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SA Police 'makes it difficult' to be a female officer, union survey says

SA POLICE makes it "unnecessarily difficult" for women to remain in the force despite the organisation's push to recruit more females, the SA Police Association says.

Elizabeth Henson

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The SA police union believes SAPOL makes it unnecessarily difficult for women to join the force.

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SA POLICE makes it "unnecessarily difficult" for women to remain in the force despite the organisation's push to recruit more females, the SA Police Association says.

The union says women seeking part-time work or work-from-home arrangements to look after children are finding their options are often limited to accepting a demotion, calling in the association for back up or taking their fight to the industrial relations court.

The revelations follow a survey of 1784 sworn police officers that revealed more than half (51 per cent) believed SA Police was not a family-friendly workplace.

The poll, commissioned by the association and released to members this month, also showed 81 per cent of female officers and 59 per cent of male officers had either experienced difficulty accessing family-friendly working arrangements or knew someone who had.

The association claimed SA Police was causing undue stress on those seeking flexible working arrangements and was pushing officers, many of whom were women, out of the force.

SA Police recently launched an advertising campaign to entice more women into the organisation [following the introduction of a 50-50 male/female recruitment quota on January 1](#).

The matter was discussed in the latest edition of the *Police Journal*, where seven officers told of their difficulties obtaining flexible working arrangements in the force.

Senior Constable Phillipa McGowan, who said she was forced to give up her position as a crime scene investigator and take on another role because management would not allow her to work part-time, said she felt let down.

"It's very much a case of 'well, if you want to get pregnant, don't,'" she told the *Police Journal*.

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"That's because if you want part-time, it's just so difficult."

Sergeant Jo Nicholls, whose request to temporarily work from home to look after her children in 2014 was denied, described SA Police's claim of being family-friendly as "a bit of a joke".

"If SAPOL wants to attract more women to the job, they need to take a serious look at their policies and how they're going to retain women and they need to just take of the women they've already got in the job," she said.

Police Association President Mark said women served an average of 7-8 years before leaving the force.

"SAPOL cannot expect to attract more women to the job while its access to (flexible work arrangements) remains so unstable," he said.

Mr Carroll said he would discuss the matter with Police Commissioner Grant Stevens at a meeting next month.

Police Minister Peter Malinauskas said: "Improving staff retention and workplace flexibility is a key consideration within the workforce strategy being led by the Police Commissioner."

Police Commissioner Grant Stevens referred *The Advertiser's* request for comment to a spokesman.

"Significant work has already begun on several projects to improve workplace diversity, create talent development pathways and improve workplace policies and practices for both men and women," he said.



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