

Boosting Police Numbers

More police on the frontline of crime.

OVERVIEW

Under Labour, violent crime has soared by 47%. The cycle of violence, law-breaking, and disorder on our streets is robbing New Zealanders of their right to feel safe.

The police are New Zealand's best resource for preventing and fighting crime, but National believes they are stretched too thin. In communities like South Auckland – where innocent people are being killed or violently assaulted going about their daily lives – police need all the extra help they can get.

We need more police to tackle growing violence, maintain order, and ensure that all New Zealanders can feel safer in their homes, their streets, and their communities.

National will boost police numbers so there is one police officer for every 500 people by 2011, and we will keep this ratio as the population grows. This means recruiting and training 600 extra police officers from 1 January 2009.

We want more of our police on the front line of crime – targeting the offenders most likely to commit crimes, and targeting the places where crime most often occurs.

We will make sure that every single one of the 600 extra police officers is in general duties roles – out on the beat fighting crime. By the end of 2011, National will have 50 extra police cars on patrol in our streets.

We believe the citizens of South Auckland deserve more than the lip service they have received from Labour. Violence in Counties-Manukau has soared by 65% in the past nine years, and yet Counties-Manukau has the second lowest police-to-

population ratio of any police district in the country.

People in South Auckland deserve a police force that is big enough to effectively respond to crime, actively prevent crime, and one that has a visible presence on their streets deterring crime.

National will provide a priority boost to Counties-Manukau police. We will commit 300 new sworn police to frontline roles in the district by the end of 2010. We will put 25 more police cars on patrol in the streets of South Auckland over the same period.

Our Comprehensive Law and Order Package

This policy is just one part of our comprehensive law and order package.

For more information, see our policies on:

- [Putting Victims First](#)
- [Upgrading Police Tools](#)
- [No Parole for the Worst Repeat Violent Offenders](#)
- [Clamping Down on Gangs and P](#)
- [Tackling Youth Crime](#)

National has more law and order policies to come.

Costs

Many of the initiatives in this policy will involve refocusing existing police resources on the front line to prevent and tackle crime. We will also allocate an additional \$18.5 million each year to recruit, train, and employ the extra police over and above the current recruitment plan.

This will be funded from the allocation for new spending outlined in National's fiscal policy.

BOOSTING POLICE NUMBERS

Current Plans for Recruiting 1,000 New Police Officers

The three-year campaign to recruit 1,000 additional sworn officers began in mid-2006 and is due to be completed by the middle of 2009.

The Police have faced a number of challenges to meet the target. Serving officers have questioned whether recruitment standards are being compromised to meet this target.¹ A report into police standards found that although the standard of Police College graduates has not declined, there has been a decline in performance on general mental ability tests at the recruitment stage.² Another report found that a relaxation in 2006 of two of the physical standards for recruits lacked a sound rationale.³

National will fulfil the commitment to recruit 1,000 additional sworn officers by the middle of 2009. However, we will ensure that the recruitment of these extra police is more than just a slogan and that they will make a real impact on crime (see “Focusing on the Front Line” later in this policy).

It’s important to ensure that the quality of new police recruits is not sacrificed for the sake of quantity.

The influx of 1,000 new police officers could also create a significant experience-gap in the force. This risk is heightened by the fact that serving officers with between 10 and 20 years’ experience are over-represented among those leaving the force.⁴

¹ “The thick blue line”, *Dominion Post*, 23 June 2007; Hon. Annette King, “Expert Advice on Police Recruitment Sought”, press release, 26 June 2007

² John Hattie, “Police Standards and Assessment Practice to Probationary Constable Level”, in *Advice on Police Standards and Assessment Practice: Stage One*, prepared by Dave George for New Zealand Police, 2007, p.9

³ Dave George, *Advice on Police Standards and Assessment Practice: Stage One*, prepared for New Zealand Police, 2007, pp.29, 31.

⁴ New Zealand Police, “NZ Police Monthly HR Scorecard”, February 2007, p.13. The investment in a police officer

National will make greater efforts to retain experienced police officers to supplement the new recruits. This will help maintain the present balance in the police ranks between older hands and new officers.

National will:

- Fulfil the Government’s current plan to recruit 1,000 extra police officers by the middle of 2009.
- Ensure that the quality of police recruits is not sacrificed for the sake of quantity.
- Make greater efforts to retain serving police officers to supplement the new recruits.

Our Pledge – 1 in 500

National believes that future efforts to boost police numbers should be based on the ratio of officers to members of the public, rather than a flat increase.

A ratio is more enduring, because it ensures there is an appropriate number of police as the population grows.

There is currently one sworn police officer in New Zealand for every 521 people. This ratio has remained relatively stable since the early 1990s.

When the target of 1,000 extra police is achieved by mid-2009, the police-to-population ratio will be 1:504 based on projected population growth. However, if sworn numbers are simply maintained at this level, then further population growth will mean that by mid-2011 the ratio will decline to 1:514.

National will continue to boost the number of sworn officers to increase the ratio of police-to-population to 1:500 by the end of

over a 10-year period, including salary, training, and equipment, is estimated at \$680,000 (Parliamentary Question for Written Answer 14078 (2007))

2011. We will also aim to increase this ratio over the longer term.

This is a realistic target that will result in more police on the streets and will ensure that the quality of new police graduates is maintained

We estimate that meeting our 1:500 target will require an extra 224 sworn officers from 2009/10 through to 2010/11 on top of the present recruitment plan.⁵ Recruiting these extra officers is expected to cost an additional \$18.5 million each year.⁶

This will be funded from the allocation for new spending of \$1.75 billion outlined in National's fiscal policy.

National will:

- Achieve a police-to-population ratio of 1:500 by the end of 2011, and maintain this level over the longer term.
- Increase the number of sworn police by recruiting 224 new police officers on top of the present recruitment plan. This will result in 600 new officers from 1 January 2009 to the end of 2011.

Upgrading Police Tools

National has already announced our policy to upgrade the tools the police have to tackle crime. These include introducing Tasers, extending DNA testing, introducing on-the-spot protection orders, and strengthening the bail laws. For more information see our [Police Tools](#) policy.

⁵ The numbers actually recruited will need to be higher than 224 in order to replace officers leaving the police (292 in the year to 30 June 2008)

⁶ This figure does not include the estimated flow-on effect to the rest of the criminal justice sector. However, since the flow-on effects of the 1,000 additional police to the Probation Service, Courts Services, Judges Salaries, Criminal Legal Aid was estimated to be an additional \$10 million each year, the impact of this package is likely to be significantly less.

BOOSTING FRONTLINE POLICE

More Frontline Police

In June this year, the Police Association raised concerns that only 52% of the extra police recruited since 2006 have gone to the 'front line'⁷. The association used a broad definition of 'front line', to include investigators, youth, and community police, but it was mostly concerned about the number of officers in response or general duties roles (i.e. police on the beat or patrol).

This is backed up by data that shows that since 2004 the number of general duties officers has declined as a proportion of sworn police, from 40.7% to 38.7%.⁸ Although officers in other roles will assist at an incident, general duties officers are normally the first on the scene and are the most visible police on our streets.

Labour confirms that once the 1,000 extra police in the present recruitment plan are in place, only 210 of these will be in general duties.⁹

National wants more officers on the front line of crime. National will commit all of the 600 new sworn police officers that we will recruit from 1 January 2009 to general duties, on the front line. This is almost three times as many as Labour has allocated from the 1,000 extra police in the present recruitment plan.

This will result in 50 more police cars patrolling our streets, given that there are about 12 general duties officers per police car.

National will:

- Commit all the 600 new sworn police officers that National will recruit by the end of 2011 to general duty roles. This will put 50 more police cars on our streets.

⁷ Hon. Annette King told the House on 8 December 2005 that "We will recruit another 1,000 sworn, front-line police"

⁸ Parliamentary question for written answer 2887(2008)

⁹ <http://www.police.govt.nz/resources/2008/extra-police-allocations/>

A Priority Boost for South Auckland

In recent months, South Auckland has seen several brutal high-profile crimes, including the murder of Katie Powles, Navtej Singh, Yin Pin Yang, Joanne Wang, and Sergeant Don Wilkinson.

Soaring violence and crime in Counties-Manukau was foreseen in a 2004 internal police report. 'Project Equity' looked at crime and demographic trends and predicted there would be a major crime spike in Counties-Manukau by 2010 that would stretch police resources. Unfortunately, no action was taken.¹⁰

In the past nine years, reported violent crime in Counties-Manukau has soared by 65%, and yet it has the second lowest police-to-population ratio of any police district in the country.

Police staff have been drafted in from other regions to help, and the Manukau City Council is considering hiring private security guards to improve safety in the area.¹¹

National believes that the law-abiding citizens of South Auckland deserve far better than this. They deserve to feel safe as they go about their daily lives. They deserve a police force that is big enough to respond to crime, actively prevent crime, and has a visible presence on their streets deterring crime. And they deserve this urgently.

National will, therefore, provide a priority boost to Counties-Manukau police.

We will allocate half of the 600 new police that we will recruit – 300 new officers – to general duty (frontline) roles in the district, and we will commit to deploying them by the end of 2010.

This will result in 25 more patrol cars on the streets of South Auckland.

National will:

- Provide a priority boost of 300 new frontline police to Counties-Manukau by the end of 2010. This will put 25 more police cars on patrol in the streets of South Auckland.

¹⁰ TVNZ, *Close Up*, 3 September 2008

¹¹ *Newstalk ZB*, 19 September 2008

BACK ON THE BEAT

National will make the most of our boost in frontline police to catch more criminals, deter more crime, and make New Zealanders feel safer.

We will target frontline police resources where they have the most effect on crime by putting a greater emphasis on proactive policing – targeting the offenders most likely to commit crime, and targeting the places where crime most often occurs.

Targeting those Most Likely to Commit Crime

Canterbury police are trialling a programme that targets the top 10 criminal families in the district, because they account for a huge amount of offending in the district.¹² As well as putting considerable resources into monitoring these known offenders, the police's longer-term aim is to divert future generations of these families away from crime by intervening when their children are very young.

Police work closely with social agencies to help those families or family members who demonstrate a commitment to change.

This strategy echoes the Prolific and Other Priority Offender Programme trialled in the UK, which found that offenders who were targeted had 43% fewer convictions under the scheme than beforehand.¹³

National will:

- Roll out Canterbury's persistent-offender programme, which targets crime families, to other districts, subject to a positive evaluation of the trial.

¹² Police estimate that the 177 members and associates of the top 10 crime families in Canterbury have cost the taxpayer \$53 million to bring them to justice ("Police Target Worst Families", *The Press*, 2 December 2006).

¹³ Paul Dawson and Lucy Cuppleditch, *An impact assessment of the Prolific and other Priority Offender programme*, London, Home Office Report 08/07, 2007.

Tackling Youth Crime

National will provide the youth justice system with a modern set of tools for getting young people out of the crime cycle. For more information, see our [Youth Crime](#) policy.

Targeting the Places Crime Most Often Occurs

In many areas of the country, basic law and order is under threat. Since 1999/2000, for example, wilful damage to property has increased by 55%.

The lack of order in a community not only influences the behaviour of offenders, it also generates fear among law-abiding citizens. The perception that streets, public areas, and neighbourhoods are no longer safe is often more meaningful to the public than statistics describing how well police are fighting crime. The police's aim should therefore be not just to reduce crime, but also to reduce the fear of crime.

Police can help achieve this by targeting areas with high crime rates and working more closely with their communities, as well as connecting better with other communities to make sure they don't slide into decay.

The "Broken Windows" or "Reassurance Policing" approach has often been cited as a model for improving order in communities. Broken Windows focuses on tackling low-level crime, such as loitering, public drinking, or graffiti. By confronting low-level disorder, more serious crimes are less likely to develop.¹⁴

This approach was adopted by New York police in the 1990s. By concentrating officers in crime 'hotspots' and focusing on

¹⁴ Christchurch police announced in May 2008 that they were starting a Broken Windows-style programme, targeting minor offences to lift the general level of social acceptable behaviour, thereby heading off serious crimes ("Get tough on crime", *The Press*, 12 May 2008)

nuisance offences, it saw a 72% decline in robberies from 1991 to 2001.¹⁵

National will encourage police in New Zealand to adopt a similar approach by focusing the police on the maintenance of order in communities, and creating a more visible presence. Our plan to boost frontline police will assist this process.

'Reassurance Policing' does not mean officers should start arresting everyone who litters – rather, the emphasis should be on allowing police to use their discretion to dissuade and divert. There is, for example, considerable scope for the police to employ restorative justice methods to ensure that low-level offenders are held accountable, yet prevent escalation to more serious offending.

National believes that police should work as closely as they can with communities to understand their specific problems, and that, in turn, citizens and community groups should take a greater role in maintaining order. Many local councils, for example, already fund graffiti-removal services for private and public property, but cleaning up graffiti is effective in deterring recurring damage only if it is done quickly. This relies on the willingness of the public to report it.

Other countries are giving communities a greater role in setting local police priorities. In the UK, the Crime and Disorder Act requires local police to undertake a review of patterns of crime in each area, consult with communities, and develop a strategy on that basis.

Under National, police will set local crime reduction priorities after consulting the community and organisations – such as local councils, Maori wardens, and community patrols – that already have knowledge of, and an interest in, local safety issues. This may will help the public recognise that the police face resource constraints, and that too much reliance on

¹⁵ Norman Dennis, George Erdos and David Robinson, "New York Mets 159: London Mets 0. Whose Team Tactics are Best at Beating Street Crime?", *Civitas*, September 2002

reactive '111' style policing comes at the expense of pro-active police work.

National also wants to reinvigorate Neighbourhood Watch schemes. These schemes tend to be least common in the areas with the most crime. In Australia, police have adopted an effective approach of notifying neighbours immediately after a burglary, providing them with security advice, and encouraging them to set up a scheme.¹⁶ We believe this can work well here.

National will:

- Encourage police to develop and expand 'Reassurance Policing' programmes similar to the New York's successful 'Broken Windows' approach.
- Ensure that police work more closely with local communities to set and tackle local crime priorities.
- Reinvigorate Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

Refocusing traffic safety

National supports police in their efforts to reduce the road toll by enforcing traffic safety. Yet the strongest feedback we receive from the public about the police is that too much time and resource is spent on giving out traffic tickets and too little time is spent fighting crime.

This perception is supported by a number of leaked memos over the past three years. These suggest that police are concentrating on issuing tickets as part of some sort of quota system – tickets that are not always issued in black-spots¹⁷.

¹⁶ Dr Sally Harvey, *Police Practice in Reducing Residential Burglary: Literature Review*, Ministry of Justice, December 2005, pp.44-46

¹⁷ See "Speeding Ticket Scandal: The Internal Police Memo", *New Zealand Herald*, 2 July 2006; "Memo Links Pay to Ticketing", *Manawatu Standard*, 19 July 2006; "Third Memo: Traffic a Priority", *Manawatu Standard*, 20 July 2006; "Ticket-Quota Issue Returns After Leak of Police Memo", *New Zealand Herald*, 9 August 2007; "Officer's email suggests ticket quota blitz", *New Zealand Herald*, 13 September 2008

Since 1999/2000 the number of tickets issued from speed cameras has declined slightly to 436,500, yet the number of tickets issued by officers has increased by 85%, from 560,427 to 1,038,109.¹⁸

In 2005, Treasury estimated that 44% of police resources went towards road safety, 20% to youth offending, 31% to general crime reduction, and 5% to violence strategies.¹⁹

The perception that police are spending too much effort on revenue gathering and too little time on ensuring traffic safety and on fighting crime is undermining public support for the police. We believe this needs to be reversed.

National will:

- Ensure that road safety policing concentrates on preventing accidents by focusing on those drivers and areas (e.g. blackspots) that are most at risk.

¹⁸ New Zealand Police, *New Zealand Police Annual Report 2007/08*, p.102

¹⁹ The Treasury, "Treasury's In-depth Review of Criminal Justice", Treasury report to Ministers, December 2005., p.26