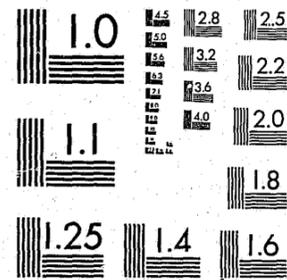


National Criminal Justice Reference Service



This microfiche was produced from documents received for inclusion in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot exercise control over the physical condition of the documents submitted, the individual frame quality will vary. The resolution chart on this frame may be used to evaluate the document quality.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART  
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

Microfilming procedures used to create this fiche comply with the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Justice  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C. 20531

11/24/82

83866

Present  
9-30-82

POLICE MANPOWER IN AUSTRALIA

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GLENN WITHERS

Macquarie University and Bureau of Labour Market Research\*

A Summary of Findings of a Research Project  
funded by the Criminology Research Council  
for the CRC Annual Report.

\*Research School of Social Sciences  
Australian National University,  
from April 1982.

This study examined major manpower trends in the Australian police forces for the 1960s and 1970s. While the picture varied from force to force, the study sought to provide an overview for Australia as a whole since the mid 1960's. Major institutions involved in the police labour market were first defined and characterised and it was concluded that the police manpower system is an unusual one, with a limited number of employers and restricted union activity operating within an arbitral environment and subject to close political scrutiny and that this has had consequences for the level of public security, as will be seen. Police themselves were reviewed using census data and it was seen that the police represent a relatively young, male but less well-educated workforce, with particular per capita concentrations in the Territories and also in South Australia and Tasmania. There is also a disproportionate (and increasing) trades skills representation, and higher incomes than average.

A range of indicators developed demonstrated that there has been an increasing divergence between police requirements and available labour for policing over the period since the mid 1960's. Requirements were established in relation to numbers required for prevailing populations, crime and traffic levels in the mid 1960's and by what has happened to these three factors since that time. Per capita crime

8386

levels, in particular, grew significantly over the period, as did traffic. Available labour referred to both existing police strengths and the pool of potential recruits.

Given the background of requirements trends and supply forces outlined, the actual level and composition of police forces achieved reflected accommodation to those trends and influences. A range of possible adjustments could be and were pursued. An obvious one is wage levels and it was found that police wages have responded a little to the trend divergence of requirements from the available labour pool. By the end of the 1970's police wages had increased more than comparative wages, especially for more senior police. The latter observation could well have been related to a dramatic rise in resignations and retirements in the late 1960s. Nevertheless the relativity changes were basically small.

Another form of adjustment directed at retaining experienced officers is more rapid promotion. But promotion is shown in the study to be overwhelmingly a matter of seniority at the expense of merit, with serious consequences for police efficiency. And overall there is only minor evidence of "rank inflation" (ie a greater proportion of senior officers) as a means to more rapid promotion in the Australian police forces over this period and hence to permitting less senior people to be promoted in general

Of course, wages and promotion ignore other conditions of service including allowances, and State Treasurer's estimates show that overall provision of allowances has moved ahead of wage increases, but only a little so that it has not been a major adjustment influence. Another service condition is work hours, which can be a major source of extra police income through over-time. However Australian Bureau of Statistics data show that while police are well paid compared to other protective service workers, their standard hours have not changed since the mid 1960's and their over-time has actually fallen a little, contrary to other protective service workers.

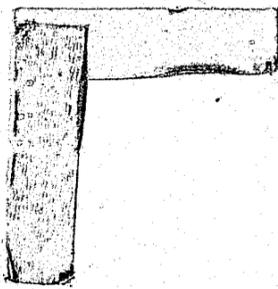
Moving beyond wages and conditions, examination of minimum entry standards and of ratios of applicants to recruits did not indicate any major use of these options to overcome the increasing relative shortage of police. Similarly there seemed little major effort to improve recruit advertising and to upgrade cadet training for these purposes either. Rather the major avenue adopted has been to turn to increasing civilian departmental support staff and to increasing the number of women police. Ratios of these staff have both grown dramatically, from 10 to almost 20 per cent in relation to police numbers for civilians and from 1 to 6 per cent of police strength for women police.

By contrast internal allocation of police across traffic and crime duties, and internal expenditures on capital vs labour have not altered much, nor has there been much evidence of increased relative reliance by the public upon private security employees despite growing police shortages - though use of private security equipment was unexplored due to data difficulties.

What was the outcome of these adjustment? The answer is, as indicated, that the adjustments adopted have been too few and too ineffective to permit police forces to keep up with growing crime and traffic levels. This is less true of traffic where at least fatality levels have shown some sign of reducing on a per capita basis, but it is probably true of traffic flow and congestion problems. More importantly it is clearly true in the crime area, where there has been a steady deterioration in clearance rates since the mid 1960s ie the ability of police to obtain committals and convictions in relation to recorded crimes has worsened notably. The community is obliged to accept a declining ability of the police to apprehend and successfully prosecute offenders. The blame for this is shared. No doubt contemporary social conditions and attitudes (eg legal reform) are part of the explanation, as are those senior police managers and union officials who resist and obstruct meaningful police administrative reform. But this study also

shows that the deteriorating standard of public security clearly reflects the decision of governments not to fund the further resources necessary to maintain earlier standards of policing.

Police forces have grown. The 1980 force level is in total 80% higher than in 1964. But recorded crime rates have increased by more than 300% over that period and committal and conviction rates have halved. There is a serious and increasing relative shortage of police in Australia.



**END**