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## AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE ASSOCIATION MEDIA RELEASE

### SPIT HOODS ARE A NECESSARY SAFETY MEASURE

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) fully supports Deputy Commissioner and ACT Chief Police Officer Neil Gaughan's comments advocating for the proportionate use of spit hoods, which were made after one was used during an arrest in Canberra recently. The offender had allegedly refused to surrender alcohol and allegedly then bit the inside of their mouth and spat blood at arresting officers.

AFPA President Alex Caruana said there was often no practical alternative to using spit hoods and that they must not be banned as it would place police officers at unnecessary risk.

"Spit hoods are used to prevent AFPA members from being exposed to transmissible diseases, many of which can have an ongoing and harmful impact on a member's health. These tools are applied under strict guidelines for the safety of the person in custody and police members.

"If they are going to ban spit hoods, then they must implement mandatory blood and saliva testing for all violent offenders, if not everyone who is arrested. The AFP has very clear WHS obligations to all of its appointees, and keeping spit hoods on the table as a last resort is a safe, reasonable and measured way of meeting these obligations.

"Biting the inside of one's mouth and then spitting the resultant blood at arresting officers is not something which can be precluded with handcuffs. The only realistic way this can be prevented is by placing a prophylactic barrier between the arrested person and the arresting officer(s). Any such barrier must

- be safe for all persons involved in its use,
- be able to be secured (and not be able to be removed by the offender),
- be durable, hygienic, and reusable,
- and meet a minimum manufacturing standard.

"Spit hoods, when used correctly by trained police officers, meet all of these requirements."

Mr Caruana said that the AFPA would be advising any members who were spat on to consider charging the offender with 'assault frontline emergency worker.' In addition, he will be looking for amendments to the existing legislation so that if an offender is aware they have a communicable disease, they would then be charged with an aggravated offence and face harsher penalties.

#### For comments:

Please contact the AFPA on (02) 6285 1677 – [AFPA@afpa.org.au](mailto:AFPA@afpa.org.au)