



## POLICE ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 1AM MONDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2015.**

### Poor Judgement on Court Security

The Police Association of NSW today panned the Chief Magistrate and the Sheriff's Office for continuing to prohibit police wearing their firearms and appointments in NSW Courts.

Police Association President, Scott Weber, said, "This is a long-running issue for us and our members. It was first raised in correspondence with the former Attorney General in October last year, the NSW Police Force hierarchy and more recently, WorkCover NSW.

"Our members have repeatedly expressed concerns, exacerbated by the current terror threat alert for their safety and the safety of those attending courts and recent events have proven their concerns to be justified.

"We have seen terrorism related offences in Sydney, current heightened security warnings and subsequent direction for police to carry their appointments due to escalating threats. Recent events in Victoria involving a direct threat against police officers have meant the risk for police is at the highest levels and all reasonable steps must be taken to alleviate risk.

"Even leaving aside the escalating terror-related threat and attacks here and overseas, Courthouses can be pressure cooker environments and police need to be properly equipped when confronted with a violent situation. Judges, Magistrates and court officials can't always control what happens in the courtroom.

"The assumption that Sheriffs provide adequate security, even at scanned courts, has been proven incorrect time and time again.

Recent incidents just in the last two weeks include:

- a prosecutor being knocked out intervening in a domestic assault on Level 4 of the Downing Centre, seven police were required to restrain the offender and it took five minutes for Sheriffs to make their way from the foyer to Level 4 with handcuffs;
- A domestic violence offender was taken into custody at the order of the Magistrate, when searched by police he was found to have a large knife in his bag that was immediately behind him as he stood at the bar table;
- An offender at Grafton Court, appearing on a weapons charge, was seen to pass a large knife to an associate as he entered the court room proper.

"Some members of the judiciary must be stuck in the past; tradition does not dictate no weapons in the Local Court. It is an archaic system from higher courts and times have changed. When these traditions developed, there were no credit card knives, no ceramic edged weapons, no 3D printed edged weapons or firearms. A recent newspaper article in The Daily Telegraph confirmed there has been an increase in "credit card knives/wallet blades" being detected at courts across NSW.

"Police have a sworn duty to intervene and all our training involves access to all our tactical options, including our full appointments. Offenders are unlikely to turn around and attack the gallery they will turn on police or the bench. We must be able to protect ourselves and others.

"In a time of uncertainty, the judiciary have an opportunity to be the champions of common sense and overturn their antiquated position and mitigate what is an unnecessary and preventable risk to police officers and the public."

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**PRESS RELEASE**