The Members of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

In compliance with Section 38E of the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983,* I present a report to the Legislative Assembly titled **Police Response to Calls for Assistance.**

A C HARRIS

Sydney
March 1998

Performance Audit Report

Police Response to Calls for Assistance

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Audit

This report contains the results of a performance audit on *Police Response to Calls for Assistance*.

The audit has been undertaken at a time of substantial change in the NSW Police Service. In particular, a new local area command structure was implemented in mid 1997 with greater local resource flexibility, to deliver more efficient and responsive policing.

The Audit Office recognises the progress already made by the Police Service in implementing this new structure. The audit illustrates the considerable developments still needed, in management and support systems particularly, before its full potential will be realised.

Assessing Performance

The NSW Police Service has recognised the importance of responding to calls effectively. Its Guarantee of Service refers to response specifically and offers callers:

- a "satisfactory" level of service
- "top priority" in emergencies.

There is, however, no definition of these terms or how to measure them. Nor has there been sufficient information to support measurement of response times or satisfaction levels. As a consequence, The Audit Office is not in a position to assess how far response objectives have been achieved. Nor is the NSW Police Service. This represents a lack of accountability that needs to be rectified.

Some information is now being collated by the Police Service in this area. Initial results, still to be verified, suggest there is scope for improvement. For example, response times (on non-urgent calls) vary significantly between local area commands, and between times of day. And the places and times with most calls are not always those with most resources available to respond.

Management Weaknesses

Maintaining a response capability costs the NSW Police Service around $300m pa. The Police Service needs to manage these resources better so that it can meet its objectives. This means its managers must have the capacity to match available resources against demand. But the existing communications arrangements and the allocation of responsibilities within the Police Service weaken managers' capacity to manage.

- While central communications units are responsible for broadcasting calls from the public for assistance to police cars; these units have no authority over those police cars. And while local police commands are responsible for police deployment, they have no ready capability to communicate with their police cars.

- Local police management have limited contemporaneous knowledge of what their response resources are doing, and little useful management information that can tell them what they have done over prior periods.

- Current systems of response fail to distinguish adequately between calls of various types. All tend to be allocated for response by a police car, even where the caller's needs may be equally well met by alternatives which are less resource-intensive.

Key Steps

The NSW Police Service has begun to address these limitations. But it understands that more needs to be done before the service can realise improvements in response performance, and evidence levels of efficiency and effectiveness. In particular, the NSW Police Service should:

- formulate a strategy for improving response overall, before it commits itself to major new investments in this area

and, as part of this strategy,

- clarify accountabilities throughout the response "system"

- develop a framework of indicators and standards to help it (and the public) monitor response performance.

The main report contains more details in each of these areas and makes specific recommendations to address the limitations observed in current arrangements. A summary of these recommendations follows.

Summary of Recommendations

Strategic Framework

The response system as a whole should be examined and a strategic framework formulated that integrates management responsibilities and individual improvements. The following recommendations are made as part of this.

Guarantee of Service

The Guarantee of Service should be enhanced to include standards (performance indicators) to guide the public (and the police) on what a satisfactory level of service entails and to allow them to monitor its achievement**.**

Monitoring Performance

Managers should be made responsible to report on the efficiency and effectiveness of police response, and its component parts. Standards may differ between areas (eg between rural and urban) to reflect differences in geography and in demand and supply conditions. They should cover all components of response - call receipt, dispatch and delivery, and include measures of:

- timeliness
- quality
- demand levels and call grading
- resource availability and workload
- cost.

Authority and Accountability

Responsible managers should be given authority over resource deployment. The Service should consider as part of this process:

- giving the communications rooms responsibility for controlling (not just broadcasting) all urgent responses
- giving the local area commands deployment responsibility for all non-urgent jobs.

Differential Response

A differential response system, managed to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, should be considered by all local area commanders, and its implications for response and resourcing assessed on a consistent basis as part of resource allocation across the service.

Grades of Response

The response grading system should be changed to support differential response more explicitly with additional response options included - such as telephone, walk-in, mail-in and referral to another agency - and clear guidance provided for their use. The grading system should be applied consistently throughout the state, including country areas.

Police Assistance Line	The cost and benefits of the proposed Police Assistance Line should be compared with those of lower cost alternatives as part of a wider evaluation than the current trial proposes. This should demonstrate its "fit" with the overall response improvement strategy, before a decision is taken to proceed with service-wide implementation.
Computer Terminals in Police Cars	To maximise the time police officers spend on patrol and to improve information available to them, NSW Police should establish the business case for installing computer terminals in police cars, based on established overseas practice and costs.
Attendance by a Single Police Officer	Police should continue to encourage attendance by a single police officer, rather than by officers in pairs, in accordance with safety criteria already established. This 'single unit' police response could usefully constitute another grade in the differential response policy.
Computer Aided Dispatch	The cost and benefits of the proposed computer aided dispatch facility should be compared with those of lower cost alternatives, including an upgrading of the existing system and use of commercially based vehicle location systems. This should demonstrate its "fit" with the overall response improvement strategy, before a decision is taken to proceed with service-wide implementation.

Response by NSW Police Service

The Service welcomes the Report's statements about how the Police Service is changing for the better. The Service believes improving results are related to the Service restructure which has directed more resources to the frontline.

The NSW Police Service has worked closely with the Audit Office during the review. The Service has already adopted many of the Report's recommendations and is considering the remainder. However, the Service does not agree with all the assumptions, interpretations and comparisons made in the Report.

The Service is implementing the Government's election commitment to make "a timely response to calls from the public" core business. This Report will assist further in that regard.

Crime prevention is also core police business. Through crime prevention, the Service is seeking to reduce the number of times assistance is required. Proactive policing operations and the new Safer Communities Plan are key elements in this regard.

In responding to calls, the central principle is the response be appropriate for the circumstances. That's why response times should not be confused with timeliness of response. If personal safety is at risk or a serious crime is in progress, an urgent police response is critical.

As the Report recognises, some calls do not require a police presence on the same day or indeed at all. The Service is currently trialing initiatives, such as the Police Assistance Line (PAL) and "differential response models" to deliver more timely and more appropriate responses to calls from the public.

The Service acknowledges compliance with the current Guarantee of Service can be improved. Surveys show the community is satisfied if given an estimated time of police arrival and departures from that time are advised in advance. Achieving community satisfaction is the number one priority.

Assessing Performance

Comparisons with other jurisdictions and organisations are problematic. For example:

- comparing NSW with other Australian police services is not possible because no other service has published standards for, or statistics about, police response times
- comparing police response times in NSW with London's Metropolitan Police is unhelpful without a comparison of police numbers, geography, distance and numbers of call; and
- any comparison with ambulance and fire brigade services is not useful as they are purely "urgent response" organisations.

Reliable systems are needed to measure response times properly. The Computerised Incident Dispatch System (CIDS) was not originally intended to measure response times. However, since July, CIDS data has been put to this use. As part of the response to this Report, the Service will decide whether in the long term to use CIDS for this purpose or some other system.

Management weaknesses

The Service has recognised that current communications infrastructure does not readily assist Local Area Commanders in exercising control of local operations. That's why several proposals are being developed to improve the communications system.

From July, 1997, the introduction of Duty Officers has increased supervision, guidance and management of response resources in local area commands.

A number of local area commands, such as Macquarie Fields, have trialed initiatives to improve local response. The Service acknowledges the Audit's praise of this approach. Such trials will be evolved into a statewide standard.

Recommendations

Strategic Framework

The Service endorses the Report's recommendation that a strategic "response times" plan developed. Further comment on individual recommendations is made in this context.

The Strategic plan will need to take into account current and pending technologies which affect customer service. The Service acknowledges implementation of future projects may need to be deferred until integrated into the plan.

Guarantee of Service / Monitoring Performance

The Service agrees with the Report's recommendation. Therefore, a standard of performance for response to calls for assistance will be identified and a means of local and corporate monitoring will be developed.

To assist the development of this standard and monitoring mechanisms, the Service is auditing response times in local area commands.

Authority and Accountability

The Service believes local commanders should be accountable for the policing of their local community. Therefore, the Service favours deployment practices which maximise local responsibility.

Differential Response / Grades of Response

The Service endorses this recommendation. A number of local area commands, including Macquarie Fields, are trialing such initiatives with the aim of implementing a state-wide standard.

Police Assistance Line (PAL)

Reducing unnecessary attendance by car crews is one objective of the PAL system being trialed by the Police Service. The Service believes PAL has the potential to reduce response times to urgent calls.

However, the Service acknowledges the need for PAL to be developed and implemented within an overall strategic plan for improving response times.

Computer Terminals in Cars

The Service is currently assessing the use of computer terminals in police cars.

Attendance by a Single Police Officer

Existing guidelines outline appropriate circumstances for the attendance of a single police officer. Officer safety must be a priority. Wider implementation in local area commands is being encouraged and monitored.

Computer Aided Dispatch

The Service is currently assessing the feasibility of introducing a computer aided dispatch facility.

Conclusion

The NSW Police Service is undergoing radical reform. This Report will be a useful resource as the NSW Police Service works to further improve response times to better protect the people of NSW.

(Signed)
P J RYAN
COMMISSIONER
Date: 26 February 1998

1 Introduction

1.1 The Core Business of Policing

NSW Police Service now costs $1.14 billion pa. The Service employs over 13,000 police officers and over 3,000 administrative staff.

The mission of the NSW Police Service reflects an emphasis on community based policing.

To have police and the community working together to establish a safer environment by reducing violence, crime and fear.[1]

This translates into five major functions:

- maintaining safety, peace and good order in neighbourhoods, including on roads
- responding to emergencies
- managing criminal investigation leading to apprehension of criminals
- containing crime, based on understanding its patterns and community priorities
- helping to solve community problems and preventing their recurrence[2].

This audit has focused on the police response to calls for assistance from the public. The Minister for Police has stated:

With particular reference to this audit, one of this Government's election commitments was the recognition that 'timely response to calls from the public' is the core business of the Police Service.[3]

1.2 Responding to Calls for Assistance

Police attend 1.4 million calls for assistance annually across the state. The vast majority of these calls do not require an urgent response, nevertheless the Police Service must organise its resources - by location, day, time - to be ready when an urgent call occurs.

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[1] NSW Police Service, *Corporate Plan 1997-2000*.
[2] Ryan, P.J. *Reform of the NSW Police Service - Phase 1,* November 1996, p2.
[3] Minister for Police, letter to The Audit Office, 3 November 1997.

It is estimated that 30% of police, supported by communications officers and other support staff, provide the response capability. They have an important role in patrol, in maintaining public safety and preventing crime. They also respond to calls for assistance. The cost of maintaining this response capability equates to about $300million pa.

As a consequence, achieving efficiency and effectiveness in responding to calls for police assistance can be expected to have a major impact on efficiency and effectiveness for the Police Service as a whole.

1.3 Audit Scope, Objective and Cost

The NSW Ombudsman has reported on the police response to calls for assistance in specific cases. Those cases have informed this study but will not be re-examined here. Rather, the audit has concentrated on systemic issues in police response.

It examines efficiency and effectiveness overall, focusing on <u>when</u> and <u>how</u> police respond to calls generally. It also includes a review of the management of police response, both at local area commands and in communication rooms. The audit concentrates on day-to-day front line response; it does not examine response by police specialist or support teams, nor responses to major incidents and state emergencies.

The audit objective is to assess whether police response is efficient and effective and whether it is managed in accordance with best practice guidelines for internal control[4], guidelines for strategic planning[5] and the Police Guarantee of Service.

The audit takes into account recent initiatives, including the new Guarantee of Service, the new Corporate Plan, the Communications Review and the proposals for a Police Assistance Line. To the extent possible, the audit draws comparison with 'best practice' in these areas.

The report quotes information (for example, on response times and staff numbers) current at the time of field visits (3rd quarter 1997). Some details may have changed since then because of continuing developments in the service. However, The Audit Office believes the findings and recommendations in the report remain appropriate.

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[4] NSW Treasury, *Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Control,* 1995.
[5] NSW Office of Public Management, *Strategic Management Brief 3*, 1990.

The total cost of the audit is as follows:

Direct Salary and overhead costs	
Emergency Response preliminary study	$58,000
Police Response audit	$108,000
Printing (estimate)	$7,000
Travel and incidentals	$1,360
Total costs	**$174,360**

The $58,000 represents the full costs of a preliminary study of Emergency Response covering the Ambulance Service of NSW and NSW Fire Brigades, as well as the NSW Police Service. Also included is $7,000 in unpaid overtime.

Acknowledgment The Audit Office wishes to acknowledge the cooperation it received from all the officers and civilians visited by the team at Police Headquarters and at the Ministry for Police, in Police Communications and Human Resources and in local area commands at City Central, Parramatta, Marrickville, Ku-ring-gai, Fairfield, Campbelltown, Macquarie Fields, Coffs Harbour and Griffith.

The Audit Office also wishes to pay tribute to the key liaison role played by the late Deputy Commissioner Lawson during the conduct of the audit; and by her staff and colleagues in completing consultation on the report after her sudden death.

2   How Response is Organised

Translating a call for assistance from the public into a police response involves a number of stages. This chapter outlines the arrangements in terms of:

- how calls are received
- how calls are graded
- how police are dispatched
- how response is resourced
- how much time and cost is involved.

2.1   How Calls are Received

Public requests for police assistance are generally made in one of the following ways:

- by calling the urgent number 000
- by calling the general police switch number (9281 0000)
- by calling the local station directly
- by attending the local station.

Police communications rooms also receive calls from:

- other emergency services
- security firms
- electronic security devices such as building and armed robbery alarms
- calls from police vehicles on patrol.

Calls Direct to 000

Calls to 000 requesting police assistance are first handled by Telstra which directs calls to 12 police communications rooms across NSW employing some 220 staff. Approximately half the staff in the communication rooms are civilians.

The 'call takers' in the communications rooms obtain relevant information from the callers and, where a response is required, record that information on a computerised incident dispatch system (CIDS). The call taker places a priority grading on the call, depending on the urgency of police response required, and then passes the request to the dispatcher for a response.

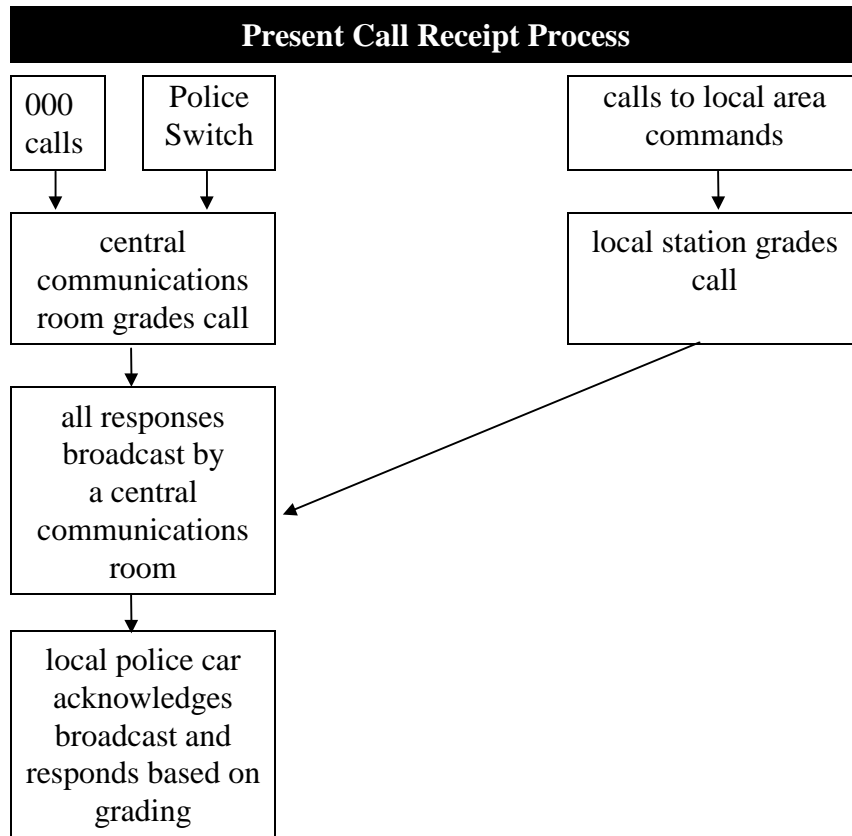Whilst 000 was intended to be used only in emergencies, records show more extensive usage. Overall, around 40% of calls for police assistance are made on 000, despite the fact that no more than 10% of calls are for urgent assistance. Because the 000 number is well known, and because members of the public find it difficult to locate a more suitable number, the 000 number is often used for non-urgent calls.

Calls to Police Switch   The police switchboard number is intended primarily for information and administrative calls. Nevertheless some such calls require a police officer to attend, in which case the switchboard operator redirects them to the appropriate police communication room for action.

Calls Direct to Stations   Call receiving and call grading also take place at police stations. Calls made directly to police stations are taken by an equivalent number of general duties staff, many of whom are civilians. The details are meant to be entered directly onto the police computerised incident dispatch system and relayed electronically to the dispatcher in the relevant communications room for a response.

Present Call Receipt Process

```
 ┌────────┐  ┌────────┐              ┌──────────────┐
 │ 000    │  │ Police │              │ calls to local area │
 │ calls  │  │ Switch │              │ commands     │
 └───┬────┘  └───┬────┘              └──────┬───────┘
     │           │                          │
     ▼           ▼                          ▼
 ┌──────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────┐
 │ central          │          │ local station grades │
 │ communications   │          │ call             │
 │ room grades call │          └────────┬─────────┘
 └────────┬─────────┘                   │
          │                             │
          ▼                             │
 ┌──────────────────┐  ◄────────────────┘
 │ all responses    │
 │ broadcast by     │
 │ a central        │
 │ communications   │
 │ room             │
 └────────┬─────────┘
          │
          ▼
 ┌──────────────────┐
 │ local police car │
 │ acknowledges     │
 │ broadcast and    │
 │ responds based on│
 │ grading          │
 └──────────────────┘
```

2.2   How Calls are Graded

Upon receipt of a call, the NSW Police Service grades its response at five levels of priority, from most urgent to least urgent (P1 to P5). This is intended to allow a more efficient and effective use of police resources, queuing non-urgent calls (or re-allocating them altogether) to allow patrol officers to give priority to urgent jobs.

In practice two of the above categories, P1 and P5, are seldom used:

Grading of Calls by NSW Police July 1997
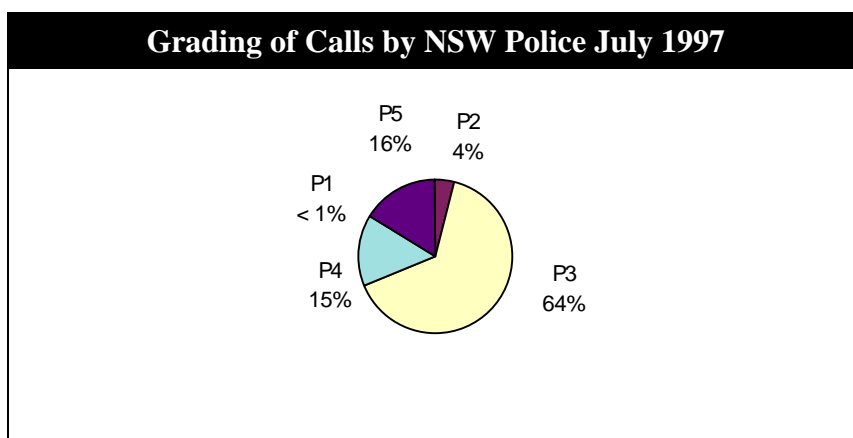
Legend:
P1   Police Needing Assistance
P2   Urgent: Crime or other Emergency in Progress
P3   Non-Urgent: Non-threatening, Requires Police Attention
P4   Police Administration
P5   No Police Action

Source: NSW Police Service, *CIDS and Trainee Reference Handbook,* July 1997, Communications Operations Course

Categories P1 and P4 do not generally include calls from the public.

Effectively Two Levels

Effectively, the NSW Police Service operates a two level grading system for responding to calls for police assistance from the public: urgent (P2) or non-urgent (P3).

2.3   How Police are Dispatched

Although call receiving and grading occur at both police stations and communications rooms, dispatch is initiated from communications rooms only. The process is designed to be as follows:

1. the call-taker creates a file on the computer
2. a radio operator reads the file and calls the job over the air
3. a police car crew will 'acknowledge' the job
4. the police attend the scene of the incident
5. police write up the incident and suggest further action
6. local supervisor verifies that the record is complete

The radio operator will usually broadcast the call signs of the primary response vehicles in the local area first and wait for one of them to 'acknowledge' the job. When the job is urgent, the radio operator may broadcast a call for any available vehicle. Several vehicles, or none, may respond immediately and attend the incident. If a vehicle does not acknowledge within 20 minutes, the radio dispatcher will usually telephone the local station to pass to it responsibility for responding to the call.

Whilst the communications room broadcasts messages and priority gradings, it does not control or deploy police units in the field. It is up to individual units to 'acknowledge' or accept a response task.

When a car acknowledges a job whilst carrying uncompleted jobs, the officers concerned will make a note of it on a pad in the vehicle and subsequently attend the scene as workload and priorities permit.

2.4 How Response is Resourced

Response is provided from the mobile resources allocated to 80 local area commands across the state. A typical local command will attend about 50 calls in a 24 hour period. As the following graph indicates, the day and evening shifts have four times as many calls for response as the night shift.

Number of Calls by Time of Day - July 1997
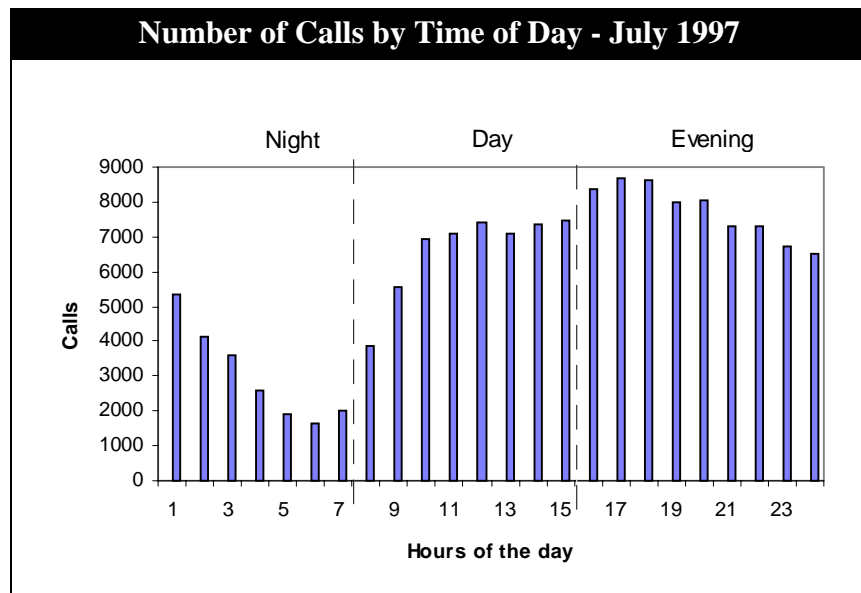
Source: NSW Police Service, *CIDS Data Analysis,* July 1997

Nevertheless, each local area command must provide a minimum level of mobile response cover across the 24 hour period 365 days per year. The general duties constables provide this cover with some supplementation from mobile supervisors, beat officers, detectives and highway patrols. As the following extract from a daily roster at one of the larger local area commands illustrates, the general duties cover provides a minimum of two double-crewed vehicles rostered for response duty at all times in the local area command.

Local Area Command	
General Duties Staff Rostered Each Shift	**Number of Staff**
duty officer	1
supervisors	2
two response vehicles, each with two crew	4
custody officer	1
station staff	4
civilian support officer	1
Total available each shift	13

Source: Field Visit

Note: This is one of 9 local area commands visited as part of the audit. It ranks in the top 10% of local area commands in terms of its general duties strength.

With three shifts to be covered each day, this local area command typically had 39 general duties officers on duty in a 24 hour period. The remaining officers on duty were deployed mainly on traffic, beat patrol and detective duties.

2.5   How Much Time Is Involved

Each response to an urgent incident requires a significant amount of police time. This includes the time needed to dis-engage from non-urgent incidents and to re-engage once an urgent incident has been dealt with.

The following table illustrates the time taken to respond to a common, uncomplicated incident - in this case a break, enter and steal. Leaving aside the time of communications room staff, the responding police officers are committed for more than an hour. (Nearly half of that time is spent after the work at the scene is complete.)

Typical Time Committed on "Uncomplicated" Calls		
Task	**Elapsed Time**	**Total Staff Time**
Travel to scene	9 minutes	18 minutes
Time at scene	30 minutes	60 minutes
Return from scene	9 minutes	18 minutes
Data entry	20 minutes	20 minutes
TOTAL	**68 minutes**	**116 minutes**

Source: NSW Police Service, *Communications Review*, 1996, Annexure E1

The commitment of resources to response is significant, but not routinely 'costed'. Initial police estimates suggest that response to such an incident costs over $200 (including the costs of two officers, a police vehicle, and associated back-up and support).

A typical local area command will deal with 50 calls a day or about 2 an hour on average. But with the number of calls varying unpredictably across the 24 hour period, and with a minimum of two response vehicles on duty, it is clear that there will be times and locations when backlogs build up.

Several Local Area Commanders expressed the opinion that these occasions are becoming more frequent.   There is no historical data on calls to the police in NSW to verify this, but it is consistent with experience of other police jurisdictions. It is also consistent with trends in recorded crime per officer, as the following graph indicates.

**Growth in Recorded Crime per Police Officer
NSW 1984 - 1996**
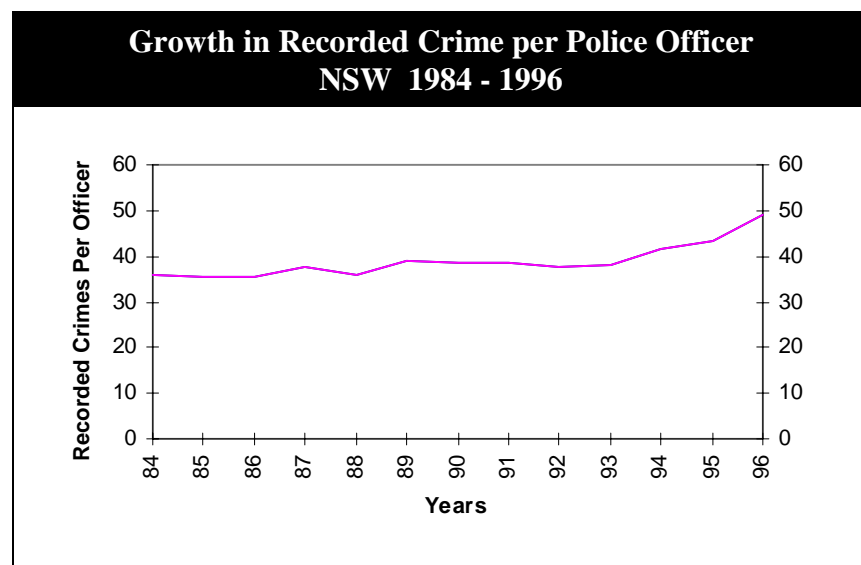
Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, *Recorded Crime Statistics,* NSW Police Annual Reports and Police Board of NSW, *SCORPIO - Phase One Report*, September 1996, Table A

Recorded crimes per officer grew by a third between 1984 and 1996, because crimes recorded grew faster (80%) than the number of police officers (30%).

The increase in recorded crime per officer may be due to a number of factors including the greater use of telephones; increased insurance coverage and the success of police efforts to encourage the public to report crime.

It is also relevant to note that crime reporting and recording procedures in NSW have changed over the period. Nevertheless, it is the response to reported crime that the Police Service has to manage, along with a wide range of other calls, from accidents to public order.

How well the NSW Police Service has developed strategies to manage these demands, and the resources responding to them, is the focus of the chapters which follow.

3 Improving Response Performance

The NSW Police Service faces the prospect of responding to increased calls for assistance with finite police resources. At the same time it is seeking to improve overall response performance. This chapter examines how response performance is currently assessed, and how it could be improved, including:

- service to the public
- assessing performance
- response times
- performance indicators and service delivery standards.

3.1   Service to the Public

Guarantee

The current NSW Police Service Guarantee of Service was approved by the Commissioner and distributed in January 1997 to patrols, to be made available to members of the public. A framed copy is meant to be displayed prominently in each police station. A copy has been included as Appendix 1.

The NSW Police Guarantee of Service offers the caller, in relation to response:

- a 'satisfactory' level of service
- 'top priority' in emergency situations
- an estimated time of arrival
- a toll free number for complaints.

This falls short of the principles for customer service recommended by the Director-General of the Premier's Department.

Customer Service Principles: How the Police Guarantee of Service Compares	
Principle	**Achieved?**
Full Information	No
Explicit Standards	No
Consultation with customers	Yes
Openness	Yes
Responsiveness to complaints	Yes

Source: Citizen's Charter Seminar, *Social Policy Directorate*, 1994, Sydney

Where it is particularly weak is in the absence of standards and supporting information. This is surprising, considering that the Service has done a great deal to consult with its customers, who recognise that police are busy.

In surveys conducted by the Police Service -

> *The groups were asked "after you report the crime, how long do you think it should take for Police to arrive?". All groups expected Police to respond promptly to a report of a crime. They all expressed the view that the expected time of response would depend on the situation (on the type of crime). This support for a differential response was unprompted. They also expressed the view that the response time would depend on how busy Police are. All participants would be satisfied with the response time if an expected time of arrival was given ("like the NRMA does").[6]*

The estimated time of arrival is the one specific commitment in the Guarantee of Service but, in practice, this is not generally given. Therefore, there is little that is tangible in the Guarantee and so there is little basis for judging performance or for making complaints. In practice the Guarantee appears to have little significance for the police or public.

Better Practice   As an example which demonstrates better practice in this area, the UK Metropolitan Police Service Charter is reproduced in Appendix 2. It includes the details of the following:

Our role

How we will carry out our duties

Our targets

To answer 999 calls within 15 seconds

To arrive at urgent incidents within 12 minutes

To answer calls other than 999 calls within 18 seconds

To answer calls which come to direct lines within 30 seconds

To respond to letters from the public within 10 working days

To assist callers at police stations without delay

To achieve 100% public satisfaction with the services we provide

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[6] NSW Police Service, *Victim Expectations of Police,* 1993, Price Waterhouse Urwick.

Recommendation **The NSW Police Guarantee of Service should be enhanced to include standards to guide the public (and the police) on what a satisfactory level of service entails and to allow them to monitor its achievement.**

3.2   Assessing Performance

No Monitoring The audit found little evidence that provision of the Guarantee of Service had been monitored by police management.   The reference to response times is the most specific element of the Guarantee of Service.   Yet the audit found no reference to response time standards, as used by other police services.

Moreover, until recently, there is little evidence of police regularly monitoring any aspects of response performance, except as a result of complaints or as a by product of other work. This is surprising, given the importance attached to response performance by police and public alike.

Conclusion It means that the audit cannot reach a definitive conclusion on whether police response to calls for assistance in NSW is efficient or effective, or whether it is getting better or worse.

The lack until recently of even basic information on response has two other implications.

It means that the Police Service has not been able to measure over a significant period any improvement or not in response times.   One of the Government's key policy initiatives is to aim to halve the delay in responding to crime by making available an extra 650 police officers.

With particular reference to this audit, one of this Government's election commitments was the recognition that 'timely response to calls from the public' is the core business of the Police Service.[7]

The Government is providing the additional resources, but it is only recently that there has been information available to analyse response times.

It also makes it difficult for the NSW Police Service to counter accusations of poor performance overall, which tend to be based on anecdotal evidence of slow response.

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[7] Minister for Police, letter to The Audit Office, 3 November 1997.

3.3 Response Times

Response Time Information

The NSW Police Service has recognised these limitations. Response time information is starting to become available centrally from the Computer Incident Dispatch System (CIDS). Initial results need to be treated with caution because the data are not complete and have yet to be proved. Nevertheless the initial data for urgent (P2) and non-urgent (P3) calls look consistent and credible. This allows some analysis.

Overall the pattern of response times is similar to that found in other emergency services, with half the calls reached quickly, as the following table illustrates.

Approximate* Response Times December 1997		
% of Calls Attended	**Urgent Calls (P2)**	**Non-Urgent Calls (P3)**
50% Calls	within 10 minutes	within 22 minutes
80% Calls	within 21 minutes	within 54 minutes
95% Calls	within 58 minutes	within 139 minutes

Source: NSW Police Service, *CIDS,* December 97 - State Summary

* These, and subsequent, response times are initial unaudited figures from the CIDS information system. Percentile figures are used rather than averages to minimise the risk of distortions caused by isolated extremes and incomplete data.

However, if these data are valid, they show some problems confront the Police Service. These relate not only to urgent calls where the percentage requiring more than 20 minutes for the response to arrive is a cause for concern. There are also issues arising from the more timely response to some non-urgent calls compared to urgent calls.

Variation Between Local Area Commands

Response times vary significantly between local area commands. Based on times within which 80% of calls were attended to, some commands within the metropolitan area take twice as long to provide a response as others, as the following examples illustrate.

80% Response Times September 1997 Metropolitan		
Local Area Command	**Urgent Calls (P2)**	**Non-Urgent Calls (P3)**
City Central	14 minutes	49 minutes
Parramatta	16 minutes	68 minutes
Ku-ring-gai	21 minutes	58 minutes
Blacktown	26 minutes	99 minutes
Mt Druitt	34 minutes	120 minutes

Source: NSW Police Service, *CIDS,* September 1997

This is partly explained by local geography and thus outside police control - response times will generally be greater in larger commands with lower call density. Examples from country areas illustrate this best.

80% Response Times September 1997 Country Areas		
Local Area Command	**Urgent Calls (P2)**	**Non-Urgent Calls (P3)**
Wagga	20 minutes	48 minutes
Far South Coast	24 minutes	42 minutes
Goulburn	29 minutes	45 minutes

Source: NSW Police Service, *CIDS,* September 1997

But response times can also be influenced by variations in workload between local area commands. Initial analysis undertaken by audit suggests that, as call workload increases, so do response times, at least for non-urgent calls.

Response Times and Workload by Local Area Commands
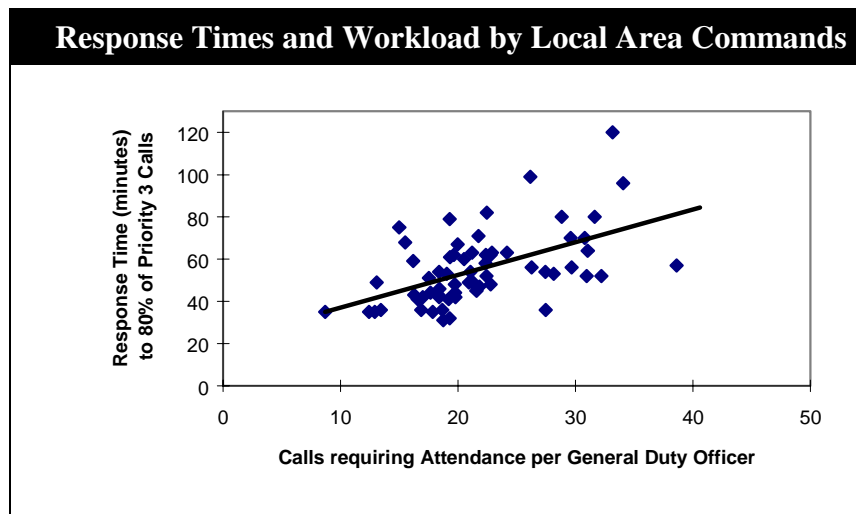
Source: Response times from NSW Police Service, *CIDS*, September 1997 and authorised strength by LAC at November 1997

Notes: Workload is CIDSworkload only and is unweighted.
Authorised strength is for all general duties constables. There is no authorised strength breakdown for mobile response constables only. The resources allocated to mobile response from the general duties strength depend on other commitments, particularly station duties, and local priorities.

The "line of best fit" (marked) suggests that local area commands whose General Duties Officers have higher response workloads, have slower response times to priority 3 calls. The line's R squared is 0.29. This is significant at 99% confidence interval. However, it suggests that only 29% of the total variation in response times is related to workload. Other factors account for the rest, including local geography, management priorities, and data imperfections.

That workload affects response times to non-urgent calls is not surprising given current practices of:

- responding to almost every call with a police officer attending personally, and
- rostering similar levels of resources for response on all shifts despite major variations over the 24 hour period in calls received.

Urgent calls form less than 10% of total call workload. Audit analysis on these calls indicates, by contrast, that their response times do not generally increase as total call workload increases. This suggests that police officers generally can, and do, drop non-urgent work when urgent calls are broadcast. But it leaves unanswered the question of what causes the long delays in a small percentage of urgent calls.

Response Time Standards

The recent compilation of response time statistics by the Police Service is an important first step in the monitoring and management of one aspect of response. It is important to note that response time is only one of many possible performance indicators. However, without some standards against which to assess this information, the audit (and the Police Service) is not in a position to say whether current performance is good or bad overall.

Standards have been developed by other emergency services in NSW and by other overseas police services (eg UK), which provide a first indicator of comparative performance.

Information from NSW Ambulance

The Ambulance Service of NSW conducts a monthly survey of emergency response times and compares these to international standards for ambulance performance. These benchmarks are that 50% of ambulance arrivals at the scene should be less than 8 minutes from time of call and 95% of ambulance arrivals should be less than 14 minutes from the time of call.

Actual performance is short of the international benchmark, but would appear to exceed that of NSW Police.

Response Times to Urgent Calls			
	NSW Ambulance		**NSW Police**
Benchmark	**Target**	**Actual**	**Actual**
8 minutes	50%	45%	44%
14 minutes	95%	89%	69%

Source: Ambulance Service of NSW, *Annual Report 1994-95* and NSW Police Service, *CIDS,* July 1997 - State Summary

In comparing these results it is important to recognise the different workloads of the two services. Whilst each police response vehicle attends about the same number of urgent calls as an ambulance, police response vehicles attend around ten times the number of non-urgent calls. After delivering a patient to hospital, an ambulance generally returns to the station and waits upon the next urgent call. Police units, on the other hand, are often dealing with minor incidents when urgent calls come in. So, one of the reasons for the lower percentage of urgent calls reached in 14 minutes by police could be that, when a police unit is already engaged with a lower priority task, it takes time to dis-engage before travelling to the new incident.

Information from UK

Police-specific comparisons of response times are also available from overseas. (Australian police forces do not routinely publish response time information currently, although Victoria is expected to shortly). For example, all police services in the UK report performance against response time standards. There, the London Metropolitan Police Service sets a standard for response to urgent calls of 12 minutes. The table below compares NSW Police performance against the Metropolitan standard and actual levels.

Response Times to Urgent Calls			
	London Metropolitan Police		**NSW Police (Metropolitan)**
Benchmark	**Target**	**Actual**	**Actual**
12 minutes	85%	88%	62%

Source: Metropolitan Police Service, December 1997, *Monthly Management Report* and NSW Police Service, *CIDS,* December 1997 - State Summary (Metropolitan areas only).

The urgent response performance of the London Metropolitan Police Service would appear more timely than that in NSW metropolitan areas , but allowances must be made for the greater density of calls and police officers in London.

Conclusion

The audit could not reach a definitive conclusion in relation to response time performance, but it noted that:

- **there is considerable variation between local area commands**
- **variations in workload and distance are major factors**
- **comparison with standards used by other emergency services shows that there are significant differences.**

All these suggest there is likely to be room for improvement from the closer management attention that better information and standards will bring.

3.4 Performance Indicators and Service Delivery Standards

Response times do not cover all aspects of response performance, and a broader perspective may be more appropriate in the NSW context as it develops its guarantee of service, resource allocation formula and local accountability. The choice of indicator or standard depends critically on management decisions regarding what is to be achieved. The audit suggests the following dimensions of response performance could be regularly monitored by local managers, and by the service as a whole, against pre-set standards:

(1)   Demand - the number and types of incidents

(2)   Workload - the ratio of demand to mobile response resources

(3)   Cost - the cost of providing the service to the standards set

(4)   Quality - the satisfaction of the caller

(5)   Timeliness - speed for urgent calls; meeting expected times of arrival or appointments for non-urgent calls.

The NSW Police Service is starting to collect information related to (1), (2) and (5) above, but there is little evidence of regular performance monitoring. With information on (3), it would become possible to calculate operational efficiency, using cost measures and workload (2). Caller satisfaction (4) is only addressed currently as part of a wider survey and service-wide, which offers limited help to local managers who are now accountable for response.

Caller Satisfaction

Formal complaints about police response are rare. Of 6000 formal complaints lodged against the Police Service yearly, less than 2% relate to response. This is from a total of 1.4m calls attended annually.

A more general assessment of customer views is obtained through the Police Service's well established survey for reporting trends in client satisfaction. Information specifically on police response to calls for assistance is not reported separately there. However, extrapolated information suggests that almost 9 out of 10 callers are satisfied. Of those that are not, most are concerned with 3 aspects of the response itself (apart from the police manner).

- Didn't do anything
- Took too long to arrive
- No feedback.

UK Experience
For the last four years the police services in the UK have gathered information about their performance which they publish in local newspapers.

Included in this is the following information related to response times:

- response times for answering telephone calls
- times taken to attend incidents.

Each standard is unique to the police service concerned and takes account of local conditions.

Response Times
By way of example, the Metropolitan Police Service sets the following standards:

Call pick up times	within 15 seconds
Urgent calls	within 12 minutes
Less-urgent calls	within 1 hour.

There are longer response time standards in less densely populated police forces to reflect the greater distances involved. Clearly any standards set in NSW would need to reflect local variations in call densities and travel times across the State.

Quality Indicators
The following quality indicators have been recently developed and adopted for national use by the police services in the UK[8]:

- percentage of people satisfied with police action in response to 999 calls
- percentage of people satisfied with the service received at police station inquiry counters
- percentage of victims satisfied with the police initial response to a report of violent crime
- percentage of victims satisfied with the police initial response to a report of burglary of a dwelling
- percentage of victims of road accidents satisfied with the police service at the scene
- percentage of people satisfied with the level of foot and mobile patrols.

Each indicator is rated on a 4 or 5 point scale.

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[8] Vevers, *Guiding Lights*, Police Review, 15 December 1995.

Recommendation   **Managers should be made responsible to report on the efficiency and effectiveness of police response, and its component parts. Standards may differ between areas (eg between rural and urban) to reflect differences in geography and in demand and supply conditions. They should cover all components of response - call receipt, dispatch and delivery, and include measures of:**

- **timeliness**
- **quality**
- **demand levels and call grading**
- **resource availability and workload**
- **cost.**

4 Improving Response Management

Establishing a better reporting framework on response performance would offer significant improvement in management support. But without a more fundamental review of the response system as a whole, and its management arrangements, such an improvement will not realise all its potential benefits. This chapter examines how clarifying response accountabilities and strategies could contribute.

4.1   Accountability

The Royal Commission

The Royal Commission Interim Report identified the need to *move to a structure which enables accountability at all levels of supervision and command, and which is flatter than the present structure.*[9]

Local Area Commands

The Commissioner subsequently established local area commands (LAC's) with a primary focus on operational policing.

From 1 July 1997 local area commands are to be the primary management units of the Service....Each local area command will become an integrated service delivery unit built up in a flexible way to meet local demands....The local area command will set its own priorities in the context of local demands and community compacts as well as overall Service-wide priorities and exigencies.[10]

The Commissioner also proceeded to strengthen the supervision of the new management units.

The Royal Commission has often drawn attention to problems associated with ineffective or non-existent supervision. Proper supervision is a must and I intend to ensure that there is a new approach to supervision within the Service....I have already indicated that I intend to have a duty officer on every shift at each local area command....   the duty officer will be in charge and responsible for supervising what is actually happening.

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[9] Ryan, P. *Reform of the NSW Police Service*, November 1996, p14.
[10] ibid, pp18,19.

In practical terms this means such things as:

- *knowing where the cars are and what the occupants of the cars are doing*

- *knowing what cases detectives are working on whether in or out of the police station*

- *knowing what the general duties police are doing and that their supervisors are in the streets leading and supporting them*

- *knowing what those on station duty are doing*

- *ensuring that all officers on duty are productively engaged in duties and activities consistent with core policing functions[11].*

Lacking Support   However, the systems to allow the Police Service to manage police resources effectively (and to allow senior management to assess results) are not yet developed.

- The call grading process in practice distinguishes only between two main types of response - urgent and non-urgent. With more than 90% in the latter category, and with limited information on the call passed to patrol officers, there is insufficient ability to discriminate between calls of varying urgency.

- Patrol officers (eg. officers in police vehicles) have no procedure with which to communicate directly with callers until they arrive at the scene. This discourages keeping the caller informed, both before and after the police officer has attended the incident (eg to offer reassurance, to make and change appointments/expected times of arrival).   The increasing use of unofficial (mostly personal) mobile phones by patrol officers offers more flexible communications options besides the radio. However, the lack of universal availability and coverage of mobile phones, prevents the Police Service from taking full advantage of their potential.

- Local supervisors have no direct communication with their vehicles for supervision purposes (except again through the unofficial mobile phone or by arrangement with central radio room to use a spare channel); they must rely in the first instance on the abbreviated messages passed on by the radio room, or on face-to-face contact when the patrol officers return to the station.

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[11]ibid, p20.

- Local managers have little involvement, in practice, in the allocation of response tasks to their patrol officers. Although they are accountable for response performance, the call to respond is generally initiated by central radio rooms.

- Local area commanders are accountable for the 'bottom-line' of their budgets but have little spending discretion. So, they have limited flexibility to re-direct financial resources to areas offering the greatest improvements in efficiency and effectiveness - for example, using salary savings to upgrade equipment or to increase overtime flexibility.

- Information to monitor the call-handling performance of central radio rooms is well-developed, but the information needed by local area commands to monitor response workload and performance overall is not.

Responsibility Split with Communications

Responsibility for managing response remains split between central communications and local area command management and monitoring accountabilities are not clearly defined.

The units have different perspectives. For example, the central communications rooms are interested in clearing all calls as quickly as possible. The local command units are concerned to manage the demand, which may include allowing delays on non-urgent calls to achieve efficient resource utilisation.

The difference in perspective is highlighted by a recent example. When one local area command endeavoured to provide telephone responses in place of physical attendance, the central communications staff advised that they had insufficient time to assist. It was quicker and easier for them simply to note the caller's details and to request police cars to attend the incident in question, even when a longer telephone conversation between communications staff and the caller may have satisfied the caller's needs without requiring a police officer to attend. This would have been less costly overall.

Neither the central units nor the local area commands are well positioned to supervise and ensure that each call is attended in a timely fashion. Neither knows where the cars are. Neither allocates the jobs. Neither watches, in real time, to see that each call is being attended in a timely fashion and satisfactorily dealt with. As supervisory personnel change over at the end of each shift, incoming supervision will be even less aware of how well the public's minute by minute needs are being met. No one, who has enough authority to do something about it, is exercising responsibility for seeing that police are actually responding in time to each and every call for assistance.

Accountabilities Unclear

At present, no part of the NSW Police Service can be adequately held accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness of response performance.

- The local area commands, although nominally responsible, have little involvement in, or knowledge of, the allocation of work to their patrol officers.

- The communications rooms' responsibility extends only to taking the call and broadcasting the message.

- The individual patrol officers have very limited knowledge beyond their own situation and the small amount of information broadcast.

Options

There are a number of options which could align authority and accountability more clearly. They include measures to:

- Strengthen central control by equipping the communications rooms with comprehensive computer aided dispatch systems and introducing centralised call centres. This would enable centralised resource allocation and control of response activities, with the regions and local area commands restricted to the role of resource provider.

- Strengthen the role of the eleven police regions, using a regionalised approach to the above. The centralised systems would need to be operated and controlled on a regional basis, but would probably continue to be centrally housed.

- Strengthen the role of the 80 local area commands, specifying levels of service from the communications rooms, improving local communications and possibly decentralising the deployment of the non-urgent majority of jobs.

There is significant cost associated with any structural change. There is also a balance to be struck between possible economies of scale associated with centralisation and possible effectiveness gains associated with de-centralisation.

For urgent response, centralised control has the potential to be more efficient and effective than a decentralised system. But for non-urgent jobs, the majority, most of which are first received at local stations, the efficiency gains of centralising response might be small. The table below summarises the merits of centralised vs. decentralised deployment for these jobs.

Non-Urgent Jobs	
Centralised Deployment Offers	**De-centralised Deployment Offers**
economies of scale leading to operating efficiencies	freed up central communications, left to coordinate major incidents and emergencies
single tier of communications, without the need for local areas to separately communicate with and direct their response units	local area autonomy, which is a key element in the new management philosophy of NSW Police
response units not confined to local area boundaries	local area awareness of public needs, safety and the optimal form of police response

Decentralised Control of Non-Urgent Calls

The diagrams opposite compare the present method of deployment where all dispatch is centralised through the central radio room, with a possible alternative, decentralised dispatch except for urgent calls. All non-urgent calls would be allocated through the local area commands. Local area commands would be responsible for deploying and controlling their response units to non-urgent jobs. The central radio room would be responsible, by agreement with the local area command structure, for deploying and controlling response units to all urgent jobs. In each case, this would involve allocation decisions, continued monitoring and supervision throughout the duration of the incident.

Current: Centralised Dispatch

```
┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐              ┌──────────────────┐
│ 000      │  │ Police   │              │ calls to local   │
│ calls    │  │ Switch   │              │ area commands    │
└────┬─────┘  └────┬─────┘              └────────┬─────────┘
     │             │                             │
     ▼             ▼                             ▼
┌────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
│ central            │              │ local station grades │
│ communications     │              │ call                 │
│ room grades call   │              │                      │
└──────────┬─────────┘              └──────────┬───────────┘
           │                                    │
           ▼                                    │
┌────────────────────┐                          │
│ all responses      │ ◄────────────────────────┘
│ broadcast by       │
│ a central          │
│ communications     │
│ room               │
└──────────┬─────────┘
           │
           ▼
┌────────────────────┐
│ local police cars  │
│ acknowledge        │
│ broadcast and      │
│ respond based on   │
│ grading            │
└────────────────────┘
```

Possible Alternative: Decentralised Dispatch

```
┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐              ┌──────────────────┐
│ 000      │  │ Police   │              │ calls to local   │
│ calls    │  │ Switch   │              │ area commands    │
└────┬─────┘  └────┬─────┘              └────────┬─────────┘
     │             │                             │
     ▼             ▼                             ▼
┌────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
│ central            │              │ local station grades │
│ communications     │              │ call                 │
│ room grades call   │              │                      │
└──────────┬─────────┘              └──────────┬───────────┘
           │         ╲            ╱             │
           ▼          ╲          ╱              ▼
┌────────────────────┐ ╲        ╱  ┌──────────────────────┐
│ urgent responses   │  ╲      ╱   │ non-urgent           │
│ (10% of total)     │   ╲    ╱    │ responses (90% of    │
│ broadcast by       │    ╲  ╱     │ total) handled by    │
│ central            │     ╲╱      │ local area command   │
│ communications     │     ╱╲      │                      │
│ room               │    ╱  ╲     │                      │
└──────────┬─────────┘              └──────────┬───────────┘
           │                                    │
           ▼                                    ▼
┌────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
│ local police cars  │              │ local police cars    │
│ acknowledge and    │              │ only deployed        │
│ respond as soon    │              │ where less costly    │
│ as possible        │              │ resources            │
│                    │              │ inappropriate        │
└────────────────────┘              └──────────────────────┘
```

For the alternative decentralised approach to work, the local area command would need a means of fast and flexible communication between the local area command and the response units in the field. Police do not have channels assigned for this purpose, although it is possible to request Radio for the use of a spare channel. To the extent that this is slow and awkward using the existing radio network, police are increasingly using mobile phones.

It is understood that NSW Police could double the number of channels available on the Police network by reducing the bandwidth from the current 25 khz to the new standard of 12.5 khz. It is also understood that police radios can scan an alternate channel, whilst being set to the emergency channel.

The installation of hands-free mobile phones in primary response vehicles, used with suitable recording devices, might also allow a low cost solution. These have an advantage in that communication is more secure than could be achieved using a radio broadcast. Standard operating procedures would be needed for their effective use.

Either communications option would be expected to provide the necessary support to enable decentralised deployment of non-urgent calls.

Either approach to response management, centralised or de-centralised, could be developed as the basis for strengthening control of response and improving accountability for response performance.

Recommendation   **Responsible managers should be given authority over resource deployment. The Service should consider as part of this process:**

- **giving the communications rooms responsibility for controlling (not just broadcasting) all urgent responses**

- **giving the local area commands deployment responsibility for all non-urgent jobs.**

4.2   Strategy

Strategic Framework

Effective management requires strategic planning, specific objectives, appropriate information and the allocation of clear responsibility for monitoring and acting on response performance.

Individual initiatives have been proposed, but the audit has found no recent examination of the response "system" as a whole and no strategy that integrates individual improvements within an overall strategic framework. So, it is difficult to see whether and how these new initiatives, and their potential costs and benefits, fit together.

- There has been little assessment of the potential impacts of these initiatives on response timeliness or response effectiveness, and how these benefits can be realised.

- There have been no assessments of cross-impacts of the initiatives, for example, the impact of a police assistance line on the need for other response resources; mobile digital terminals on the need for response resources and the need for improved voice communications.

- There has been less attention on low cost, management-oriented solutions than on high cost technical solutions.

- The NSW Police Service has not identified objectives or standards for response performance that are specific enough to be useful.

- Although much of the information needed to monitor response performance is already available, it is not in a form that is readily accessible.

- Responsibility for managing response is split between central and local units and management and monitoring accountabilities are not clearly defined. One consequence is that there is little incentive to use the information that is available for management purposes for planning response as a whole.

Recommendation

The response system as a whole should be examined and a strategic framework formulated that integrates management responsibilities and individual improvements.

5   Improving Resource Utilisation

5.1 Limitations in the Availability of Police Resources

Limitations in the availability of police resources for response arise in three ways:

- total police resources are limited
- resources rostered for response are limited
- rostered resources actually available are even more limited.

Total Police Resources are Limited

The response function competes with other police functions for resources. Resource priorities are still set centrally, despite moves to greater local flexibility.

The allocation of police to local area commands has been based on the traditional notion of an 'authorised strength'. This has specified the number of positions in each local area command for general duties, highway patrol, detectives and others, which has restricted local management discretion to respond to changes in workloads.

In many areas, population changes and other developments have resulted in increasing public demands on police. A Council on the Cost of Government study of police patrols in Sydney has found a wide variation in the levels of activity per police officer.[12]

As one way of addressing this, the NSW Police Service is taking steps to increase its resources for frontline policing by re-allocating resources from headquarters to local area commands. It is also developing a more explicit workload based allocation formula and there are now pilot schemes promoting greater resource flexibility in a number of local area commands, with an emphasis on response policing.

**Resources Rostered for Response are More Limited**

The number of officers rostered for response on any shift appears to be determined less by workload and more by other factors, such as:

- reaching minimum levels of cover, including cover in stations to keep them open, whether or not the resources are needed at the station
- sharing the unpleasantness of shift work equally across teams in the rotating shift pattern
- responding to staff preferences (for 12 hour shifts and long weekends off).

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[12] Council on the Cost of Government, *NSW Police Service Review of Resource Management*, November 1996.

Faced with major variations in the number of calls by hour of day and night, the relatively inflexible rostering of staff puts great pressure on response resources at busy times, and in busy stations.

There is no summary information yet available from local area commands on the impact of such inflexibility on response in total. But its impact is likely to be comparable to that on 000 call-handling in the central communication rooms, which is recorded. There, as the graph below indicates, the mismatch between the number of staff on duty and the pattern of calls leads, in the evening peaks, to delays in call pickup and even to callers abandoning calls in a few cases.

000 Calls and Staffing at Sydney Central Communications Room
Wednesday 19/11/97
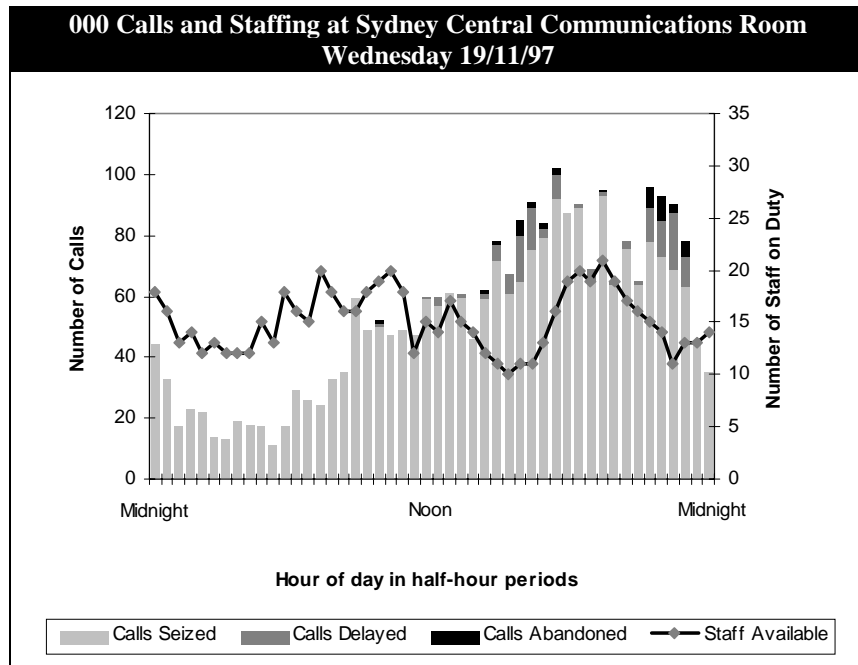
Source: Sydney Communications Rooms, Call logging system

Most police stations operate for most of the time at 'minimum staffing' levels, negotiated between local management and staff. These generally require that at each local area command there are crews rostered for two general duty response vehicles 24 hours a day. So, for example, Tumut with a population of 15,000 will normally have two response crews rostered. Coffs Harbour, with a population of 50,000 will also roster two response crews, as will Hornsby with a population of 90,000. Extra resources for response (and for other duties) are only available once the minimum cover has been achieved in all stations open in the local area command.

The Police Service has recognised the limitations of current rostering practices and is seeking to encourage a more flexible approach, through "intelligence-based rostering", to match supply and demand more closely and maximise the potential for crime prevention.   This is a most important and positive initiative, but implementation is still some way off and its success will depend on greater freedom to act than local area commanders feel they have had under a regime of authorised strengths on each role and staffing agreements.

Rostered Resources Actually Available

Availability is significantly affected by other demands, which limit the time that patrol officers spend in the field.   Police Staffing Shift Surveys show that response resources rostered are reduced by a third through losses such as sickness, court attendance, secondments, and training days.   And even when police are on duty, a study in the Northern Region[13] found that the average time the primary response vehicles spent in the stations was 47%.   An examination by police of management at the Glebe Patrol gave similar results.

Patrol officers are required under current systems to spend time at the station attending briefings, processing offenders, entering details of incidents into the computer system and making inquiries in relation to the incidents they attended.   They also take scheduled lunch breaks.   There is no arrangement which automatically substitutes other police to ensure that the primary response vehicles remain on patrol.

Some large local area commands have introduced the concept of a 'mobile' supervisor.   This supervisor is intended to operate in the field.   In practice the mobile supervisor spends a significant amount of time at the station.   In some cases the mobile supervisors attend minor jobs on their own or as part of a crew, to supplement the response capability of the command.

Even when police are patrolling, they might not take on jobs that arise near the end of shift - particularly within the last half hour.

Case Study - Labour Day

The Labour Day holiday was a busy day at Parramatta Police station.   On the afternoon shift police responded to 31 calls for assistance, only one of which was graded as urgent.

The one urgent call had a response time of 20 minutes.   A quarter of non-urgent calls involved response times longer than one hour.   The reasons given are summarised as follows:

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[13] NSW Police Service, *Northern Region Review of Police Deployment,* September 1996.

Case Studies of Response at Parramatta - Labour Day 1997			
Incident	**Priority**	**Time to Attend**	**Reason**
vehicle accident	3	1hr 7min	change of shift
threatening phone calls	3	1hr 20min	change of shift / not urgent
mentally disturbed person	3	1hr 2min	change of shift
bag snatch	3	1hr 20min	cars were occupied
deceased person	3	1hr 5min	waiting for relatives to attend
domestic with violent threats	2	20min	cars were occupied
alarm at a DOCS premises	3	1hr 8min	waiting for key holder
assault	3	1hr 18min	cars were occupied
break and enter	3	1hr 34min	change of shift

Source: Field Visit

These were generally non-urgent calls and so longer response times may have been efficient and appropriate when other calls were being dealt with or when the police were waiting for clients to arrive. However, the reason given to audit for four of the eight longer response times was "change of shift".

Police practice at this station, and at some others visited by audit, was for general duties officers not to respond to non-urgent calls in the last half-hour of the shift, but to leave them for response by the incoming shift. This allowed officers time to complete paperwork and computer entry at the end of each shift, without incurring overtime.

For much of the afternoon one of the two nominated response vehicles was unavailable, due to police having shoplifters in custody. Additionally, the second vehicle was involved for periods with an apprehended violence order and attending a deceased person. When two mobile units were unavailable, the mobile supervisor attended calls.

Conclusion   In general there seems to be little incentive for police to maximise the time spent on patrol. There are no measures of the availability and utilisation of response units, no automatic substitution for officers who become occupied at the station and little direct supervision of response activities.

These limitations suggest that there is scope for improving resource utilisation in three major areas of response:

- efficiency initiatives which divert calls to less expensive response

- efficiency initiatives that directly or indirectly increase the availability of response resources

- effectiveness initiatives which allow quicker dispatch and closer control of (faster) response.

The rest of this chapter examines each of these in turn.

5.2 Diverting Calls to Less Expensive Response

The greater the use of emergency systems and systems for non-emergency calls, and the more police officers respond to calls personally, the greater the cost to the police service. So there are efficiency gains from initiatives which (1) reduce the use of emergency phone lines for non-urgent calls and (2) reduce the proportion of calls requiring attendance by police officers.

Diverting non-urgent calls from emergency phone lines

A number of alternatives have been developed in other countries to divert non-urgent public calls from emergency phone lines:

- a three digit police number, supported by a Police call center, or
- a three digit number, for access to all emergencies services, or
- a seven digit general police number.

The NSW Police Service already has a general non-urgent number 9281 0000, but the number has several disadvantages:

- it is eight digits long, which makes it difficult to remember
- it is not widely publicised - appearing in the Sydney phone directory only on page 2331, for example
- it is not always answered promptly, because it is used for general enquiries as well as calls for police assistance.

A six digit number 131 444 is being trialed as a non-urgent police assistance line. Provided it is well publicised, this new number should assist NSW Police to reduce the number of non-urgent calls to 000.

Better Matching Response to Need

Differential response systems offer the potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of response, by allowing more and cheaper alternatives to the traditional one of dispatching a patrol

officer as quickly as possible.

Alternative means of response include:

- delayed response by patrol officers to some types of calls
- despatching civilian personnel instead of sworn officers
- taking reports of some types of crimes by telephone
- asking complainants whether they would be able to attend the station or mail-in their reports.

A number of programs involving differential responses to calls from the public are being implemented in police forces, particularly in the US, where in some cases up to 50% of calls have been diverted to alternative systems of response without suffering any reductions in public satisfaction.[14]

The principle was advocated in a 1995 report within the NSW Police Service.[15] However, changes in organisational structure and resource priorities have meant that these principles have not been fully or widely adopted in NSW.

Response Grading

Part of the problem is some confusion over the grading of calls and the use of non-urgent responses. The Commissioner's Instructions - a copy of which is held in each police station - is the reference manual for police operational procedures, including graded response. It prescribes a 5-level priority system, as outlined below.

Commissioner's Instructions on Response Grading	
Priority	**Description**
1 - urgent response	The matter is life threatening.
2 - immediate response	The matter may become life threatening or cause serious disruption to the public.
3 - delayed response	Respond as soon as possible.
4 - routine response	The matter is routine and is attended by arrangement between the response unit and the customer.
5 - no police response	No police response is necessary.

Source: NSW Police Service, *Commissioner's Instructions*, 1 November 1994

Note: In country areas which are not within the reach of the central communications rooms, no formal prioritisation of jobs is evident. (This situation should be remedied during 1998 with the extension of central communication to all country areas.)

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[14] Sheehan & Cordner, *Police Administration*, 1995, Ohio, p411.
[15] NSW Police Service, *Evaluation of Beat Policing*, ORA Section, Draft 20 April 1995 p34.

However, this is significantly different from the grading scheme adopted in communications rooms. There the four levels of priority for responding to calls from the public have been replaced with only two:

Comparing Response Grading	
Commissioner's Instructions	**Present Practice in Communications Rooms**
urgent	
immediate	urgent
delayed	non-urgent
routine	
no response	no response

Source: NSW Police Service, *Commissioner's Instructions,* 1 November 1994, and section .2.2 above

Better Practice Models

Differential response systems require a more articulated grading of calls received from the public than is the current practice in NSW. Even the Commissioner's Instructions provide, arguably, too few gradings. Models in the US and UK offer a number of developments in these arrangements with the potential for greater effectiveness and efficiency.

- The top priority grade applies to life-threatening situations facing the public and the police (as opposed to the NSW police 'signal one' which is restricted to police).

- More than one non-urgent category is employed, to differentiate those responses where time is important from responses where time is not so important.

- A 'by appointment' grade is included for the convenience of the public and of the police.

- Gradings are included for response by telephone, walk-in and mail-in.

- A grading is included to show where the caller has been referred to another agency.

Differential Response Initiatives in NSW - Macquarie Fields

Response grading alone is not sufficient without a realignment of response resources locally. In NSW there have been two important initiatives recently.

On 5 August 1997 the Macquarie Fields local area commander introduced a form of differential response:

...effective immediately the process of "filtering" unnecessary response calls for service will commence in this command.

This strategy will only apply to minor matters, where there is little or no likelihood of an arrest, community safety is not compromised and THE CUSTOMER AGREES that a mobile response by police is NOT required.

After three months of operation, the new policy had resulted in some 650 calls being responded to without police having to attend the scene of the incident. This represented a 10% reduction in the number of calls requiring physical attendance.

CIDS data suggest that a reduction in response times has been achieved for the remaining calls that still require a vehicle to attend, as the following table demonstrates.

Macquarie Fields Time to Respond to 80% of Calls		
Month	**Urgent Calls (P2)**	**Non-Urgent Calls (P3)**
July	20 minutes	70 minutes
September	19 minutes	53 minutes
Reduction	1 minute	17 minutes

Source: Macquarie Fields Local Area Command *Tiered Response*, 5 August 1997, and NSW Police Service, *CIDS,* July and September 1997

This improvement relates to all calls responded to, even though the reduction in calls requiring physical attendance was achieved only on calls made directly to the Macquarie Fields station. The local area commander was unable to adopt a similar approach to the many 000 calls from his area, because response to 000 calls was outside his management control (it lies with the central communications room). Had this been possible, and effective, the reduction in the number of calls requiring physical attendance would likely have been even greater and similarly the improvement in response times.

As public confidence in these arrangements grows, so the police discretion to respond may be extended to a greater proportion of cases. With effective response grading, plus guidance and public education as to when police will attend, the local area commander believes it should be possible to continue to satisfy public expectations while improving further the efficiency of response at Macquarie Fields.

Police Assistance Line (PAL)

The differential response experiment at Macquarie Fields is an initiative of the local commander. The Police Assistance Line (PAL) is a Police Service initiative on a larger scale. It is currently being trialled at Campbelltown prior to service-wide implementation.

The PAL proposal has the following characteristics:

- provision of a six digit non-urgent number, widely publicised, for the public to use instead of 000 to call the police

- receiving these calls at a dedicated call centre, which screens out and deals with all calls where a police officer is not required, or requested, to attend

- staffing the call centre with civilians (and police supervisors) to reduce costs of the telephone response and data recording

- fast links to redirect those calls, where a police officer response is needed, to the appropriate local area command or communications room.

However the cost of implementing PAL service-wide would be considerable. Current estimates suggest a call centre operating 24 hours a day throughout the year for the service as a whole would require 200 civilian staff, plus police supervisors and would cost over $10M per year to operate.

Audit Concerns on PAL

The audit supports the aims of PAL but has a number of concerns with the proposal as presently formulated. Although the proposal anticipates savings from fewer police officer responses, it does so at the cost of a substantial investment in PAL itself.

- The efficiency and effectiveness gains have to be considerable, and real, before such an investment can be justified.

- Many of these gains may be achieved, as the initiative at Macquarie Fields demonstrates, by a well-managed differential response scheme locally, without the expense of an additional dedicated call centre. This has the added advantage of maintaining local accountability rather than splitting it still further between central and local units.

- If centralised handling of non-urgent calls is still preferred, existing communications rooms may in future have the capacity to provide the same sort of call diversion and telephone response. This would be more efficient than a separate, dedicated, call centre. Releasing that capacity will depend on the removal of much of their current workload in responding to requests for information from response vehicles, which would follow if mobile digital terminals were introduced in those vehicles (this initiative is examined later in the chapter)

- Alternatively, up-grading the service provided by the Customer Assistance Unit and Crime Stoppers might be considered - possibly using a call center on a smaller scale.

As far as the audit is aware, these alternatives were not examined in any detail before the PAL trial commenced. Nor does the evaluation of the trial propose to examine them, or other initiatives which are widely used in other police services to handle minor crime and enquires locally. The audit believes this would be worthwhile, even though alternatives may not offer all the potential benefits of PAL.

For example, the US National Institute of Justice is evaluating approaches to non-urgent numbers. Other initiatives are the use of crime desks and crime lines, which have been widely used to support the telephone response to minor crime. Help desks have been introduced to free-up police communications centres.

The development of PAL highlights the risks of pursuing individual initiatives without an integrated strategy for improving response generally and for differential response specifically.

Applying Differential Response

The following table illustrates a generalised differential response model, which offers a structured approach to exploring the range of responses possible to different types of incidents. The table shows the circumstances which would 'trigger' different forms of response. This depends not only on the type of incident, but whether it is major or minor, and whether or not it is in progress.

NSW Police already provides guidance in this area to its radio operators.[16] The guidance needs to be summarised, as illustrated by the model, to facilitate the establishment and communication of response policy throughout the Service. To supplement this, the more detailed guidance now provided to radio operators could be provided to all members of the Service responsible for grading calls for assistance.

The general NSW practice at present, which focuses on physical attendance at each incident, is illustrated by the 'X's. Better practice would result in the 'X's in the lower half of the table being moved to the right hand side.

Generalised Differential Response Model											
		Response Options									
Status	*Type of Incident*	IMMEDIATE	EXPEDITE	ROUTINE	APPOINTMENT	TELEPHONE	WALK-IN	MAIL-IN	REFERRAL	NO RESPONSE
MAJOR	IN-PROGRESS	X								
PERSONAL	PROXIMATE	X								
INJURY	COLD	X								
MAJOR	IN-PROGRESS	X								
PROPERTY/DAMAGE	PROXIMATE	X								
LOSS	COLD		X							
POTENTIAL	IN-PROGRESS	X								
PERSONAL	PROXIMATE	X								
INJURY	COLD			X						
POTENTIAL	IN-PROGRESS	X								
PROPERTY/DAMAGE	PROXIMATE		X							
LOSS	COLD			X						
MINOR	IN-PROGRESS	X								
PERSONAL	PROXIMATE		X							
INJURY	COLD			X						
MINOR	IN-PROGRESS	X								
PROPERTY/DAMAGE	PROXIMATE			X						
LOSS	COLD			X						
OTHER	IN-PROGRESS	X								
MINOR	PROXIMATE			X						
CRIME	COLD			X						
OTHER	IN-PROGRESS	X								
MINOR	PROXIMATE			X						
NON-CRIME	COLD			X						

Source: adapted from Sheehan & Cordner, *Police Administration*, 1995, Ohio, p412

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[16] NSW Police Service, *Specific Incidents Guidelines,* Standard Operating Procedures, Radio Operations Unit.

Recommendation   **In relation to differential response the audit recommends that:**

- **a differential response system, managed to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, can and should be considered now by all local area commanders, and its implications for response and resourcing assessed on a consistent basis as part of resource allocation across the service.**

- **the response grading system should be changed to support differential response more explicitly with additional response options included - such as telephone, walk-in by client, report mail-in and referral to another agency - and clear guidance by client on their use. The grading system should be applied consistently throughout the state, including in country areas.**

- **the cost and benefits of the proposed PAL (Police Assistance Line) should be compared with those of lower cost alternatives as part of a wider evaluation than the current trial proposes. This should demonstrate its "fit" with the overall response improvement strategy, before a decision is taken to proceed with service-wide implementation.**

5.3   Increasing Resource Availability

There are a number of initiatives which can increase the availability of resources and meet calls for response within the existing police strength.

Civilianisation   The police service sees increasing the role of civilian staff as a major priority. But, as yet, little progress has been made in relation to "civilianisation" of local area commands. Most commands have no more than a few civilians in a staff of over a hundred.

Local area commanders are conscious of the fact that civilians cost less and that there will be increasing pressure to employ civilians in many posts to release police officers for operational duties. As a local area commander commented:

If I could replace my sworn police officers employed as administrative or semi-administrative staff with civilians, I could put another dozen police on the street.

The constraints now appear more to do with a public and policy focus on police officer numbers (inputs) rather than on police service outputs.

Station closures   Similar efficiencies are possible through minimising the number of police officers on station duties. Rationalising the number of police stations, as the COCOG recommended, would assist in this respect. However public concerns about station closures have been recognised in current Government Policy which is to retain all current stations.

Computer Terminals in Police Cars   Computer terminals have been available for use in police cars overseas for many years, particularly in the US. For example:

In 1978 the Phoenix Police Department installed a computer aided dispatch system (CAD). In 1980, mobile digital terminals (MDT's) were placed in all patrol vehicles adding to the capacity of the communications system. A capital improvement bond, passed in 1988, provided for the replacement of the 1980 system and by 1994 a new CAD / MDT system was in operation in a new police communications facility.[17]

The mobile terminals have several key advantages:

- *There is no need for attending officers to return to station for data entry.*
- *Officer can perform data entry during low demand periods whilst still on the road and visible.*
- *There is reduced radio traffic and operator time as officers no longer need to radio dispatchers for checks; wait for the dispatcher to enter the data, and the dispatcher to radio back with the result.*
- *Competition for terminals at patrols is reduced.*[18]

The NSW Police Service began to experiment with mobile terminals in 1997, with trials being held at Marrickville, Manly and Maroubra stations.

A recent Scoping Study by the NSW Police Service concluded:

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[17] National Institute of Justice, *Reducing Non Emergency Calls: Four Approaches*, June 1997.
[18] NSW Police Service, *Systems Review Board, Computer Capital Bid*, 16 October 1996, p12.

The majority of first response vehicles in New South Wales are operated by dual unit crews. The implementation of mobile data terminals (MDT) would substantially improve the efficiency of dual unit crewed vehicles leading to dramatic service quality improvements and cost savings. The same advantages would apply to single unit crews, but to a lesser extent.[19]

This is not newly-emergent technology and there appears to be little doubt that there is potential for significant benefits.

Recommendation   **To maximise the time police officers spend on patrol and to improve information available to them, NSW Police should establish the business case for installing computer terminals in police cars, based on established overseas practice and costs.**

Attendance by a Single Police Officer   The practice of having a single police officer attend an incident, as opposed to the usual two officer team, is referred to as 'single unit' policing. Single unit policing is practiced extensively overseas, particularly in the US, and the efficiency advantages are obvious. It does not seem to be widely deployed in NSW because of concerns about officer safety.

Single-unit policing was trialed at Ashfield, Kogarah, North Sydney and Parramatta Patrols in 1993. The trials confirmed it offered a number of benefits

- *Flexibility in rostering arrangements;*
- *More efficient and effective use of resources;*
- *Expanded coverage of patrols from existing personnel;*
- *Enhanced development of individual officers;*
- *Increased opportunity for community interaction.[20]*

From 1995, local commanders have been given the option to deploy police during daylight hours as single unit officers, providing minimum criteria, including availability of a back-up vehicle, are met. But the lack of a well-articulated differential response system and the mixed workload in many commands makes it difficult to segregate the less dangerous or demanding work to which single-unit policing is suited, which may explain its limited adoption.

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[19] NSW Police Service, *Mobile Data Scoping Study,* 1997 p3.
[20] Single Unit Policing*, Police Service Weekly,* February 1995, Vol 7 No 8.

Recommendation **Police should continue to encourage attendance by a single police officer, rather than by officers in pairs, in accordance with safety criteria already established. This 'single unit' police response could usefully constitute another grade in the differential response policy.**

5.4 Initiatives to Improve Dispatch

Police already have a simple computer aided dispatch (CAD) system, known as CIDS. The system has been progressively introduced into the NSW Police Service since the early 1990's.

Incident messages which require police attendance are keyed into pre-formatted screens on terminals connected to the police computer system from either the central communications rooms or from local area commands.

All local area commands now have access to CIDS, with the exception of those in the Western Region, the Northern Region and the Monaro local area command. Full coverage is expected to be achieved in 1998.

CIDS Limitations The CIDS system represents little more than a shared computer record of the details of an incident. It has fields for entering incident type, status and resources. But:

- it does not allocate resources
- it has no mapping facility
- it does not know where response vehicles are
- it does not know response vehicle availability.

The limited features help to explain the limited role that central communications rooms staff currently play in resource deployment - they provide a message broadcasting service primarily, not a resource deployment and control function.

The system lacks the sophistication of CAD systems installed in other police services where individual incidents are controlled from start to finish. These systems offer new facilities, with some important benefits, as a recent capital submission highlighted:

CAD Benefits   *GIS Mapping using map plotting software will result in decreased response times. Dispatcher will dispatch mobile units to correct addresses because the exact location will be validated on line on an electronic map.*

The automated tracking of status and location would lead to better management of resources. If a clustering approach is taken for mobile deployment, distance-based assignment could be used, resulting in more efficient deployment of the mobile resources. The CAD focus group members estimate a 20% increase in resource availability due to decreases in travel times across all mobile resources, because the closest resource would typically be assigned to the job.[21]

However, new CAD systems are also expensive and a system for NSW Police is estimated to cost up to $20m.

A more sophisticated CAD would assist the NSW Police Service to maintain and improve central control of police response, particularly response to urgent calls and major incidents. However, these form the minority of calls (10% of the total). For the remainder, the advantages of CAD may be limited and, unless it can be installed to support deployment by local area commands as well, may cut across moves towards greater local accountability.

Recommendation   **The cost and benefits of the proposed computer aided dispatch facility should be compared with those of lower cost alternatives, including an upgrading of the existing system and use of commercially based vehicle location systems. This should demonstrate its "fit" with the overall response improvement strategy, before a decision is taken to proceed with service-wide implementation.**

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[21] NSW Police Service, *Systems Review Board, Computer Capital Bid*, 16 October 1996, pp9,13.

APPENDIX 1

NSW Police Service Guarantee of Service

NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE SERVICE

GUARANTEE OF SERVICE

The Guarantee

We guarantee to provide a satisfactory level of service to any person or organisation with whom we have contact: our customers.

If unsatisfactory service results from a failure on our part to be consistent with our standards of professionalism, courtesy, equity or any other factor under our control, we will rectify the problem.

Customers

We acknowledge that NSW society is a complex, multicultural and multi-dimensional mix of people and expectations.

To achieve equity, and provide a consistent high standard of service to everyone, we believe that it is important to be able to respond to different needs of different groups. For this reason, we have implemented programs and services specific to the needs of various groups including ethnic communities, youth, aged, gays and lesbians, and Aboriginal people.

The needs of residents of NSW are identified through on-going customer research which links to our corporate plan. For example, we conduct focus groups drawn from the general community to discuss specific issues, and we listen carefully to our Customer Councils on a wide range of topics.

Satisfactory Service

Satisfactory Service means meeting all reasonable expectations in relation to those matters over which we have control. If we fail to meet those expectations, we will acknowledge it and do something to correct the problem.

Some examples of what you can expect from us include:

RESPONSE TIMES

Police will provide you with an estimated time of arrival depending on the nature of your call. In emergency situations your call will always receive top priority. In less urgent situations, response may have to be deferred because of emergencies. If the estimated time you were given needs to be changed, you will be contacted to arrange another suitable time.

ISSUE OF LICENCES

If you apply for a licence issued by the Police Service it will be processed and ready for you within two to six weeks depending on the type of licence required. There is a mandatory "cooling off" period of 28 days for Shooters' Licences before processing can begin.

You will be advised of the date you can expect delivery of any licence, and have a right to a satisfactory explanation if there is any delay.

If you are not satisfied with the explanation and require a refund of fees paid in advance, they will refunded in full.

How You Can Help

You can help us to identify the main causes of dissatisfaction with police services by telling us about them!

A Customer Assistance Unit has been established to help you with any concern, problem, question, complaint or compliment you may have regarding police services. You can call toll free on:

1800 622 571

In cases where you suspect a serious act of misconduct or criminal behaviour involving bribery or corruption, the complaint may be made to any police officer. You may also make your complaint directly to the Ombudsman or to any Member of Parliament. Complaints may be made orally or in writing and can be anonymous if you wish.

APPENDIX 2

UK Metropolitan Police Service Charter

Metropolitan Police Service Charter[22]

Our role

We have many responsibilities. Having listened to your views we have set particular objectives to:

- uphold the law to the very best of our abilities;
- operate a 24-hour service, responding promptly to telephone calls and urgent calls for assistance;
- be visible on the streets of London to help you feel safe and secure;
- make every effort to protect you from crime and detect offenders;
- be sensitive in the way we treat victims of crime;
- provide a quality service which takes account of your views and makes best use of our resources.

How we will carry out our duties

- We will be courteous and approachable.
- We will respond to your needs within local communities.
- We will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of sex, colour, race, sexual orientation, religion or disability.
- We will be honest, use common sense and sound judgement.
- We will be fair in our treatment of everyone, including those we arrest.
- We will be open and honest in our personal contact with you, on the telephone and when answering your letters.
- We are committed to more of our staff wearing name badges.

Our targets

To answer 999 calls within 15 seconds

For 24 hours of every day, and every day of the year, police officers are on duty to deal with emergencies. Our aim is to answer your 999 calls within 15 seconds. We expect to meet that standard at least 80% of the time.

To arrive at urgent incidents within 12 minutes

Based on the information you give us, we decide whether to send a police officer urgently to your assistance. When we do, our aim is to have the officer with you within 12 minutes. We expect to meet that standard at least 85% of the time.

How do we decide what is urgent? We listen carefully to what you tell us. We always send a police officer immediately, when:

- someone has been seriously injured or is in danger;
- there is a serious risk to property;
- a crime is being committed;
- someone suspected of committing a crime is close by, or you know where the person is, and there is an opportunity to arrest the suspect;
- witnesses might leave the scene of a crime, or evidence might be lost, if we do not get to the scene of a crime quickly;
- a further crime might be committed;
- there is a caller who is seriously distressed, even though other circumstances suggest a less immediate response.

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[22] Metropolitian Police Service Charter. [Online] 1997;
http://www.open.gov.uk/police/mps/mps/charter/mps-ch01.htm

On average we respond to an urgent call every 25 seconds of the day, every day of the year. So that we can give this service and carry out our wide range of other duties, it may take us longer to respond to other calls. However, we will let you know if we are going to be very late, or if we cannot keep a pre-arranged appointment.

To answer calls other than 999 calls within 18 seconds

Our aim is for trained operators at Headquarters at New Scotland Yard and at police stations to answer calls within 18 seconds (you will then be put through to the person who is able to help you). We expect to meet that standard at least 90% of the time.

To answer calls which come to direct lines within 30 seconds

Many of our offices can be called direct. Our aim in those offices is to answer your calls within 30 seconds. We expect to meet that standard 60% of the time.

To respond to letters from the public within 10 working days

Our aim is to reply to your letters within 10 working days. We expect to meet that standard 90% of the time. At the very least we will contact you and explain why we need more time to give you a proper reply. You will always be given the name and telephone number of a person to contact if you need to.

To assist callers at police stations without delay

If you go to a police station you will be seen as soon as possible. If the station reception officer is already dealing with another person, please be patient, but if you think your need is urgent then tell the officer when you first arrive. Our aim is to assist callers without delay. We expect to do this at least 75% of the time. However, our surveys have told us that you want us to have more police officers on the streets and to respond quickly to your urgent calls for assistance, so sometimes you may have to wait a little longer.

To achieve 100% public satisfaction with the services we provide

We want to be sure that our service to you is of a high standard and we will seek views on our performance from people who have been involved in road accidents, are victims of crime, or have called at one of our police stations. Each year we also carry out a survey among Londoners asking about the level of satisfaction with the services we provide. Our aim is to provide a service that will satisfy all accident and crime victims, and those people who call at police stations. We expect to meet that standard for accident and crime victims at least 90% of the time, and for callers at police stations at least 80% of the time.

Have you recently been a visitor to London? Did you have any contact with the Metropolitan Police service? If you wish to make any comments about the service you received please do so by Email direct to Performance Information Bureau at New Scotland Yard. Include as many identifying details as possible about the incident. We will try to use constructive criticism to improve our service to visitors to London. Thank you.

Performance Audit Reports

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NSW Agriculture	*Review of NSW Agriculture*	27 March 1997
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