



**Hon Mark Mitchell**  
Minister of Police  
Minister of Corrections  
Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery

6 December 2023

Mr Andrew Coster  
Commissioner of Police  
New Zealand Police

Dear Commissioner

### **Ministerial Expectations for the Commissioner of Police**

Every New Zealander deserves to feel safe in their home, community and workplace. This Government wants to see a strong focus on public safety and victims, while ensuring that there are real consequences for crime and serious offending. The New Zealand Police has a vital role to play in achieving this as part of the wider justice system.

New Zealand has a world class, modern and professional police service. As Minister, I am fully committed to backing the Police, so you have the tools and resources to restore law and order in our communities.

My expectation is that frontline officers are considered the priority when decisions are being made around investment and allocation of resources.

In line with your responsibilities to me as Minister of Police under section 16(1) of the Policing Act 2008 (the Act), I expect you to deliver on the Government's direction and priorities outlined in this letter while providing effective leadership of the New Zealand Police.

Within its first 100 days, this Government has committed to:

- introducing legislation to ban gang patches, stop gang members gathering in public, and stop known gang offenders from communicating with one another
- giving Police greater powers to search gang members for firearms and make gang membership an aggravating factor at sentencing
- beginning work to crack down on serious youth offending
- beginning to repeal and replace Part 6 of the Arms Act 1983 relating to clubs and ranges.

I expect Police to support the delivery and implementation of these changes within the first 100 days and beyond.

All expectations are set within the parameters of section 16(2) of the Act, noting your operational independence.

## **Gangs and organised crime**

Gangs in New Zealand are more violent, better funded, and behave as if they are beyond the law. They regularly take over public roads and spaces, threatening, intimidating, and assaulting members of the public. They appear to have little respect for our frontline Police officers. They peddle drugs and misery in our communities.

I expect the Police will use the powers provided to them in legislation to ensure gangs will not take over towns, public roads or spaces. Law abiding members of the public are entitled to have their rights to safety and freedoms protected.

To support Police's efforts to address this, the Government is introducing a range of new legislative tools and powers to disrupt and crack down on gang crime. I expect Police to be using the full force of the law and the tools and resources it has available, to significantly disrupt gang and organised crime within communities across New Zealand. I expect to see an immediate and sustained focus to deliver results in this area by Police.

## **Tackling youth crime and offending**

I expect Police to continue a strong focus on targeting youth crime, in order to ensure violent youth offenders can be held accountable for their actions through the broader youth justice system.

I also expect to see Police continue to work effectively with Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children and others to ensure youth offenders have pathways and targeted support so they can leave a life of crime and serious offending.

## **Strengthening policing in our communities**

I expect Police to be focused on core policing in and around communities, which includes being highly visible in communities and providing that community assurance.

I appreciate that to focus more on policing in public spaces, Police need to be relieved of responsibilities that are more appropriately delivered by other agencies, such as mental health. This is in line with the Government's approach to social investment.

My expectation is that you will work closely with chief executives across partner agencies, to identify where Police resources can be refocused back onto core Policing.

As part of our commitment to improving public safety, I want Police to continue building strong relationships within communities, including with retailers, shop owners and the security industry to improve safety and support.

## **Backing the frontline**

Police's frontline staff are instrumental to creating safer communities. I am committed to backing the frontline to ensure they have the tools and resources they need, and most importantly, that they are safe.

Recognising both frontline and specialist Police staff capability, I expect an ongoing focus on retaining and developing the Police workforce to enable it to deliver on its core functions.

After reading the Briefing to the Incoming Minister, I am now aware of the large challenge Police will have with the ability to fill recruit courses due to Australia actively recruiting New Zealand officers and many of the current staff coming to retirement. However, I maintain that target recognising the challenge it will be.

Safety of frontline staff is paramount and a key priority for me as Minister of Police. The Government will be advancing legislative changes to ensure offenders that harm police face real and serious consequences for their actions. I expect Police to continue to focus strongly on the safety of frontline staff, building on the successful roll out of the tactical response model, and I invite the Commissioner to advise on opportunities for further action.

### **Delivering justice sector reform**

In addition to the legislative reform commenced within the Government's first 100 days, this coalition Government has agreed to a suite of further reforms to target the drivers of crime and ensure Police has the right tools to keep our communities safe, including:

- taking advice on amending the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Act 2009 so the threshold amount for seizing gang assets is \$0 if an illegal firearm is found
- amending the Sentencing Act to give priority to victims, target gangs, and ensure real consequences for offenders
- reforming fleeing drivers legislation to curb the increase in fleeing driver incidents
- introducing a suite of measures designed to tackle youth crime including consideration of a Youth Justice Demerit Point system
- introducing the Protection for First Responders and Prison Officers legislation which will create a specific offence for assaults on first responders
- introducing the Coward Punch legislation which will create a specific offence for anyone who injures or kills someone with a coward punch.

I expect Police will actively inform the development and implementation of these changes and other Government policy proposals as they are progressed.

The Government intends to set measurable targets across key areas of public service delivery. It is my expectation that Police will deliver on those relevant to them.

### **Driving efficiency to strengthen frontline delivery**

The Government has a strong focus on delivering improved services and outcomes for New Zealanders by moving resources from the back office to the frontline. Noting your early briefing to me on the fiscal pressures Police face, and the work you have underway to address these, I expect Police to develop an organisation-wide programme to identify efficiencies and back-office savings and ensure these are invested back into enabling frontline policing services. As part of this work, I expect Police to be actively reducing its expenditure on contractors and consultants.

## **Ministerial engagement and no surprises**

As Minister of Police, I expect that you will keep me and my Office well informed of matters of significance and high public interest, and that you operate in accordance with the Cabinet Manual 'no surprises' principle. I also expect that you will regularly report to me on your progress to deliver against the expectations I have set for you.

Commissioner, this letter outlines expectations that will require strong and decisive leadership of Police to overcome what are, in my view, significant challenges with regard to law and order in this country.

It also presents a significant opportunity for you and me to work together to overcome those challenges and address my concern about a decline in public confidence. We have an opportunity to put a stop to gang members intimidating communities and taking their spaces and to tackle youth offending in a meaningful way.

Our New Zealand Police staff are working in a far more complex, demanding and dangerous environment that requires focused, strong and supportive leadership. My expectation is that that leadership is evident.

Yours sincerely



Hon Mark Mitchell  
**Minister of Police**