Police

Highlights:

Labour will:
- Increase the number of sworn police officers by 1,000 over three years
- Extend Police Safety Orders to a maximum of 10 days unless a Protection Order is applied for
- Widening the Police’s ability to take action against organised crime activities.

Introduction

We believe police must be properly resourced to achieve their stated objectives and meet our diverse communities’ expectations. Labour recognises that properly resourcing community policing is a major factor to successfully implementing a ‘prevention first’ operational strategy and is vital if the Police is to retain the trust and confidence of the general public.

Labour supports NZ Police’s transformation programme ‘Policing Excellence The Future’, their vision ‘To have the Trust and Confidence of all’ and the Prevention First operating model.

More police on the streets and in the community

Policing in the 21st century must be a mix of soft deep community engagement and tough law-and-order issue resolution. We will regain and retain the trust and confidence of NZ’s diverse communities through an integrated policing model, where community policing sits alongside more traditional policing techniques.

Labour will:

- Increase the number of sworn police officers by 1,000 over three years. We will provide funding to increase police numbers in each year, with a total increase of a 1,000 extra Police Officers in of our first term. This will bring the total number of Police Officers to 10,000, which will bring the police to population ratio back below 1 to 500
- Support these additional Police Officers with extra funding for additional support staff, training, and resources they need to do the job
- Significantly increase community police numbers to the point where the majority of the 1,000 extra police promised by Labour will move into community policing roles.

World best practice in the community policing area is described as follows:
“Community policing is, in essence, a collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems. With the police no longer the sole guardians of law and order, all members of the community become active allies in the effort to enhance the safety and quality of neighbourhoods. Community policing has far-reaching implications.

“The expanded outlook on crime control and prevention, the new emphasis on making community members active participants in the process of problem solving, and the patrol officers’ pivotal role in community policing require profound changes within the police organization. The neighbourhood patrol officer, backed by the police organization, helps community members mobilize support and resources to solve problems and enhance their quality of life. Community members voice their concerns, contribute advice, and take action to address these concerns. Creating a constructive partnership will require the energy, creativity, understanding, and patience of all involved.

Reinvigorating communities is essential if we are to deter crime and create more vital neighbourhoods. In some communities, it will take time to break down barriers of apathy and mistrust so that meaningful partnerships can be forged. Trust is the value that underlies and links the components of community partnership and problem solving. A foundation of trust will allow police to form close relationships with the community that will produce solid achievements. Without trust between police and citizens, effective policing is impossible”

There is a growing body of research that proves that the practice of locating all policing operations at a large central station where community policing teams are dispatched in a reactive response to deal with a specific set of issues, has often served to isolate police from the communities they serve.

This isolation hampers crime-fighting efforts as well as undermines the ability of the Police to develop key long term partnerships, based on mutual trust and respect, with key community stakeholders. Statistics on unreported crime suggest that in many cases police are not aware of existing problems. Without strong ties to the community, police may not have access to pertinent information from citizens that could help solve or deter crime.

While there will need to be resources placed in other policing areas of critical shortage (or example, the Organised Crime Squads), the emphasis will be on returning to a highly community-based form of policing.

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Protection orders for domestic violence

Labour will:

- Extend Police Safety Orders so they can be issued for 10 days instead of the current 5 unless a Protection Order is applied for.
- Investigate strengthening Police Safety Orders or allowing Police to issue temporary Protection Orders to better protect people until they can obtain a permanent Protection Order.

A temporary protection order would enhance the ability of NZ Police to effectively intervene and manage the growing incidence of domestic violence in our communities.

Currently only the courts can issue Protection Orders and yet these can take time that victims of domestic violence often don’t have in terms of keeping themselves (and, often, their families) safe.

Police do have the ability to issue Safety Orders, however, these are short term and, in many instances, do not provide a level of protection necessary to ensure the medium-to-long term safety of the victim of domestic violence.

It is acknowledged that in the heat of the moment in a domestic dispute, Police may only receive one side of the story that might not reflect the reality of a situation. Despite this, Labour believes that Police need a mechanism that provides a level of safety and certainty for the victim that is more powerful.

Within this timeframe, the victim must have applied for a court-ordered permanent Protection Order for the Police Safety Order to remain valid until the Courts can determine the merits of issuing a permanent Protection Order or decide on another course of action; or if not applied for, the order will lapse.

Widen Police scope to take action against organised crime

Labour will:

- Review legislation that governs the ability to prosecute those involved in organized crime with the objective of widening the Police’s ability to take action against organised crime activities. The primary pieces of legislation are the Crimes Act, Local Government Act, and Sentencing Act.

Rationale

Police need to have the legislative tools to do whatever it takes to remove gangs from society, while also providing protection to those who wish to exit the gangs and start afresh.
We recognise that the presence of gangs may be symptomatic of a deeper structural problem in society that must be dealt with through other means. While noting this, gangs are still responsible for distributing the majority of P into our communities and their members engage in a disproportionate amount of unacceptable anti-social and criminal behaviour.

In 2014, the Police analysed 3,969 patched members and prospects belonging to 32 New Zealand adult gangs. They looked at the proportion charged with a serious violence offence involving a firearm or an offence against the Arms Act. The analysis showed that 44 percent of the members and prospects had been charged with an offence involving a firearm, and that 9 percent had been charged with five or more offences involving a firearm during their lifetime.