

20 December 2017

Special Constables bulletin – PSA concerns see One-Out Overwatch scrapped

PSA delegates and industrial staff have had ongoing meetings with NSW Police on the practice of 'Overwatch', raising strong concerns about the work health and safety (WHS) issues members have raised with us.

When the practice was implemented, the PSA was surprised to learn that no risk assessment had been conducted, and it was immediately agreed that 'One-Out Overwatch' would be suspended whilst the risk assessment was undertaken.

The position of PSA delegates and staff from the beginning has been that no Special Constable should ever be directed to perform Overwatch 'One-Out', including to cover the front of buildings while colleagues went on patrol.

Given the current risk and security environment, the PSA maintains there should always be a minimum of two people positioned outside.

The PSA notes the industrial dispute Police Officer colleagues and their union ran in recent years arguing successfully for the discontinuation of 'Single Unit Policing'.

Following the completion of the risk assessment, NSW Police informed the PSA that it did not intend to release the document, citing security clearance and privacy issues.

This put the PSA in a position of being asked to drop a safety dispute based on a document to which we were not being given access.

As such, there was no choice but to refuse the re-implementation of the practice unless proper consultation occurred on the risk assessment.

The PSA is pleased to advise that NSW Police confirmed at the most recent meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) on 13 December that it no longer intends for Overwatch to be performed One-Out at any time.

An email direction should now have gone to all staff indicating that the practice is to be performed by two officers at all times.

This is to protect the WHS rights of all Special Constables.

An ongoing foot traffic survey being undertaken by NSW Police will determine the hours that Overwatch will be required to be performed at PHQ and SPC.

In the meantime, the PSA has written to NSW Police advising that performing Overwatch Two-Out and providing members at SPC and PHQ with the crib breaks to which they are entitled under the award requires an additional Special Constable on each shift at each site. Supervisors should not be systematically relied on to plug these gaps; they should be supervising staff.

The PSA intends to protect the award entitlements of its members.

A copy of the letter can be seen [HERE](#).

If you would like to organise a PSA visit to your site, or for any feedback/concerns, please contact:

» **Roland Harris** - PSA Organiser
rharris@psa.asn.au

