

Union boss blasts SA Police shake-up

A MAJOR SA Police shake-up of its organisational structure has been labelled “a front” for cost cutting by the police union.

Meagan Dillon
April 22, 2015 - 9:22PM The Advertiser

0 comments

A MAJOR split has emerged between rank-and-file police and top brass over a controversial restructure of the force that has been branded “a front” for cost-cutting.

Police Association president Mark Carroll, whose union represents the vast majority of police, has launched a scathing attack on Commissioner Gary Burns’ organisational reviews, labelling them “budget-cutting measures masquerading as service-delivery gains”.

SA Police is undergoing its biggest operational shake-up in decades and has so far released discussion papers on its Crime Scene Investigation units and Local Service Area (LSA) Traffic Enforcement sections.

“The prime objective of these so-called organisational reviews is abundantly clear — it is cost-cutting,” Mr Carroll wrote in the association’s latest Police Journal.

Mr Carroll said the restructure could result in heavier workloads for officers and the quality of investigations could be compromised.

SA Police has defended its reviews, saying the primary focus was to provide improved policing.

But a spokeswoman refused to address the question of cost-cutting.

She said comments made by the retiring Mr Burns in *The Advertiser* last month — when he said the review was “not a dollar-saving exercise” — echoed his current position.

SA Police has to meet a State Government imposed \$81 million a year in savings by 2017-18.

FROM OUR PARTNERS

Big Little Lies on Foxtel Now. **Watch every episode On Demand.**

Mr Carroll urged incumbent commissioner Grant Stevens and Police Minister Tony Piccolo to reveal whether there would be a reduction in the workforce to help meet the budget cuts.

“These are serious matters affecting all members and the community,” he wrote.

As part of the crime scene investigation review, SA Police’s preferred option is to create a crime scene relief pool of officers, who would be attached to a central evidence desk.

Mr Carroll said SA Police wanted to realign control of its crime scene officers to the Forensic Services Branch.

“A move which would, in turn, reduce the number of full-time positions,” he said.

Currently, each Local Service Area has its own crime scene investigation team.

In February, Mr Carroll wrote a letter to Mr Burns highlighting concerns about the crime scene investigation review.

He wrote: “Members argue the new model will lead to increased workloads that will impact the quality of crime scene investigations.”

But he said Mr Burns had not responded to the association’s concerns, and that “SAPOL paid little more than lip service” to them.

“The current reviews lack academic rigour and are a front for budgetary-savings measures,” Mr Carroll said.

“Like the traffic review, SAPOL already appeared to have a predetermined outcome in mind even before the consultation period started.”

Opposition police spokesman John Gardner said there would be community concern if the crime scene investigation units review resulted in fewer police officers.

“Any changes must be focused on meeting operational outcomes, not cost-saving measures,” he said.

But a police spokeswoman said changes to the crime scene investigation model would provide greater “coordination of resources, standardisation of work practices and increases the number of full-time crime scene examiners”.

Last November, SA Police released its paper in relation to the LSA Traffic Enforcement sections review.

Its preferred option was to establish a Road Safety Policing Unit within the Operations Support Service.

In February, the association commissioned the University of Adelaide to assess police’s traffic review and found the preferred option could not be sustained because there was insufficient evidence it was the most efficient of the three options canvassed.

In response to the university’s findings, SA Police said it did not support some of the conclusions drawn in the report.

Mr Carroll said SA Police’s dismissal of the university’s findings was “both disappointing and worrying”.

Sergeant Garry Stewart, an experienced traffic officer with the Sturt LSA, told the Police Journal in February the one-size-fits-all model of policing was fraught with danger.

“SAPOL seems to want a police officer who fits all positions — I don’t think that’s achievable,” he said.

But a police spokeswoman said traffic officers would be redeployed to higher priority areas, including family violence, child protection, electronic crime and general duties patrols.

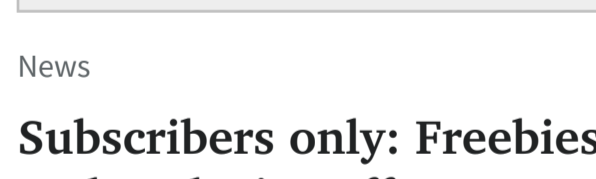
SA Police has to meet a State Government imposed \$81 million a year in annual savings by 2017-18.

Mr Burns will retire in July.

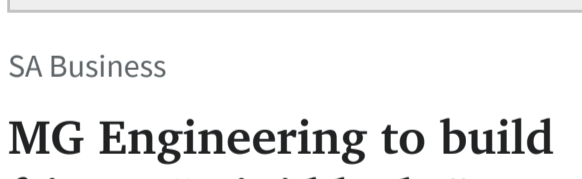


Join the conversation (0 comments)

More related stories



Subscribers only: Freebies and exclusive offers
Every month we offer Advertiser digital subscribers access to a range of new fantastic freebies, special offers and exclusive competitions.



SA Business MG Engineering to build frigate “mini blocks”
SA shipbuilder MG Engineering has been chosen to build four “mini blocks”, which will be used to test leading-edge manufacturing techniques for the \$35 billion future frigates program.



HOW FARMERS WILL WEATHER THE STORM
SPONSORED

Most commented

Council frustrates push to remove ‘extremely dangerous’ tree

109

UK COVID strain found in Adelaide medi-hotel patient

99

‘Disrespected’ SES volunteers fear for safety on virus frontline

77

How did SA’s Liberal pollies score in 2020?

47

How did SA’s Labor pollies score in 2020?

35