

THE WA RETIRED POLICE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF WA

We wish all serving officers, their families, and the supporters of WAPU a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The Retired Police Officers Association (RPOA) exists to retain and encourage retired police officers maintain and foster relationships with like-minded officers after their careers in the force. Many of these friendships have been built over years of service, but often, due to the location or other commitments, people lose touch. RPOA events, such as lunches, coffee mornings, and the occasional day trips, provide Members with opportunities to reconnect with old comrades and re-establish bonds. Sometimes, it's important to pause from our busy lives to come together and remember where we came from.

For this reason, we updated our Constitution to allow former police officers who resigned to pursue other careers to apply for Membership. A few non-restrictive criteria are in place to ensure suitability. Applications are available on our website at <https://retiredpolicewa.org.au> or by contacting our secretary at secretary@retiredpolicewa.org.au.

We also introduced an Associate Membership category for police widows, enabling them to stay connected to the broader retired police family. This opportunity is in addition to the wonderful activities provided by the WA Police Widows Guild. Police widows are included in all our activities while retaining their own identity, which is important to many.

Our members, especially police widows, are among the strongest advocates for joining the association. They share openly about supporting their spouses through challenging postings in both city and remote locations and take pride in recounting the highs and lows of service. They often served as the backbone of police stations, especially in inhospitable locations, and we aim to ensure they receive the recognition they may not have received in those earlier years.

In early October 2024, WA Police Union President Paul Gale published an article in *The West Australian* titled "Who will protect our Police Officers?" This article highlighted the issues with the current welfare provisions for active officers. The levels of sick leave and attrition are alarming, leading to numerous vacancies and added stress for those still serving. While the RPOA's capacity to influence active-duty welfare is limited, we are committed to supporting retired officers by providing social and welfare services in partnership with WAPU, helping make the transition to retirement smoother and more fulfilling.

Our social events are open to any RPOA Member, their partners, and potential members. We observe regular groups forming within our events, who then go on to meet socially on their own, continuing friendships that have spanned over decades.

The RPOA Management Committee includes a dedicated Welfare Committee, featuring a retired Chaplain, whose sole purpose is to support any officer in need. All our members are Peer Support trained, and whilst most contacts are in the metropolitan area we have sub-branches in the Mid-West Gascoyne, Peel, and South-West regions, along with Members in larger country towns from Albany and Broome.

The Welfare Committee's role is often to listen and offer support, providing regular check-ins and encouragement. Advice is given without expectation, and members are welcome to seek assistance as they need. Once you are a member of the "Blue Family" you remain so forever. What we do through our Welfare Group, is nothing more than what we did when we were serving officers, only now we deal with our own people for their benefit. Our welfare services are built on *confidentiality, and we only share details with permission.*

We also provide ongoing support to Members facing long-term illnesses or hospitalisation, and, importantly, we support their families. Often a simple conversation can change a life or give hope and encouragement to carry on. A visit or a phone call can revitalise a member who is in poor health, reminding them that somebody cares, it is really that simple.

Not everyone wants to have us around at these times and we respect that, but we find that most will appreciate our support. No one has found the secret of eternal life, when it comes time for you to take your final rest, we are there to support your family. Ideally, arrangements have been made in advance; we can assist with this planning. An "Assistance for Families" booklet, available through Police Health and Safety or on our own website, provides valuable information on resources and contacts. The Police Chaplains also plays a significant role, and WAPU will provide financial assistance for funeral costs. Ensure your beneficiary information is up to date, and if you haven't yet, make a Will. Again, the Union can help you with that.

If you wish for a police funeral, you may designate someone to read the Police Ode, with a framed copy presented to your family. This recognition of service and good standing with your community is important to your loved ones, as they navigate their loss.

Transitioning to retirement can be challenging, involving financial arrangements with Centrelink, health care, and seniors' discounts are just some of the matters you will have to deal with to live in the outside world. To ease this process, we have created the "Retirement Reality" booklet, sponsored by the Union, as a helpful guide. Get a copy before retiring, don't wait until the day after, you just wasted a day!

To receive the booklet, contact WA Health and Safety, or request an online version from our secretary at secretary@retiredpolicewa.org.au.

Finally, we encourage you to sign up to the RPOAWA, Membership is \$20 per year, and staying in touch with old mates can prevent isolation, so don't become a hermit. As we said before, once you are a member of the "Blue Family" you are a member forever.

The RPOAWA Management & Welfare Committees

November 2024