

Our Members Deserve No Less than the Safest and Best Tools and Equipment – An Update

Safe and effective ‘tools of trade’ are essential for all workers; none more so than for police officers who are confronted with all manner of significant hazards on a daily basis.

For this reason your Association remains vigilant in its efforts to achieve the safest and best possible equipment for our members.

Alternative equipment carriage

Poorly designed equipment belts have been a long-standing safety issue for our members. This issue has been high on the Association’s OH&S agenda for several years given the sustained application of force that these belts place on members’ backs and hips. Health and Safety legislation and regulations in Victoria require the employer to take action on issues of this kind. Accordingly, your Association has been active in ensuring that the Victoria Police Force is kept accountable on this issue.

Some of the positive developments achieved following sustained lobbying by your Association include:

1. The introduction of lightweight equipment belts to replace the

- old (and hazardous) leather belts provided by the Government after the 1999 election after the Force had rejected your Association’s requests for funding for this equipment;
2. the introduction of a procedure whereby members can ask OSTT for alternative equipment carriage systems (not available currently – see below);
3. the development of a comprehensive occupational health and safety report by an independent expert on the current lighter belt; and
4. a trial (just completed) of load bearing vests and thigh rigs.

While lightweight belts have led to significant improvements in member comfort and safety, injury risk has not been eliminated altogether. This view has been confirmed by a recent report undertaken by the Force. This damning report has led to the recent trialing of three different load bearing vests combined with a thigh rig, also known as “alternative equipment carriage systems”. The results of the trial, especially the use of a thigh rig, has been an outstanding success. In fact, the condition of the trial participants (who were all on WorkCover due to injuries caused by the existing equipment belt) improved so much that they have been allowed to keep their thigh rigs.

Unfortunately, this success for trial participants has meant that there are no more thigh rigs available for other members who may be injured or discomforted by their equipment belt.

HAVING REGARD TO THIS SITUATION WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT MEMBERS WHO ARE INJURED BY THEIR EQUIPMENT BELT CONTACT THE ASSOCIATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

In the mean time, the Association is continuing to lobby the Force to adopt a preventative approach by making available alternative equipment carriage systems to all

members who require them. We will keep members informed of future progress.

Overt ballistic vests

Your Association has been lobbying for the testing and now for the replacement of the current issue overt ballistic vests.

Many of the Force’s overt ballistic vests are older than their manufacturer’s guarantee date of 5 years and whilst not deemed unsafe, the testing undertaken by the Force showed that a significant proportion of the vests should be replaced.

Earlier this year new overt vests were trialed by members. The Association, and the Force, has approached the government for funding to replace the vests.

We will keep members informed of future developments.

Covert ballistic vests

For many years, your Association has expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of covert vests and has pushed for additional vests to be added to the range currently available to members.

As with the overt vest, the expiry of the manufacturers’ warranty on the current covert vest has given the Association an opportunity to continue lobbying for vests with greatly improved comfort. A joint consultative committee has been formed to assess the next tender for the covert ballistic vest.

Semi-automatic pistols

The Association has been actively lobbying to replace the current revolvers with semi-automatic pistols for several years. Outside of South Australia, Victoria remains the only police jurisdiction not to have adopted semi-automatic pistols.

The Association has repeatedly been on record in condemning the current revolver as antiquated and unsuitable for our members, particularly given the modern weaponry being accessed by the criminal element.

Continued on page 9