



Association President Tony King (top left) and Lead Organiser Jon Goddard speaking with members rostered on duty at quarantine hotels.

POLICING A PANDEMIC

Protecting and improving conditions in the COVID-19 environment

By Jon Goddard

What do you get when you take a worldwide pandemic, twelve hundred Police Officers, add thirty-one hotels of various standards from five star to well not quite five star, throw some military personnel in, thousands of meals, hundreds of litres of hand sanitiser, six hundred Cadbury chocolate bunnies and a team of PANSW staff making sure the membership are protected?

The answer is the COVID 19 Hotels Operation.

Operation Corona Virus 2020 is the biggest single secondment and deployment of NSW Police Officers since World Youth Day in 2008. Whilst the Papal visit and celebrations was over two years in the planning, the impact

of Coronavirus saw this operation put together in days.

Our workmates went from exclusively wearing the two blues to also wearing khaki and blue fatigues as we worked hand in hand with members of the Australian Armed Forces. Police also gained a new role: keeping the community safe by ensuring everyone does the right thing and obeys the advice of medical professionals. Twelve hundred Police Officers are directly exposed on the front line in the battle against this virus.

We were aware that many members have never been exposed to secondments like we saw during the 2000 Sydney Olympics, APEC, World Youth Day and the Mount Panorama Bathurst car race operations. Operations

of this size are logistical nightmares at the best of times, with years of planning. This operation was never going to be without issues or teething problems.

The PANSW's role is to be your voice. We are the operational cop's seat at the table to identify and advocate to fix those problems, if other options have failed. From the first day of the operation that's what your Association did. We were on the ground with our members identifying the issues.

Field Organisers were called out on the first Sunday to inspect several facilities that had difficulties with PPE and duties around the first batch of overseas travellers going into quarantine.

The PANSW had a direct line of communication with the Police



Association Organisers Jon Goddard (top), Ed Murphy and Ben Lee (above) were on the ground providing members with advice and sought-after items like sanitiser and water bottles.

Operations Centre Commanders which allowed issues to be raised directly and to get rectified. The first week of the operation with non-seconded staff identified the best practice going forward.

What followed over the next eight weeks is the Field and Industrial divisions of the PANSW worked day and night with the NSW Police Force to ensure those members seconded had the best conditions possible and operated in the safest manner.

Field organisers visited the thirty-one hotels that have been used multiple times a week talking to members, identifying and fixing problems and even supplying personal bottles of hand sanitiser, individual water bottles and N95 masks where needed. Over the Easter break,

our President even played the Easter Bunny delivering 600 chocolate bunnies to the members who were away from their families over Easter.

Rosters, five and seven day shift worker entitlements, travel time, staffing numbers, managed time for commissioned officers and relieving Commissioned Officers, PPE availability, meal quality and availability, heating, the right of return following the first six weeks, early return for Probationary Constables unable to complete their training on the deployment and the payment of overtime for over 300 members "Over Rostered" due to six-week period inconsistencies were key achievements of the PANSW during the first phase of this operation.

Other conditions negotiated also extended to the members remaining at the PACs, PDs and Specialist Commands doing day to day business in the COVID environment:

- Access to special leave entitlements for any member forced to go in to quarantine awaiting a test result or by Government Order.
- A defined policy outlining Police entitlement to employer funded accommodation should they have to self-isolate due to a work-related exposure.
- The defining of vulnerable workers and the creation of an assessment tool to assist those workers.
- Deferral of annual leave due to the pandemic in certain circumstances.
- Work from home considerations and ceasing of several high risk functions such as stationary Random Breath Testing.
- Flexible work practices for those officers caring for families and particularly school children where education facilities turned to online learning for students.

We have also increased our communication to members with this information as it unfolds to make sure that Police are both well protected and well informed. The member-only area of our website www.pansw.org.au and *PANSW Toolbox App* have been relaying information to members in real time. With push notifications being rolled out in the coming month, I urge you to download the *PANSW Toolbox App* today and ensure your mobile number is recorded on our database.

As we start slowly coming out of the COVID-19 lockdown, our members will still be on the front line of the pandemic. Whilst no one can guarantee what the world will look like in a month or a year, one thing that you can be sure of is that the PANSW will be standing with our members.

Members can continue to concentrate on looking after the people of NSW and let the PANSW look after you.

For further advice please email our Information Organising Centre info@pansw.org.au or call 02 9265 6777 or E/N 57070. ■

About the author:

Jon Goddard is the Association's Lead Organiser.