **'strength in numbers'**, **'mass negotiations, rather than individual gives us power'** and stating that **'being part of union provides assistance for all.'**

This latter theme appears to be emerging stronger year after year.

COMMUNICATIONS

TPAV continually seeks to target and improve our communications with members, and to amplify the voices of our members in the public sphere. It is crucial that we understand how and when members engage with our communications, and their level of satisfaction with same.

Specific email updates (e.g. PSO updates, Commissioned Officer updates, TPANOW etc.), TPAV App, the TPAV Journal, and the TPAV Members Only Facebook Page are the methods of engagement and communication utilised by TPAV that members use the most.

TPAV Journal

90% of members read the TPAV Journal



62%

of member prefer reading the hard copy version of the journal over the electronic version



60%

of members are satisfied with the way TPAV communicates with them as a member



69%

of all respondents are also satisfied with the frequency of communication from TPAV, while

31% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

TPAV APP and Website

Respondents were also asked to consider how the **TPAV App** and **Website** could be improved.



Most liked:



26%

Member benefits & discounts

This is a significant increase from 19% in 2021



15%

of respondents also favoured the **salary and penalty calculator**

10%

liked having that amount of content all in one place

Suggested improvements:

11%

inclusion of a **searchable EBA**



9%

more salary information



10%

more member rewards



WELLBEING

Members have appreciated the investment in wellbeing services at TPAV.



62%

of members are **satisfied or very satisfied with the general wellbeing advice/assistance provided** by TPAV personnel.

This is a significant increase from 46% satisfaction in 2021.

67%

Members assessments of TPAVs assistance through formal workplace processes continues to go from strength to strength.

Satisfaction levels have **increased significantly since 2021** with respect to the following:

- ✓ Advice receiving on a performance-related matter.
- ✓ Representation on a performance-related matter.
- ✓ Advice received on a disciplinary matter.
- ✓ Representation at a disciplinary hearing.
- ✓ Representation at the Police Service and Review Board.

MEMBER BENEFITS & DISCOUNTS

75%

of members consider Holiday Homes to be important or very important.



88%

consider the Members Discount Scheme to be important or very important.



67%

of members are satisfied or very satisfied with the Members Discount Scheme.



MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

TPAV is continually improving and expanding avenues to engage with our membership. Recent years have seen the creation of, as well as increased investment in, the Member Support Centre.

TPAV also maintains an enhanced presence on various social media platforms. The creation of the Member Facebook Page has seen increasing uptake and interaction. Further, TPAV continues to explore additional methods of engagement for the future.

63%

contacted TPAV by phone

in the past two years, with the majority reporting that they **were satisfied or very satisfied with the time taken to respond to and resolve their inquiry**, as well as the information provided.



53%

are in the Members Only Facebook Group

(up from 49% in 2021).

49%

follow TPAV's Facebook Page

(up from 45% in 2021)



32%

Listen to the podcasts

Suggested topics for future episodes of the TPAV Squad Cast included member entitlements, case studies that show the work TPAV does, challenges for women in policing, an explanation of Baseline Minimum Service Levels.



61%

of members know who their **Delegate and/or Assistant Delegate** is.



43%

of members know who their **Health and Safety Representative (HSR)** is, (compared to 38% in 2021, this has increased slightly).

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

TPAV takes the opportunity in these surveys to understand the future needs of our membership. To this end, respondents commented on what one additional service or benefit TPAV could provide that would be of most value to members.

Workplace visits

Reflecting previous iterations of the Member Feedback Survey, members suggested that there is a need to increase the accessibility of staff, appreciating that it will require an increase in staff numbers to increase responsiveness, particularly by phone and email. In addition, members requested an increase in workplace visits would be beneficial.

Website and APP additions

A number of members specifically highlighted the crucial role that representatives play in connecting members with TPAV. Members suggested that they would benefit from a central list of delegates and contacts on the TPAV app/Website to be able to contact with issues.

Consultation

In addition to this core business, members expressed that they would like to see TPAV take a more consultative and active role with respect to changes in the VPM and other policies. With respect to specific issues, members requested that TPAV continue and strengthen our campaign with respect to better rostering.

Addressing important issues

Members provided ideas for future information needs. This included updates on members rights and responsibilities in a changing policy and legislative environment, additional information on mental health and distressing incidents, and financial literacy matters.

Further training

Other training opportunities requested by members included time management, resilience training that supports the work and hours of uniform officers, as well as opportunities for families to better understand the policing role.



WALKING

AND TALKING



in memory of members lost

More important steps were taken to raise awareness for mental health in policing and in acknowledgement of the tragic loss of two beloved members from stations in Melbourne's west.



TPAV was a proud supporter of the fourth Walk to Talk, held on 14 December with around 100 participants taking to the street.

Walk to Talk was established after the tragic loss of Melton Sergeant Shona Gillie in 2020 and Constable Ryan Russel from Keilor Downs in 2021.

The 38km walk from Sunshine Police Station to Melton Police Station aims to raise awareness of mental health challenges that members face, while helping to build support and rapport among colleagues.

The walk raised \$2,000 for Victoria Police Legacy.

Shona's father, Mick O'Connor, said he was thankful for the continued love shown towards Shona and her memory.

"Shona was always proud to put on the uniform and what it represented," he said.

"While it is important to grieve, it is also so important to remember all loved ones taken too soon, and help try and create a positive impact in this space."

"If this walk can just stop one person from taking their life, then it is worth it."

Ruby, Shona's daughter, along with three of her high school friends, completed the 38km walk, with Mick joining in for the final 19km while assisting with the support crew in the first section.

"Thank you to everyone who participated in the walk, and we look forward to having a greater turn out for the next Walk to Talk," Mick said.

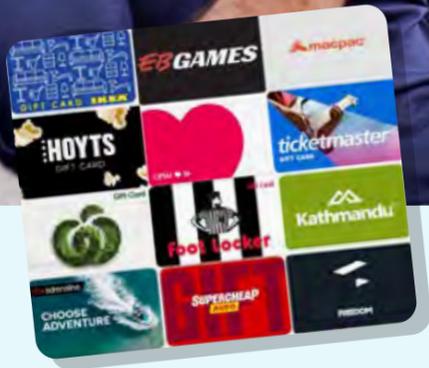
The fifth Walk to Talk will be held on 14 December 2024.

A reminder to all members that support is available if you need it.

TPAV members and families have access to free and confidential counselling 24/7 via TelusHealth on **1300 361 008**.

Additional resources at tpav.org.au/wellbeing-services and bluehub.org.au.





Union Shopper

Union Shopper is home to gift cards across all shopping categories, whether it be everyday grocery items or fuel, clothing, homeware or adventure experiences.

Purchasing a gift card through Union Shopper provides discounts of **up to 10%**. For example, a gift card at Freedom provides a member saving of **7.5%**. With the purchase of a **\$100 gift card**, you are only spending \$92.50!

Union Shopper offers a range of shopping savings, including discounts at:

- JB Hi-Fi Business
- The Good Guys Commercial
- Samsonite; and
- Cash back offers at a variety of online retailers

Head to our Union Shopper TPAV Member Rewards page to learn more.



A sustainable, reusable alternative to plastic bottles and rubber or plastic coated take-away cups, made by Fressko flasks offer stylish reusable coffee cups and drink bottles for everyday use.

TPAV members receive a **25% discount off** purchases at the made by Fressko website.



Full details are available on our made by Fressko TPAV Member Rewards webpage.

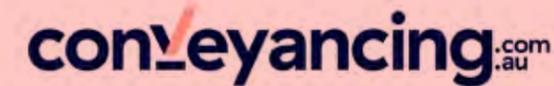


Rossi Boots

Looking for a low-cut, high-cut, work or lifestyle boot, Rossi has you covered!

TPAV members receive **20% off** member purchases at the Rossi Boots website.

Head to our Rossi Boots TPAV Member Rewards page for all the details.



Conveyancing.com.au help people buy and sell property across Australia every day with the confidence of full legal support.

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TPAV members are entitled to receive a **\$100 discount** on conveyancing services.



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TPAV members are entitled to receive a **\$50 discount** on building inspection services.



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Register today at esssuper.com.au/seminar



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TPAV Holiday Homes

Time to book in your next break?

The next ballot for TPAV Holiday Homes is coming up in **June**

Make sure to apply now so you don't miss out. Head to the TPAV Holiday Homes website to register.*

We have a number of properties throughout Victoria that are available to members for a great price.

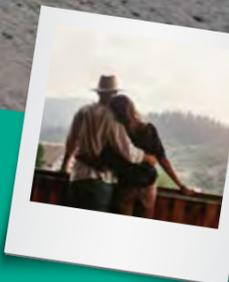
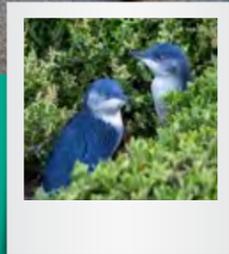
These properties are run for members and are not-for-profit.

Apply now so you don't miss out!

Scan to view properties



*Must be a current serving TPAV member. Excluding outside members.

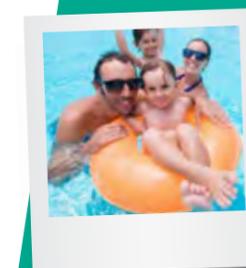


Holiday Snaps

We would love to see you and your family having fun at one of our holiday home locations!

Send in your photos to be featured in next month's Journal!

general@tpav.org.au



Celebrating WITH PRIDE



TPAV Secretary Wayne Gatt, Tyler McRae (Project/Policy Officer at Victoria Police) and Jeremy Oliver (LGBTIQA+ Community Portfolio Manager).

There was a great show of pride on display at the annual Victoria Police Pride Awards, held for the first time at The Police Association’s headquarters.

The awards, held on 8 December, celebrate the initiatives within the LGBTIQA+ community by Victoria Police staff over the past 12 months.

The awards recognise, highlight and celebrate the work of individuals and initiatives in Victoria Police that improve the wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ people and communities in the organisation and across the state.

A message from Wayne

Speaking on behalf of TPAV at the event, Secretary Wayne Gatt spoke of the importance of partnering with Victoria Police pride community.

“A union’s role in this partnership is about achieving real tangible outcomes for its members”, Wayne said.

“Tangible mechanisms are important to enable you to be your real self at home and work. You don’t get it until you talk to your members.”

Following the introduction of gender affirmation leave in EBA2019, Wayne revealed to members that The Police Association Victoria has in principle support from Victoria Police for an additional 2 weeks leave for gender affirmation leave.

Drum roll please...

There were three awards presented at this year’s event, Liaison Officer of the Year (won by Sergeant Jo Warwick and Leading Senior Constable Brooke Malane), Workplace Champion of the Year (won by Assistant Commissioner Dean McWhirter and Senior Sergeant James Cole) and The Police Association Victoria ‘Pride Initiative of the Year’, which was awarded to the Trans and Gender Diverse Employee Network (TAGDEN).

TAGDEN started in August 2022 with a small group of Victoria Police trans and gender diverse employees and has now grown to 19 members. The network is only open to employees who identify as transgender, gender diverse, non-binary and gender questioning/exploring.

The network is private and confidential which allows people to come to meetings as their authentic self regardless of where they are on their gender identity journey.

Accepting the award on behalf of TAGDEN were Jeremy Oliver, LGBTIQA+

“

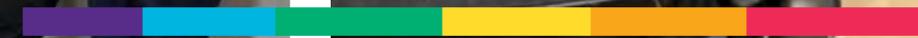
TAGDEN has worked hard over 2023 to offer a safe and inclusive space for trans and gender diverse (TGD) employees to come together, share stories and experiences, seek peer support, and generally feel part of a larger TGD community.

Community Portfolio Manager and Tyler McRae, Project/Policy Officer.

In accepting the award, they emphasised its role in facilitating an inclusive environment for trans and gender diverse community.

“TAGDEN has worked hard over 2023 to offer a safe and inclusive space for trans and gender diverse (TGD) employees to come together, share stories and experiences, seek peer support, and generally feel part of a larger TGD community.

“TPAV have been instrumental in supporting trans and gender diverse employees and improving workplace conditions and culture. TAGDEN appreciate all the work TPAV do and look forward to continuing the relationship and engagement in the future.”





Movember is an annual event involving the growing of moustaches during the month of November to raise awareness of men's health issues, such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer and men's suicide.

“Milk would’ve been a bad choice ... so we had some energy drinks on hand for Hume’s finest,” TPAV Secretary Wayne Gatt said.

‘Hume’s Heroes’ was started in 2019 by Detective Sergeant Joe Hartwig and has gathered momentum each year, winning the Victoria Police Team Challenge in 2023.

This year, the crew raised just under \$12,000 for men’s health.



HUME HEROES

RAISED ~\$12,000

BREAKING NEWS

from the lips of Burgundy

The thin blue line had a dash of burgundy and the ‘stache of Burgundy, as members from Hume added a classy touch to this year’s Movember theme.

Channelling their inner anchorman, team ‘Hume’s Heroes’ assembled and raised some money and awareness for men’s health, through sponsorship and a fun run.

The team set off on foot from the Police Academy to Broadmeadows police station, with some stops on the way to refuel – including TPAV headquarters in East Melbourne.





Kids, Cops & Competition



A healthy environment to prosper

Sport is a great unifier. It brings together people who wouldn't ordinarily meet in a healthy social atmosphere that builds lasting bonds.

It also offers an ideal platform for children to interact with and learn from their local police in a relaxed social atmosphere. That's the impetus behind the Sports COPPS (choices, opportunities, partnerships, participation = success) program, which was designed and developed by Detective Sergeant Vincent Manno in 2001 and continues to go from strength to strength.

"It brings together young people through a common passion of sport, providing them with an opportunity to connect with their community, and build their self-esteem," Detective Sergeant Manno said.

"Having positive relationships with young people is important to Victoria Police as it helps to establish networks of trust, break down barriers, whilst building strong relationships.

"The program has been responsible for reconnecting young people to their communities by providing support for those who may be marginalised, socially disadvantaged, economically challenged and 'at-risk'. It also encompasses

multicultural, indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse youth."

Initially run as 'Soccer COPPS', Sports COPPS now encompasses all sports and recreational clubs of Victoria Police. The program is open to primary school children (Grades 3 to 6) and secondary school students (Years 7 to 9).

The program offers Victoria Police volunteers a unique opportunity to engage with young people through what they are most interested in, while providing them with a safe space to do it.

There is also an educational and safety element to the program, covering topics like personal safety and assistance,



“

Having positive relationships with young people is important to Victoria Police as it helps to establish networks of trust, break down barriers, whilst building strong relationships.

reporting incidents of concern to a 'responsible adult', protocols in ringing 000, bullying and social media. It also helps young people understand how they may be able to assist the police and vice versa.

At the completion of the educational component, interactive sports coaching stations run by police volunteers are set up at either an indoor or outdoor facility. The Program can be run over a single or several days.

So far, the Sports COPPS program has reached more than **14,850 young people** across metropolitan and regional Victoria.

COPPS program has reached more than

14,850 young people



It brings together young people through a common passion of sport, providing them with an opportunity to connect with their community and build their self-esteem.

”

The program is open to all unsworn and sworn (VPS, PSO, PCO, VP) Victoria Police employees and appropriate external stakeholders.

Victoria Police employees who are willing to assist in either an administrative or sporting capacity, please email vincent at manno@police.vic.gov.au



Welcome to 2024!

By Detective Inspector
Kate O'Neill



Stay connected with us!

- @vicpolicelegacy
- @Victoria Police Legacy
- @victoriapolicelegacy
- @victoriapolicelegacy

policelegacyvic.org.au

We are looking forward to another great year of engagement, connecting and providing support to Victoria Police Legatees. The continued financial support of members means that essential programs will continue.

Your contributions, and that of our sponsors and supporters, ensures that Police Legatees know they will always be supported and are a part of the Victoria Police family. Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support.

SHOP TO SUPPORT

police families who have lost a loved one

All proceeds from the VPL shop go directly to support police families who have lost a loved one. Recent additions to the shop include the VPL Cap, ideal for keeping cool this Summer, and our brand new VPL Stress Ball, providing a fantastic physical outlet for stress, tension, and nervous energy.

Shop now via the QR code or visit www.policelegacyvic.org.au/shop



NEW!



Shop today!
Scan the code



Help make a real difference in the lives of Police Legatees.

Donate today!
Scan the code



Raised \$33,000

VPL 'World of difference' Cambodia experience

In November 2023, I was fortunate to accompany nineteen Victoria Police Legatees (aged 18-26) to Cambodia on an incredible personal development, humanitarian experience, undertaken in conjunction with Rotary International's 'World of Difference Experience' program.

As a group, we raised an outstanding \$33,000 to support several humanitarian projects in villages surrounding Siem Reap.

It was a trip with purpose, and everyone came prepared to give their all and embrace every activity.

We dug holes for toilets and cleaned sand for water filters. We purchased and rode bikes into schools to donate to children who walked up to 10km each day to receive an education. We gave English lessons, danced, sung, made paper planes, taught dental





hygiene, supported local villages where the extreme poverty was confronting and boy, did we sweat!

This trip was life changing. It pushed everyone out of their comfort zone and built resilience. I watched each police legatee become a leader, show compassion, and give a piece of their heart to the Cambodians we helped.



I'm proud to say that we discovered that although we can't change the world, we can change the world for one family. And we did this on numerous occasions."



Police Legatee, Senior Constable Nick Stefaniw, was a participant on the trip. His words show the importance of providing our young police legatees with opportunities such as this.

He said, "Ever since my father's sudden passing, Victoria Police Legacy has been paramount to my stability and resilience with growing up to be the man I have become, and this was made evident to me whilst I was in Cambodia. The comradery and the experiences that I assisted with was incredible, but mostly I enjoyed getting to know the team in more depth and hearing their stories and struggles.

"I'm proud to say that we discovered that although we can't change the world, we can change the world for one family. And we did this on numerous occasions."



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Noise-induced hearing loss is often overlooked.

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Discount off selected hearing devices** for TPAV members and close relatives

The hearing care team at Audika have extensive experience in assisting Victorian police members with noise-induced hearing loss, including assistance with Workers Compensation claims.

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*FREE hearing health checks are available to adults 26 years and over
** Discount available to both TPAV members and close family. 20% discount is off Audika hearing aid(s) in the Optimal, Premium and Enhanced ranges, excludes devices in the Entry range. Discount is to be applied prior to any eligible health fund benefits and government subsidies being paid. Discount not available for WorkCover claims. Discount not available in conjunction with any other discount. Excludes any spend on accessories (such as re-charging units and remote controls), assisted listening devices, batteries and/or maintenance, consumables, spare parts, Ultimate Care package and any other service charge. Offer available on hearing aids ordered between 12th September 2022 and 12th September 2023. TPAV members must show their TPAV membership card (or if a close relative a copy of their family members card) at the time of ordering to be eligible for the discount. Close relatives are defined for this purpose as spouses, parents and children.

Don't let your hearing loss fall on deaf ears

Police Officers put their lives and hearing on the line every day. There are many sources of daily exposure including loud crowds, police radios, sirens, firearms and traffic control.

An unfortunate incident

TPAV member David was one such Officer who suffered industrial hearing loss over the course of his career with Victoria Police. Since beginning his career in 1979, David regularly discharged firearms, and ear protection was only available during his later years of service.

In 2020, David was involved in an incident that caused permanent damage to his hearing.

David was asked to shoot a kangaroo, and when discharging the firearm, the sound reverberated around him from a nearby iron shed and tree which created an echo chamber. He had ringing in his ears for four days following the incident.

David approached TPAV's lawyers Maurice Blackburn in order to investigate his entitlements to hearing aids through WorkCover.

Maurice Blackburn successfully secured the payment of all his hearing device expenses and associated medical costs and lump sum compensation for the permanent hearing loss he had suffered.

David wants all members to be aware that they may be entitled to compensation if they have suffered hearing loss due to their duties.

"You don't need to suffer in silence. Receiving a hearing device and appropriate treatment could mean the difference between retiring early or extra years in the field."

Maurice Blackburn Associate, Nikita Moyle, advises TPAV members who have suffered permanent hearing loss as a result of exposure to noise at work to contact Maurice Blackburn today to make a 'no win, no fee' claim.

Maurice Blackburn can also assist if you, or a loved one, have been injured at work, involved in a road incident, have a public liability or medical negligence claim, or want to make or dispute a will. The initial consultation with all Association members is free.

For more information about how Maurice Blackburn Lawyers can help you on a no win, no charge basis, visit www.mauriceblackburn.com.au or free call 1800 810 812.





Berry Family Law

Are pre-nups binding?

By James Turnbull, Principal,
Berry Family Law

There is chat from time to time about 'pre-nups', what they are, what they can do and whether they are worth the paper they are written on.

In short, so long as they are drawn according to the relevant parts of the Family Law Act, they work, and they are binding. The proper name for these pre-nups is a 'Financial Agreement'. They are, in reality, a private contract between either married or de facto spouses about their finances.

An effective and binding Financial Agreement will stop either spouse heading off to the Family Court to seek an Order for a property settlement or to seek spouse maintenance.

Who can get one?

Financial Agreements are not just pre-nuptial either. They can be drawn:

- Before marriage or de facto relationship, where they take effect so long as the marriage has happened or the de facto relationship commences.
- During marriage or de facto relationship.
- After the marriage or de facto relationship.

Financial Agreements can deal with how property, superannuation or spousal maintenance is to be resolved. They can even be used to agree on who takes out the bins and anything that happens day to day while the relationship is intact.

When parties are considering marriage or entering relationships, Financial Agreements can be helpful and useful tools whether to protect existing or potential wealth or just to have an agreement in place while couples still love each other about what happens if they fall out of love.

They commonly are drawn to preserve what you each had at the start or inheritances and gifts and even superannuation from claim by a partner or spouse.

Assets can be quarantined from claim to protect any family wealth. Superannuation can be protected. They work well when in a second marriage, both want to make sure what they have can be left to their own children.

Many of our clients want a Financial Agreement because they were in a relationship before where they got burned.

They want to opt out of falling into the same situation, the unpleasantness, risk and cost if their new relationship goes bad. It's maybe not as romantic, but it can actually improve things to know you won't be taken to the cleaners by your partner.

They can be an 'insurance policy' against a later claim by a spouse or partner. The good news is they cost a lot less than going to Court.

How do I make sure the agreement is binding?

Generally, a Financial Agreement is binding so long as:

- It is prepared by one party's lawyer and checked by the other party's lawyer.
- It is signed by both parties and their lawyers.
- Each party received legal advice about it from their own lawyer.
- Each party received a signed Statement from both lawyer confirming they gave advice to their own client.

Infrequently Financial Agreement can be set aside. But in the 23 years since they became legal, none of ours have been set aside.

There is a set of reasons why they can be set aside, including fraud and if the outcome of the Financial Agreement will cause hardship to a child of the relationship. But the Courts can only intervene where one of the spouses to the Financial Agreement makes an Application to the Court. The process to do so is expensive, so going to Court to set a Financial Agreement aside is not a step to be taken lightly.

Financial Agreements are contracts which require careful consideration and specialised family law advice. Done well, they can provide real piece of mind.

Particularly for you, a Financial Agreement can be negotiated to make sure you keep your ESSS benefits intact. Achieving that or resolving a property settlement can be difficult and costly after separation.

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For further information visit [berryfamilylaw.com.au](https://www.berryfamilylaw.com.au) or contact one of our specialist family lawyers on **(03) 9397 2488** to get started.

Buying in 2024

Whilst ESPA's main function is to assist members when selling their home or investment, we do get a lot of requests to help members buy property as well.

The buying process can be very frustrating and confusing as agents operate differently when it comes to pricing and how they handle offers.

You also must understand the different methods of sale and how they can affect you as a buyer, an example of this is that at an auction you can not buy subject to a finance clause or a building inspection.

So, let's have a look at some actions you can take to make buying less stressful as well putting yourself in a better position to secure the property.

Be a buyer not a spectator

Not everyone who is looking at properties are buyers; they may have the intention to buy but due to their actions they fail. There are several reasons for this, they may be looking in the wrong price bracket or constantly making low offers, they may have unrealistic terms or conditions, or they don't understand the negotiation process.

Any of these things can lead to a buyer being unsuccessful multiple times and being stuck for months and months in the property market which is very frustrating.

Be an expert on price

Price is the biggest factor for both a buyer and seller in a property transaction. As a buyer it is very easy to become an expert on price quickly, in fact, if you do your homework, you will be better educated than most agents.

Once you have determined the area you wish to buy, visit as many open homes as possible and keep track of the sale results. You can also look in the sold section of [realestate.com.au](https://www.realestate.com.au) for the latest results and call the selling agent if they haven't been published yet.

Within weeks you will be an expert on price and when the right home comes on the market, you will be able to have an evidence-based opinion on what the home is worth based on recent sales.

It is very hard to argue with facts and you will find that it is a lot easier to negotiate with the agents when they know you are educated on the local market.



Luke Lawlor 0414 757 705

Don't make low ball offers

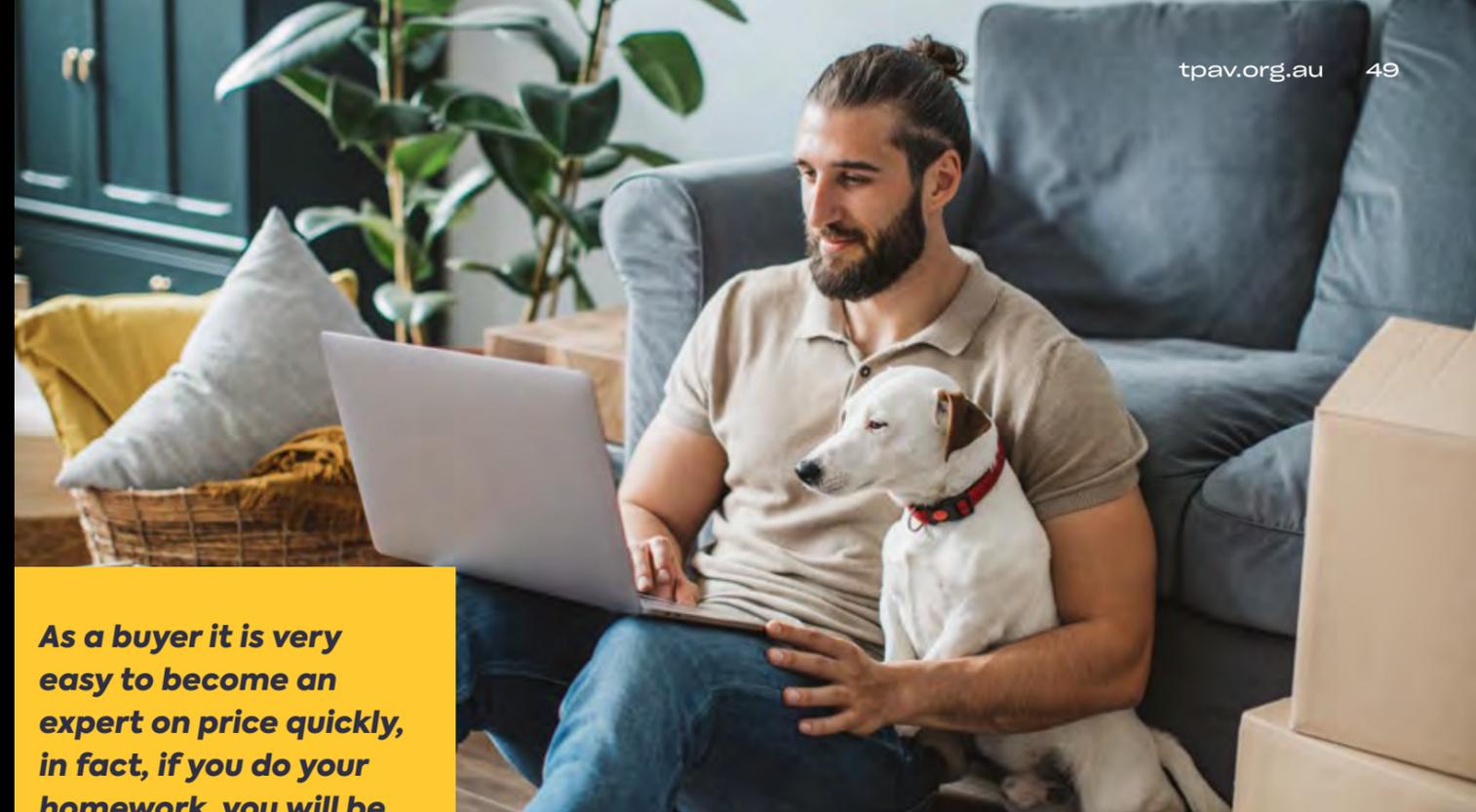
As a buyer, you now are a local expert on price. Guess what, most sellers also do their own research on price as well as being provided with this information by the agents. So, you both now have the same information on local sales results for similar properties.

One of the biggest mistakes a buyer makes is thinking that they are smarter than the agent and owner. If an owner knows the value of their home is between \$800,000 and \$840,000 based on recent comparable sales, why would they sell for \$750,000?

Low offers can offend owners which can result in them not wanting to deal with you or when they have the option to deal with a more realistic buyer, you will not be given a second opportunity to submit another offer.

Understand the method of sale

The three different methods of sale that agents will use are Auction, Private Sale, and Tender (Close Off Date). It is important to understand each method of



As a buyer it is very easy to become an expert on price quickly, in fact, if you do your homework, you will be better educated than most agents.

sale and the conditions for each method to give yourself a better chance of being the successful buyer.

The best way to do this is to ask the selling agent directly, agents can vary slightly on the process they use for each method. Agents should have this information readily available and will happily help walk you through how they operate. Just remember, if you are buying at Auction, it is a cash unconditional contract so you must have all your finances approved and no conditions attached to the purchase.

How to negotiate

Everyone has different strategies around negotiation, all I can tell you is what I have seen to be the most successful over 25 years and thousands of transactions.

Time kills deals, if you think a slow and prolonged negotiation is best, it isn't. Both parties get frustrated and dig their heels in. The most successful negotiations

generally happen quickly with both parties walking away happy.

I use a two or three step process when negotiating. My first offer will be below what the property is worth, but not too much so I don't offend the owner and they are happy to keep working with me.

If my first offer is rejected, I will ask the agent to get an indication from the owners or a counteroffer, so I know what I can buy it for and then decide if I am happy to pay that price.

If I haven't been successful to this point, I will make a 'walk away offer', this is my final offer on the home. All of this will generally happen within 24-48 hours from the start of the negotiations.

Keep it clean

Lastly, keep the offer as clean as possible. What I mean by this is remove as many of the conditions as possible. Try and get a pre-approval where you don't need a finance clause on the contract. If you are doing a building inspection, do it prior to making an offer or within the 3-day cooling off period.

Removing conditions puts you in a much better position to negotiate and a much stronger position if you are competing with other buyers.

This is a FREE service to all current & retired members

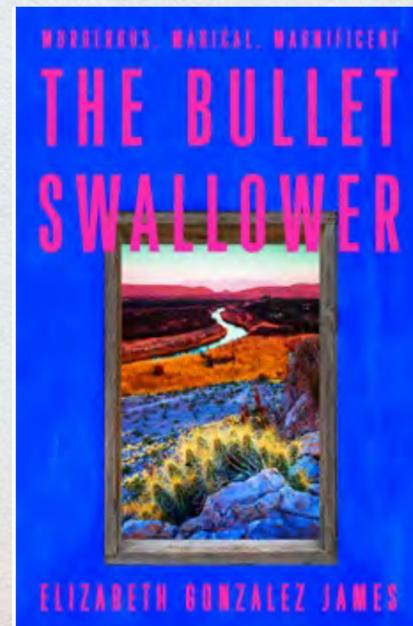
For more information on Emergency Services Property Advisors, visit the website at espropertyadvisors.com.au, or call Luke directly on **0414 757 705**.

PICK OF THE SHELF

The Bullet Swallower

By Elizabeth Gonzalez James

Published by Hachette Australia



A Western revenge story featuring the fearsome bandido Antonio Gonzalez, a character based on the author's own great-grandfather, whose vendetta against the Texas Rangers is watched intently by death itself.

A dazzling magical realism western in the vein of Cormac McCarthy meets Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The Bullet Swallower* follows a Mexican bandido as he sets off for Texas to save his family, only to encounter a mysterious figure who has come, finally, to collect a cosmic debt, generations in the making.

In 1895, Antonio Sonoro is the latest in a long line of ruthless men. He's good with his gun and is drawn to trouble but he's also out of money and out of options.

A drought has ravaged the town of Dorado, Mexico, where he lives with his wife and children, and so when he hears about a train laden with gold and other treasures, he sets off for Houston to rob it, with his younger brother Hugo in tow. But when the heist goes awry and Hugo is killed by the Texas Rangers, Antonio finds

himself launched into a quest for revenge that endangers not only his life and his family, but his eternal soul.

In 1964, Jaime Sonoro is Mexico's most renowned actor and singer. But his comfortable life is disrupted when he discovers a book that purports to tell the entire history of his family beginning with Cain and Abel.

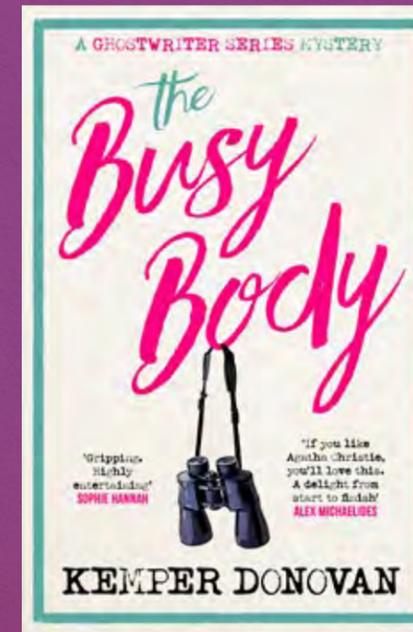
In its ancient pages, Jaime learns about the multitude of horrific crimes committed by his ancestors. And when the same mysterious figure from Antonio's timeline shows up in Mexico City, Jaime realises that he may be the one who has to pay for his ancestors' crimes, unless he can discover the true story of his grandfather Antonio, the legendary bandido El Tragabalas, *The Bullet Swallower*.

WIN! YOUR OWN COPY

For your chance to win a copy of *The Bullet Swallower*, simply email journal@tpav.org.au and answer the following question:

What is the capital city of Texas?

Entrants are asked to please include their full name and registered number, if applicable.



The Busy Body

By Kemper Donovan

Published by Hachette Australia

Veep meets Agatha Christie in this wickedly funny murder mystery for fans of Richard Osman and Nita Prose.

Meet our narrator: witty, nosy, professional weaver of lies – aka ghostwriter for the rich and famous – and now, lander of the dream assignment (that is, a politician's tell-all memoir).

Enter Dorothy Gibson: recently toppled Presidential candidate, aka that woman, the most talked-about person in the country right now (for the wrong reasons).

Add: an invitation to the middle of nowhere, one well-heeled neighbour dying under suspicious circumstances, a secret investigation and an unreasonably beautiful man.

This is a story even our ghostwriter wasn't expecting. And for once, it's all hers.

WIN! YOUR OWN COPY

For your chance to win a copy of *The Busy Body*, simply email journal@tpav.org.au and answer the following question:

Which Democrat presidential candidate was toppled in the 2016 US election?

Entrants are asked to please include their full name and registered number, if applicable.



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