

28 June 2023



MEDIA RELEASE

AFPA SUPPORTS ACT LABOR AMENDMENTS TO BAIL ACT

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) supports the introduction of a bill from Dr Marisa Paterson MLA (ACT Labor) to amend the *Bail Act 1992* and assign a neutral presumption of bail to three serious offences.

AFPA President Alex Caruana said it was refreshing to see a Member of the Legislative Assembly working to look after the welfare of police and make ACT roads safer.

“The ACT has just recorded its equal second-worst road toll since 2000, with 18 people killed on our roads. Evidence shows that dangerous driving significantly contributes to people being killed or seriously injured in traffic collisions. The three offences defined in this proposed amendment fit within the scope of crimes contributing to people dying or being seriously injured.

“The Bill introduced by Dr Paterson shifts the presumption of bail for three serious offences — culpable driving of a motor vehicle; driving a motor vehicle at police; and furious, reckless or dangerous driving — to a neutral position from the previous position of a presumption for bail being granted.

“This Bill doesn’t preclude bail, nor would it mean that more people would be incarcerated. People can still apply for bail. What it means is that the prosecutors could contest a bail application on equal footing, and the judiciary could then assess each bail application objectively.

The AFPA and its membership thank Dr Paterson MLA for her efforts towards the better protection of police officers in the ACT.

Mr Caruana said it was only a few weeks ago that a Western Australian police officer had been tragically killed after being struck by a stolen car while attempting to arrest the driver.

“Vehicular (and attempted vehicular attacks) are a constant fear playing in the back of police members’ minds. In the ACT, we’ve had too many close calls when people have deliberately driven at police officers. It’s been pure luck that there hasn’t been a member killed by this dangerous behaviour.

“If someone chooses to drive at police deliberately, this intent must be acknowledged at all stages of the judicial process. Police officers are frequently forgotten, and the target on their backs is often downplayed by the judiciary and the public.

“Policing is dangerous, and it comes with daily threats to one’s life. If a person deliberately sets out to harm a police officer, they don’t deserve the presumption of bail,” Mr Caruana said.

For comments: AFPA Media and Government Relations Manager Troy Roberts - (02) 6285 1677 – troy.roberts@afpa.org.au