

# MEDIA STATEMENT



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## **AUDITOR GENERAL FINDS POLICE NEEDS TO TIGHTEN UP RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING**

In his report tabled in Parliament today, Auditor General Colin Murphy has found that although to date WA Police had delivered the right number of trained officers, based on current application and attrition rates it was unlikely to meet its overall target of recruiting an additional 200 police officers by 2013-14.

Mr Murphy identified a number of emerging risks in recruitment and training processes that WA Police needs to address to make sure that the right people are recruited and those who reach the frontline have all the necessary skills and experience.

“WA Police not only needs to recruit enough suitable people to address both turnover and government targets for more police officers, it needs to do so without compromising the quality of either recruits or their training,” he said.

In order to become a police constable, applicants need to complete three main steps; the recruitment and selection process, six months of intensive training at the Police Academy and 18 months of on-the-job training during probation.

Mr Murphy noted that once a person is recruited for training as a police officer, almost all will go on and complete their academy training and probation, placing heavy reliance on the selection process – but there were indications that it does not always identify the ‘right’ candidate.

“WA Police selection criteria is based on its ‘22 dimensions of a police officer’, which was developed in 1987 but has not been reviewed since.

“Psychological testing is also used as part of the recruit selection process, but there is inconsistency in how the results of these tests are reviewed and often the results do not match final recruitment decisions.”

The report also shows that the number of indigenous officers is significantly less than the WA Police target of three per cent and while the proportion of women officers has increased to almost 21 per cent in 2011, it falls short of the target of 30 per cent and is one of the lowest compared to other Australian police forces.

Mr Murphy found that WA Police was providing an increasing level of remedial training and investing significant resources to bring its weaker recruits up to standard.

“Academy training works for most recruits, however some require significant remedial training and some graduate without all the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to immediately perform on-the-job as probationary constables.

"While a probation period is meant to address these shortcomings, in actual fact this may not be the case as probation is not consistently structured, supervision is inconsistent and more constables are coming off probation early."

Mr Murphy found that the percentage of probationary constables coming off probation early had grown and the average length of probation had decreased since 2007.

"'Early-off probation' was introduced as a reward for high performers, however this has now become the norm and in the squads we reviewed we found some instances where early-off probation had been awarded when training records indicated that constables may not have been ready," he said.

"WA Police currently invests over \$240 000 and two years to train a general duties constable and Parliament and the community need to know that the money and resources spent on Police recruits is effective in finding the 'right' people to be police officers and training them well.

"Policing is a challenging job and the community relies on police officers to deal with difficult and often dangerous situations, so I am pleased that WA Police has begun taking action to address some of the findings and recommendations in my report to help ensure the continued safety and effectiveness of police officers and the trust and confidence of the community."

The Auditor General's report, *'New Recruits in the Western Australia Police'*, can be downloaded from the Office of the Auditor General website at [www.audit.wa.gov.au](http://www.audit.wa.gov.au)

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