

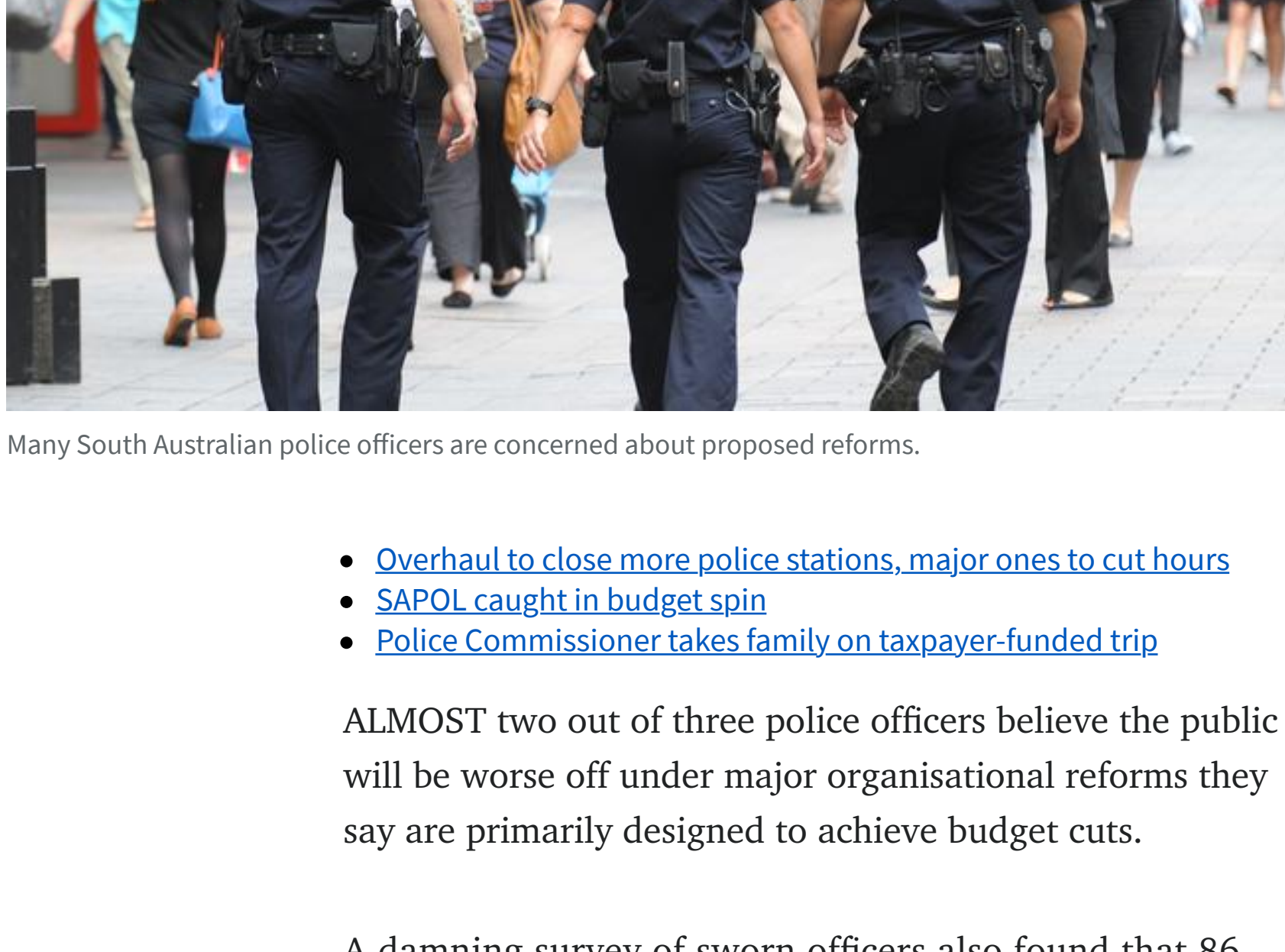
News > South Australia

## SA Police voice fears over reforms they say are designed to achieve budget cuts

EXCLUSIVE: Almost two out of three police officers believe the public will be worse off under major organisational reforms they say are primarily designed to achieve budget cuts.

Elizabeth Henson  
 June 19, 2016 - 12:00AM The Advertiser

0 comments



Many South Australian police officers are concerned about proposed reforms.

- [Overhaul to close more police stations, major ones to cut hours](#)
- [SAPOL caught in budget spin](#)
- [Police Commissioner takes family on taxpayer-funded trip](#)

ALMOST two out of three police officers believe the public will be worse off under major organisational reforms they say are primarily designed to achieve budget cuts.

A damning survey of sworn officers also found that 86 per cent oppose the introduction of a 50-50 gender recruitment quota.

The survey of 1784 police officers found 64 per cent thought service delivery to the public would be worse or much worse under the organisational reforms revealed in October last year.

Just 6 per cent believe the reforms will improve police service. Officers said response times would increase and inexperienced or inadequate staff would be left to deal with the public.

Officers also said the reforms would also lead to:

**FEWER** sworn members serving the public at stations.

**REDUCED** local knowledge or sense of connection to the local communities because of larger policing districts.

**OFFICERS** on the road being overstressed, with morale already low, and this may affect their ability to deliver effective services.

The reforms, which are the biggest shake-up of the force in almost two decades, have so far resulted in the closure of nine suburban police stations.

### FROM OUR PARTNERS

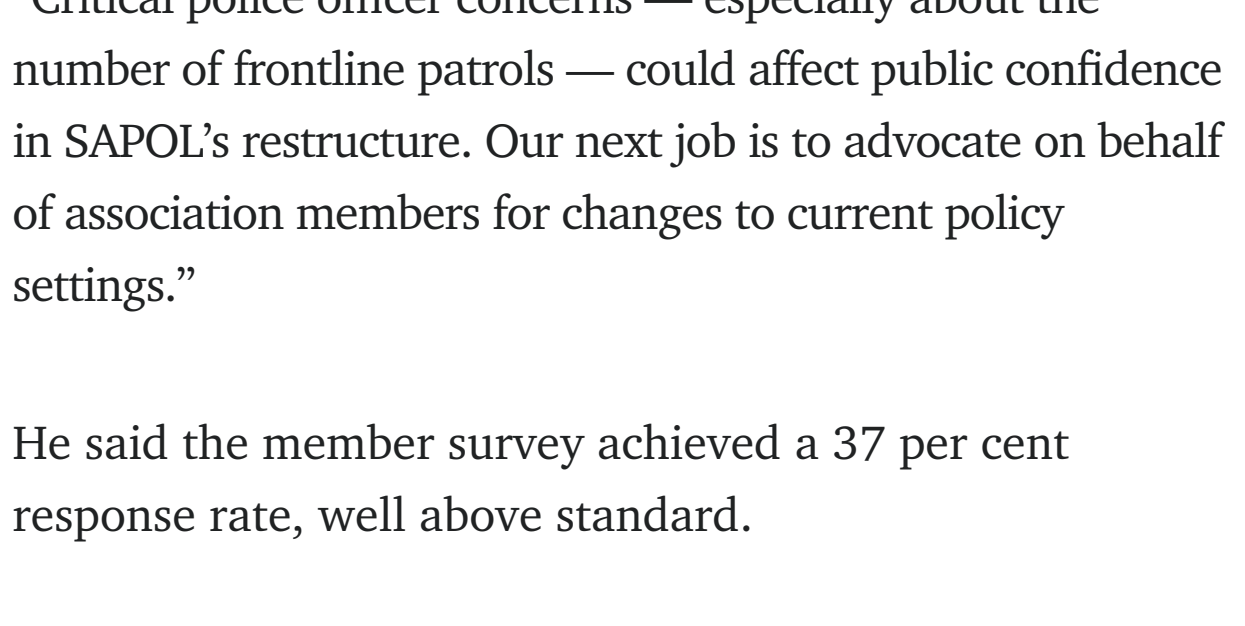
Watch *The Third Day* - A new HBO limited series **Stream it on Foxtel Now**

They propose the closure of a further two satellite stations, relocation of a city station from Wakefield St to Grenfell St, and reduced opening hours at nine others.

There are also plans to dissolve six local service areas into three metropolitan policing districts — northern, central and southern — and move more officers into frontline roles.

When the reforms were announced last October, Police Commissioner Grant Stevens said they would result in improved police responses and a more visible police presence.

But 90 per cent of officers surveyed by the Police Association said the changes were primarily a cost-saving measure.



Police Association president Mark Carroll. Picture: Sam Rosewarne

Police Association president Mark Carroll, who has previously labelled the reforms as “budget-cutting measures masquerading as service-delivery gains”, said he would meet Mr Stevens and Police Minister Peter Malinauskas to discuss the survey results.

“Failure to listen to the concerns of police officers will compromise support for the new policing model,” Mr Carroll told the *Sunday Mail*.

“Critical police officer concerns — especially about the number of frontline patrols — could affect public confidence in SAPOL’s restructure. Our next job is to advocate on behalf of association members for changes to current policy settings.”

He said the member survey achieved a 37 per cent response rate, well above standard.

It also found 86 per cent of officers either opposed or strongly opposed a 50-50 gender recruitment quota labelled by some as “insulting” and “tokenism”.

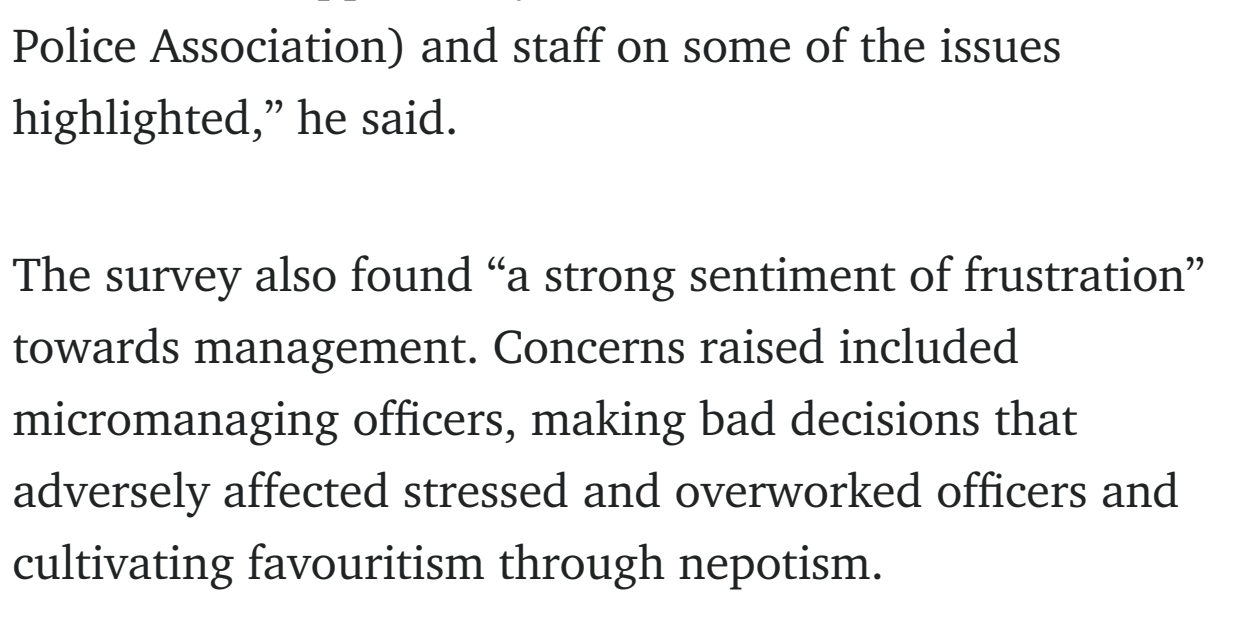
South Australia became the first state and second jurisdiction to adopt equal recruitment when the policy was introduced on January 1 this year.

“I find it insulting. Equality isn’t by recruiting 50-50. Equality is letting everyone regardless of sex win positions based on the merit of their application,” a female officer wrote.

“SAPOL are also going to struggle in 10 years when half of their workforce is off on maternity leave or seeking part-time employment when they are still in the dark ages in regards to part-time flexibility and workload.”

Another female officer wrote that recruitment should be based on “suitability and ability of applicants”.

“Females are typically less physically suitable to aggressive/confrontational clientele,” she wrote.



Police Minister Peter Malinauskas at a press conference with Premier Jay Weatherill. Picture: Sam Wundke

A third officer wrote that a recruitment quota devalued - females who got a job on merit.

“Selections should always be based on merit and not tokenism,” she wrote.

Those officers who backed equal recruitment believed it would support gender equality and make police more reflective of the community they served.

Mr Stevens said the focus on gender equality “will continue moving forward” and some issues raised in the survey - already had been addressed.

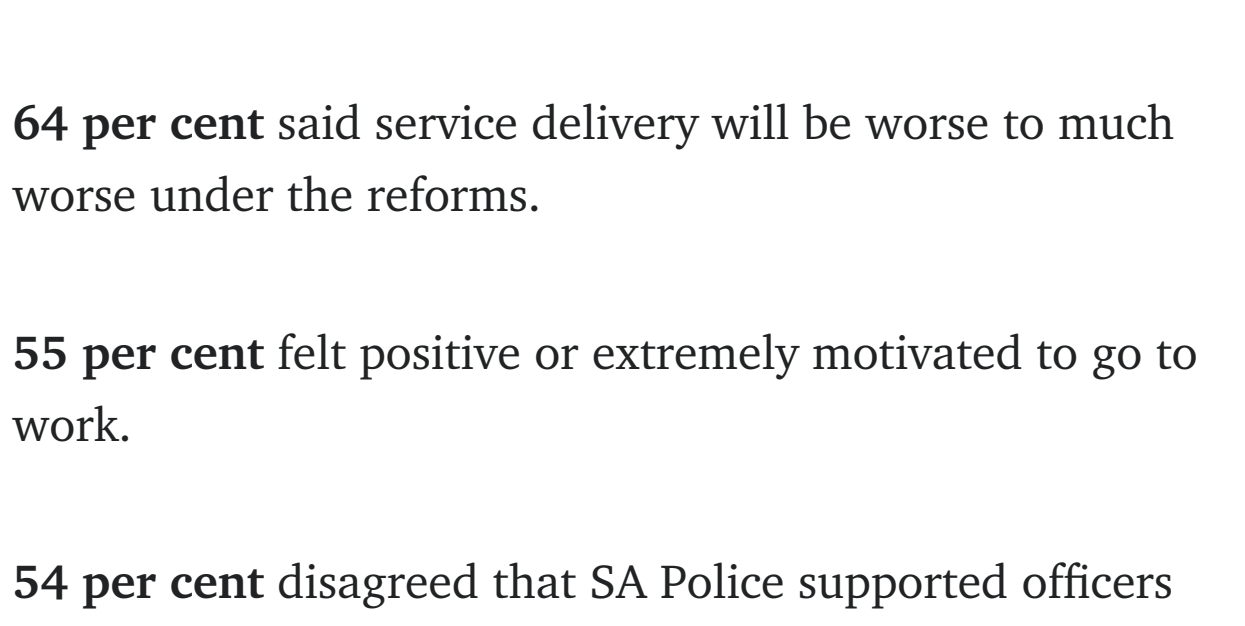
“The survey) represents some important views held within the workforce of the South Australia Police and I welcome the opportunity to continue to work with (the Police Association) and staff on some of the issues highlighted,” he said.

The survey also found “a strong sentiment of frustration” towards management. Concerns raised included micromanaging officers, making bad decisions that adversely affected stressed and overworked officers and cultivating favouritism through nepotism.

Mr Malinauskas said he was “interested in results of surveys of this nature”.

“These results should be considered in light of the fact SAPOL is going through a time of significant change and naturally the survey may reflect some uncertainties,” he said.

“Our police force should reflect the diversity of our community and having more female officers will only strengthen the service SAPOL provides to the community.”



86 per cent of sworn officers oppose the introduction of a 50-50 gender recruitment quota.

### FRUSTRATION ON THE FRONTLINE

THE Police Association members’ survey was conducted between April 6 and 22, 2016. The results were sent to officers this month. The key findings were:

**90 per cent** believed proposed organisation reforms were to achieve budget cuts.

**86 per cent** opposed or strongly opposed a 50-50 gender recruitment policy.

**76 per cent** felt workloads had either increased or largely increased in the past three years.

**75 per cent** disagreed or strongly disagreed that management would listen to their concerns.

**67 per cent** disagreed or strongly disagreed that management conducted adequate assessment before announcing the reforms.

**66 per cent** believed there were insufficient staff numbers.

**64 per cent** said service delivery will be worse to much worse under the reforms.

**55 per cent** felt positive or extremely motivated to go to work.

**54 per cent** disagreed that SA Police supported officers suffering psychological injury arising from their work.

**51 per cent** felt positive or extremely positive about their job.



Join the conversation (0 comments)

### More related stories

- Battle to save animals on the brink at Outback reserve**  
 Conservationists are battling to save animals at an Outback reserve from the effects of the worst drought in recent memory, and have received a funding boost to redouble their efforts.
- Country tradie to face court over incomplete work**  
 A country tradesman will face the Elizabeth Magistrates Court over allegations he was not licenced and refused to refund money to clients.

### Most commented

- Council 'extricates push to remove 'extremely dangerous' tree**  
 111
- UK COVID strain found in Adelaide medi-hotel patient**  
 98
- 'Disrespected' SES volunteers fear for safety on virus frontline**  
 74
- How did SA's Liberal pollies score in 2020?**  
 47
- How did SA's Labor pollies score in 2020?**  
 33