



POLICE ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Concerns for Court Security

PRESS RELEASE

The Police Association of NSW has again condemned the current protocol which strictly prohibits police officers wearing, or carrying firearms in court buildings.

This morning police launched an operation at Sydney's Downing Centre Court complex following information that a number of hearings would be disrupted.

Police Association President, Scott Weber, said "Officers from the NSW Police Public Order and Riot Squad and a PolAir helicopter were deployed. Five riot squad trucks and a BearCat armoured vehicle also circled the building.

"This incident is another example of why police officers inside Court complexes should be allowed to wear their appointments. Police need to be properly equipped to do their job of protecting court officials and people attending courts.

"It also follows last week's serious terrorism related offences in Sydney, current heightened security warnings and subsequent direction for police to carry their appointments due to escalating threats.

"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.

"Our members have expressed grave concerns regarding their security in courtrooms and court complexes, for themselves and for the people in these courts on any given day.

"The risks are real and not theoretical, despite what some in the judiciary continue to believe. It's not good enough for police to be told the security risks are being continually and closely monitored and assessed; in the meantime people and police are vulnerable and left exposed to danger while at court.

"The safety of both police officers and the community is at risk. The safety of either cannot be guaranteed as police officers are going into courtrooms with criminals who are engaged in all kinds of criminal activity, much of it violent. We don't always know who these offenders have associated with; this is a tragedy waiting to happen.

"Police and the public can remain as vigilant as you like, but this alone won't be enough to prevent violence and harm to anyone at a court facility. The judiciary should be supporting police not binding their hands behind their backs and telling them to hope for the best."

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