AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Police Rostering

NSW Police Force

The Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

The Legislative Council
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

In accordance with section 38E of the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*, I present a report titled **Police Rostering: NSW Police Force**.

Peter Achterstraat
Auditor-General

Sydney
December 2007

Contents

Foreword

Foreword

We rely on police to work around the clock to keep us safe, and our need for police changes throughout the day and on different days of the week.

Policing is a stressful, sometimes dangerous job and the fact that it entails shiftwork further increases occupational risks that need to be managed.

In recent years the rosters used by the New South Wales Police Force (NSWPF) have attracted much attention.

Getting rosters right can benefit the community, victims, the Police Force and officers by using the resources available as safely as possible in an effective and efficient way.

This report gives some guidance to the NSWPF on how to roster general duties police. It looks at best practice which is used in other jurisdictions and could apply here.

The findings of this report may also be of interest to other agencies responsible for providing a twenty-four hour service to the public.

Peter Achterstraat
Auditor-General

December 2007

Executive summary

The focus of our audit

The NSW Police Force (NSWPF) spends nearly 80 per cent of its resources on its people, many of whom work shifts. Getting rosters right can improve law enforcement, the efficient use of public resources and officer welfare, health and safety.

There have been some common trends in the types of rosters used for policing around the world. Traditionally, the predominant roster was three eight-hour shifts a day, seven days a week with similar numbers of staff rostered to work each shift. These rosters gave little or no consideration to when crimes were actually occurring.

In the 1990's many police forces began to modify police rosters to better match resources to demand and to improve the working conditions of officers.

The NSW Police Force implemented a flexible roster model service-wide in 1995. Under this model, shift length can vary between six and 12 hours and shifts can start and finish at different times. Flexible rosters can also provide more days off duty. This can help officers overcome the stresses of policing if they rest on their days off.

Flexible rosters are intended to best match staffing numbers to workloads. Commands, in consultation with officers, can choose shift lengths and shift starting times that maximise capacity when crime is occurring or when police need to be visible.

In this audit we wanted to find out whether the current police rosters, including practices around the use of 12-hour shifts, support efficient and effective policing.

Specifically we examined:
- whether rosters provide for the flexible deployment of staff
- whether rosters meet the needs of the community and victims of crime
- what impact rosters have had on officers and the NSW Police Force.

The audit focuses on general duties police. That is, police who wear uniforms, work out of local police stations and represent the largest group of officers that routinely work around the clock.

Audit opinion

Today, few elements of the 1995 flexible roster model are in practice in the NSW Police Force. Current rosters are neither consistent with the flexible roster model nor represent best practice. As a consequence, both the community and police are missing out on some of the benefits that the Force saw this model providing.

Instead, general duties police work predominantly 12-hour shifts. These shifts have common starting times and finish times. And in most commands, the majority of these shifts are worked in blocks of four, followed by at least four days off.

Some commands deploy more officers on busier nights, but generally a similar number of officers are rostered on duty regardless of demand. Although a number of factors affect performance, the rigid work pattern increases the risk the Force may be unable to attend calls quickly, provide good customer service and protect the well being of its officers.

Overall, the Force is not meeting its target for responding to urgent calls for assistance. Today, one in four complaints is about customer service. Victims of crime report issues including difficulties in contacting an officer and frustration at having to wait for an officer to return to duty to find out about their case. The timeliness of investigations is also at risk when follow-up is delayed. Seventy per cent of commanders surveyed indicated that rosters did not support continuity of investigations or victims' needs.

We are also concerned that the current roster pattern may not be in the best interest of the health and safety of officers. Sick and injury leave is higher in NSW than other states and the Force is yet to assess the extent to which rosters may contribute to this.

The problem is not entirely the use of 12-hour shifts. Twelve-hour shifts are not inherently bad. Rather, it is the practice of block rostering that seems to be the main problem.

The NSW Police Force and the Police Association of NSW are both publicly committed to the flexible roster model. According to the Association, flexible rosters can provide greater coverage during periods of peak demand resulting in better services to citizens. As this is the case, the Force should implement flexible rosters as envisaged in 1995.

The Force also needs to do more to protect its general duties officers from fatigue in line with contemporary practice for managing shiftwork.

Key findings

What are flexible rosters and do police use them?

A flexible roster is one that varies shifts patterns and lengths to optimise policing, efficient resource use and the welfare, health and safety of officers.

In 1995, the NSWPF replaced the traditional eight-hour roster with flexible rosters. Varied shift patterns were meant to meet fluctuations in demand and reduce the impact of shiftwork on officers.

We found aspects of flexible rosters in practice. Some commands vary the start time and length of some shifts. Several commands roster extra officers on busier evenings and overlap shifts to increase capacity.

A more flexible roster – see page 18

But there is much inflexibility. Most shifts are 12 hours long, start around the same time and deploy a similar number of officers day and night.

A less flexible roster – see page 19

Typically, commands roster officers for blocks of four days on duty (two day and two night shifts) followed by four or more days off duty.

Until recently, the NSWPF has not done much to promote flexibility and commands report that it is difficult to change entrenched roster practices. The NSWPF has now developed a roster training package and is introducing a tool to assess how commands manage and deploy officers.

The NSWPF is also reviewing its roster policy and practice to achieve more flexible rosters. The NSWPF plans to complete this review by the end of 2007.

Are rosters good for the community and victims of crime?

Effective rosters should help officers respond rapidly to calls, manage cases and support victims. The rosters used by NSWPF do not always do this.

The number of urgent calls for assistance has increased by 33 per cent over the last four years to more than 110,000 calls. In 2006-07, police attended 80 per cent of these calls within 12 minutes 25 seconds, failing to meet its target response time of 80 per cent within 10 minutes.

Many variables affect response times. Rosters are one of these variables yet commands do not review response time to identify if the roster contributes to delays. Nor do they use response time performance as a test of whether the roster is efficient and effective.

The current block roster gives officers only two day-time shifts every eight days. These day shifts are the most effective time for following up victims, witnesses, and other police who work standard (non-shift) hours. The limited opportunity for follow-up under the current roster may affect the timeliness of investigation and victim support.

The NSWPF has procedures in place for case management and victim support and has set minimum standards for the review of open cases. Even so, compliance with these standards is variable. Over 25 per cent of complaints to police were about customer service in 2006-07, compared to 15 per cent in 2002-03. Common complaints were that it was difficult to contact the officer handling their case and that calls were not returned.

Of the commanders we surveyed:
- 70 per cent said current rosters did not support the continuity of investigation. This rose to 86 per cent for commanders whose officers predominantly worked 12-hour block rosters
- 66 per cent said current rosters did not enable officers to manage their caseloads effectively
- 70 per cent said the rosters did not facilitate victim support.

Are rosters good for officers and the NSWPF?

A good roster meets the operational needs of the business, minimises the risks of shiftwork to staff and allows employees to balance their work and private lives.

The 12-hour block roster is popular with general duties police. It provides more time off and by concentrating working hours allows officers to have longer breaks from work. Officers report that these rest periods allow them to recover from the stresses associated with policing.

Yet research indicates that rosters can negatively affect employee health and welfare and there are specific risks associated with shift work that need to be managed.

NSWPF officers take more sick and injury leave than officers in forces that have different roster arrangements. The NSWPF is currently analysing how its rosters affect officer welfare.

The NSWPF does not have a fatigue management policy, but it has parameters that limit the number of 12-hour shifts worked to three shifts in a week. These parameters are not adhered to. Officers typically work four 12-hour shifts in four days and we found some officers working six 12-hour shifts in seven days.

Fatigue may be reduced by the long rest periods between shifts but this also makes it easier for officers to have a second job. If this happens, then the opportunity for rest may be lost. One in ten police officers has approval to work a second job but others may work without approval on their rest days.

The NSWPF does not provide guidance to commands assessing requests for secondary employment in terms of fatigue management. There is no limit on the maximum hours that can be worked. We found one case where an officer had approval to work for up to 30 hours a week on his rest days.

The NSWPF is currently reviewing the impact of rosters on officer health and welfare and is developing a fatigue management policy.

Recommendations

Achieve compliance with current requirements

We recommend that the NSWPF ensure commands comply with the current roster parameters regarding the number of 12-hour shifts that officers can work (page 35).

Review current requirements

We recommend that the NSWPF review the rostering parameters and, by July 2008, develop best practice principles that are consistent with contemporary practices for managing the risks to the health and welfare of officers arising from shiftwork (pages 22 and 35).

Incorporate best roster practices

We recommend that the NSWPF require commands, as part of the best practice roster principles, to:

- review patterns of response times, use different shift lengths and stagger start times to better meet the demand for police (pages 26 and 27)
- provide officers sufficient opportunity to follow-up investigations, witnesses and victims at customer-friendly times (page 29)
- review the roster's ability to support the needs of the community and victims by monitoring such indicators as complaints, community satisfaction and the timeliness of case follow-up (page 29)
- monitor the effect of rosters on such organisational indicators as retention, injury and sick leave, overtime, shift penalties and annual leave (page 40).

Better manage fatigue

We recommend that the NSWPF by July 2008 introduce a fatigue management policy that meets best practice principles and includes:

- training for commanders and officers in how to identify and manage fatigue (page 37)
- a minimum amount of rest taken before resuming duty (page 37).

Help commands to improve rosters

We recommend that the NSWPF by July 2008:

- provide commands with a methodology to assess local rosters against best practice principles and identify gaps (page 22)
- support commands in their negotiations with officers to change rosters to meet best practice principles (page 22).

We recommend that by July 2009, the NSWPF have rosters in place that are consistent with best practice principles (page 22).

Response from the NSW Police Force

I refer to your letter dated 2 November 2007 regarding the final Performance Audit on Police rostering.

The New South Wales Police Force welcomes the submission of this report into police rostering. As an organisation, we accept that improvements can be made in the way we manage our human resource work hours through rostering.

The organisation acknowledges the audit opinion, in terms of the Local Area Commands surveyed, that current rosters are not consistent with the current agreed parameters for flexible rostering.

There are 4 main areas of interest to the audit report:

1. Local Management of Rosters

A local roster is designed to ensure that police are deployed both proactively and responsively. Within a local roster, a Command will task police to activities such as the following:
- *First response*
- *Investigative work*
- *Station duties, such as custody or exhibit management*
- *Court attendances*
- *Training*

Thus the number of police rostered on a given shift is based on the requirements for many policing activities, including responding to calls for assistance. It is an oversimplification to correlate the number required to be deployed for responding to calls for assistance with the total number of police required to be rostered on shift, and the patterns for this rostering.

Each Local Area Command is required to enter into a First Response Policing Agreement (FRPA) with their staff. The number of police assigned to first response on a given rostered shift will be based on historical trends of calls for assistance, which may then be adjusted seasonally or based in intelligence. The first response deployment also enables capacity for a high visibility police presence. Based on current crime activity officers are proactively tasked with crime intervention, crime detection and crime prevention.

Tasking of those officers within the FRPA is conducted at weekly Command crime reviews, however each Command also reviews crime occurring each 24 hours and there is the ability to respond to this crime immediately by changing the pro-active taskings.

Best roster principles, when applied, ensure a FRPA allows for the rostering of police for shifts of various durations with staggered finishing times to meet changing demands for service. Additionally, Commanders often roster extra crews, particularly at night, to ensure the safety and occupational health and wellbeing of staff.

The New South Wales Police Force is currently providing training for roster officers to assist them in the population of rosters and adherence to the agreed parameters for flexible rostering.

2. Flexible rostering parameters

Much has recently been said of police working 12-hour shifts. I note the Auditor General's report does not criticise 12-hour shifts per se, but recommends greater flexibility within FRPAs. I agree, however I also support the notion that 12-hour shifts underpin FRPAs. It appears that 12-hour shifts, with corresponding regular breaks for officers, contribute to the attractiveness of working within the New South Wales Police Force. Attending to outstanding work in a timely manner is the basis of good case management and victim support within a Command, regardless of the roster cycle.

The agreed parameters for flexible rostering allow, for those officers who work mainly 12-hour shifts, a maximum of three 12-hour shifts in any seven day period, with four 12-hour shifts during the final week of any six week roster period. I note the findings of the Audit that Commands appear to have moved to a pattern of four 12-hour shifts. To manage any identified fatigue risk associated with this, I propose to firstly identify the extent of this risk and then implement appropriate risk control measures, which may be the acceptance of the recommendation to ensure compliance with the current flexible rostering parameters, or another series of controls which are to be identified as a part of our fatigue management project described below.

3. Investigation Case Management and Customer Service

The audit report stated that current rosters limit the time officers have to follow-up cases and victims, suggesting improved rostering practices would provide for more effective case management and victim support. It is acknowledged that the effective rostering of police will enhance their ability to conduct investigations and service customers. However, it is my view that the enhancement and reinforcement of processes should ensure that case information is readily accessible by co-workers who can assist customers should the contact officer be unavailable for any reason (such as court duty, annual leave, training, strike force or other duties), thus reducing the reliance on a single contact officer.

The merits of maintaining an effectively managed case management system, already established within COPS (Computerised Operational Policing System), will impact greatly on the quality of investigations and customer service. It is imperative that the workload of each officer is closely monitored by supervisors by utilising the system within COPS. Furthermore, the role of 'assisting officer', which can be assigned within the case management system, should be spread across shifts to allow a team based approach for the completion of tasks. Finally, the recording of investigative milestones and related documentation must be current and accessible to allow case continuation in the absence of the officer in charge.

4. Fatigue Management	*The establishment of the Safety Command in 2006 has given NSW Police the capability to identify and respond through contemporary methodologies to health and safety issues including fatigue management.*

A project to address the specific issues related to fatigue management has commenced. The basis of the New South Wales Police Fatigue Project is founded upon contemporary Safety risk management principles.

The New South Wales Police Fatigue Project will encompass the following stages:

a) Stage 1 (expected completion February 2008)
- *Examination of the current flexible rostering agreement and other related policies (eg secondary employment) in terms of contemporary fatigue management principles*
- *Examination of a sample of current Police rosters in terms of contemporary fatigue management principles*
- *Completion of risk assessment of the sample rosters in relation to fatigue*
- *Introduction of basic risk control strategies including a communication strategy to increase staff awareness of fatigue and personal risk assessments*
- *Preparation for phase 2 including a stakeholder forum in the near future.*

The main goal of stage 1 is to identify the current safety risks to the New South Wales Police Force employees from current rostering practices; and identify attainable risk control measures to counter this in the short term.

b) Stage 2 (expected completion July 2008)
- *Creation of a fatigue management policy*
- *Inclusion of contemporary fatigue practices into future flexible rostering agreements*
- *Organisational education in fatigue management practices, including how to identify and manage fatigue*
- *Creation of an organisational toolkit to be utilised by managers*

It should be noted that a sample of 16 Local Area Command rosters are being utilised in stage 1. This sample will include the four Local Area Commands that were chosen for the Audit Office report.

The Centre for Sleep Research, University of Adelaide has been engaged to undertake the scientific analysis of rosters in stage 1. Professor Drew Dawson, who is internationally recognised for his contribution in the area of fatigue management, will oversee this analysis.

The New South Wales Police Force has gained the support of the Police Association of New South Wales (PANSW) on this project, and will work in collaboration with the PANSW during the entirety of the project.

I anticipate that this Auditor General's report will greatly assist the NSW Police Force in its endeavours to improve rostering practices through the work of its recently established Safety Command whilst also ensuring improved service delivery to the people of New South Wales.

(Signed)

A P Scipione APM
Commissioner of Police

Date: 21 November 2007

1. What are flexible rosters and do police use them?

At a glance

> **The key question we wanted to answer was:**
>
> What are flexible rosters and do police use them to flexibly deploy general duties officers?
>
> **Our assessment:**
>
> A flexible roster is one that varies shifts patterns and lengths to optimise policing, efficient resource use and the welfare, health and safety of officers.
>
> In 1995, the NSWPF replaced the traditional eight-hour roster with flexible rosters. Varied shift patterns were meant to meet fluctuations in demand and reduce the impact of shiftwork on officers.
>
> We found aspects of flexible rosters in practice. Some commands vary the start time and length of some shifts. Several commands roster extra officers on busier evenings and overlap shifts to increase capacity.
>
> But there is much inflexibility. Most shifts are 12 hours long, start around the same time and deploy a similar number of officers day and night. Typically, commands roster officers for blocks of four days on duty (two day and two night shifts) followed by four or more days off duty.
>
> Until recently, the NSWPF has not done much to promote flexibility and commands report that it is difficult to change entrenched roster practices. The NSWPF has now developed a roster training package and is introducing a tool to assess how commands manage and deploy officers.
>
> The NSWPF is also reviewing its roster policy and practice to achieve more flexible rosters. The NSWPF plans to complete this review by the end of 2007.

1.1   Background

Police forces have traditionally used a rolling roster of eight-hour shifts to provide 24 hour policing to the public. These rosters deployed similar number of officers at all times. An officer typically worked blocks of days (7 am to 3 pm), afternoons (3 pm to 11 pm) and nights (11 pm to 7 am). The roster included four rest days in a fortnight and seven consecutive night shifts.

In the 1980s, some police forces reviewed traditional rosters as:

- budgetary constraints required more efficient use of resources
- computerisation gave police better information on demand
- the negative impact of night duty on officers was better understood.

As a result, a number of forces moved away from eight-hour block rosters to more flexible arrangements.

Prior to 1995, general duties officers in NSW worked a traditional roster. The NSW Police Force (NSWPF) and the NSW Police Association (the union representing officers) negotiated changes to the Award to establish flexible rosters. The aims of flexible rosters were to provide:

- more police on duty at the times they were needed
- officers with more rest days.

The NSWPF was the first Australian force to introduce flexible rosters.

1.2   What is a flexible roster?

A flexible roster is one that uses a variety of shift patterns and shift lengths to optimise community policing, efficient resource use and officer welfare, health and safety.

Over 80 per cent of a general duties officer's time is spent on patrol, attending calls, following up investigations and supporting victims and witnesses. Officers may also conduct person searches, random breath tests and other tasks while on patrol.

By varying the number of police on duty accordingly to the level of crime and calls for attendance, flexible rosters can improve operational capacity and provide officers with backup when most needed. Police visibility can be optimised by deploying more officers when they can be seen rather than in the early hours of the morning when most people are asleep.

In developing rosters, commands need to consider the various demands and environmental factors that may affect officers' availability.

Exhibit 1: Factors to consider when developing a police roster

| Responding to calls for assistance | Follow-up investigations | Victim support | | Local agreements on minimal staffing levels |

Roster

Training, Court attendance, Visible policing, Events and special operations, Crime levels, Local environment, Officer preference, OH&S, Leave, Award conditions
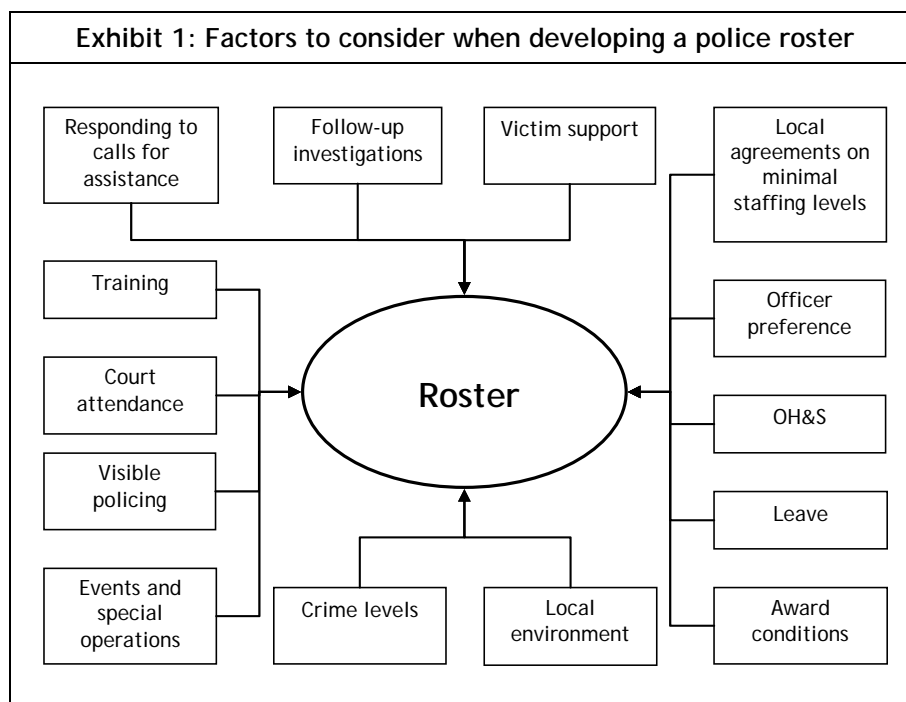
Source: Audit Office research 2007.

The focus of this audit

This audit assesses whether roster arrangements for general duties officers are flexible and benefit the community, officers and the NSWPF itself. We examined NSWPF policy and the practices in four commands. We also surveyed all 80 local area commanders and received 56 responses.

The focus of the audit was to answer the following questions:

- what are flexible rosters and do police have them?
- are the rosters good for the community and victims of crime?
- are the rosters good for officers and the NSWPF?

1.3   Is it NSWPF policy to use flexible rosters?

Our assessment

It is NSWPF policy to use flexible rosters for general duties police.

Flexible rostering since 1995

The NSWPF and the NSW Police Association agreed to adopt flexible rosters in 1995.

The agreement provides for the commander and officers to:

- develop local rosters using shifts varying between six and 12 hours in length
- ensure that rosters meet operational needs, are in the best interest of the NSWPF and do not jeopardise the officers' occupational health and safety.

In addition to the flexible rostering agreement, First Response Policing Agreements (FRPA) were introduced in 1997 to set minimum staffing levels. A local FRPA based on demand is negotiated by the commander and officers at each command.

NSWPF has a framework for measuring demand	Demand is calculated using the number of calls for assistance by hour of the week. On average one car crew (two officers) can attend one call an hour. Local and seasonal factors are also considered when setting the command's minimal staffing levels.

1.4   Do police use flexible rosters?

Our assessment	We expected commands to use flexible rosters to vary the number of officers on duty because demand fluctuates.
	We found aspects of flexibility in the rosters. For example, the Brisbane Water command has a roster that staggers start times and uses some eight hour shifts to better match officer numbers with the number of calls for attendance.
	But we also found a great deal of inflexibility. The majority of general duty shifts across New South Wales are 12-hours, start around the same time and deploy a similar number of officers day and night. Commands typically roster officers for blocks of four or more days on duty.
Fluctuations in the demand for police is largely predictable	Data from the NSWPF and other jurisdictions shows that the demand for police is largely predictable and consistent across commands. That is, the number of calls for police attendance builds during the day, peaks in the evening, drops sharply overnight and is higher on Friday and Saturday and during summer months.
	In the commands we visited, the number of calls for police to attend was at least five times higher on Friday and Saturday nights than in early mornings Monday to Friday. For example, in the 13 weeks to December 2006, the Sutherland command responded to an average of:

- up to one call an hour between 3 am and 7 am Monday to Thursday
- between five and eight calls an hour between 10 pm and 1 am on Friday and Saturday nights.

|	
	Given this, we expected commands to vary the number of officers rostered on duty at different times.
We found some flexibility	However, we found mixed results.
	Some commands stagger the time some shifts start and roster more officers on busy nights. For example, we found:

- Sutherland command rostered four additional officers (two cars) for 8-hours on Friday and Saturday evenings
- the Griffith, Rocks and Lower Hunter commands frequently rostered an additional 12-hour car crew to cover Friday and Saturday nights
- the Rocks and Lower Hunter commands staggered some night shifts.

Greater flexibility in response to demand is possible. For example, the Brisbane Water command uses mostly 12-hour shifts, but varies the number of officers on patrol according to demand. It achieves this by:

GOOD PRACTICE

- staggering the start of night shifts to roster more officers in afternoons and evenings and fewer in the early morning
- including an eight-hour afternoon shift Sunday to Wednesday to avoid overstaffing in the early morning
- rostering fewer officers on Monday nights and more on Friday and Saturday nights
- retaining some extra capacity at night to provide back-up when few other police resources are available.

Exhibit 2: Brisbane Water command general duties roster
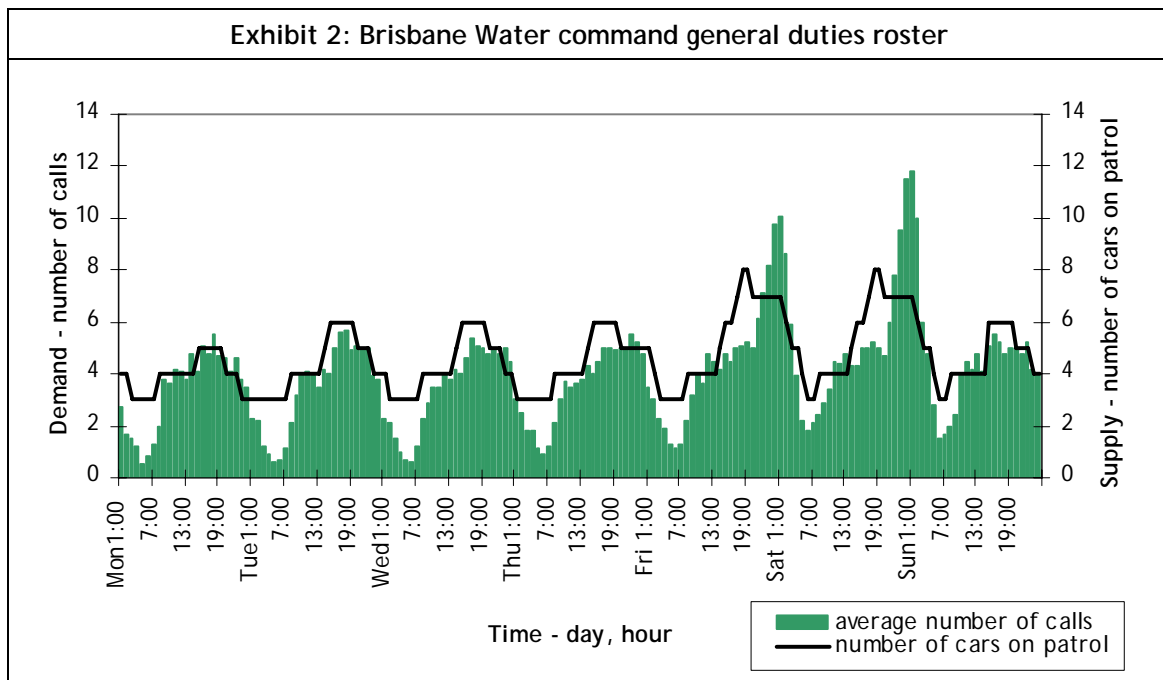
Source: Brisbane Water Local Area Command, July 2007.
Note: On average a car attends one call an hour. Although the Brisbane Water roster makes good use of flexible practices, additional officers may be needed around midnight on Friday and Saturday.

Many rosters are inflexible

But we also found a great deal of inflexibility.

The most common shift length is 12 hours. The four commands we visited use 12-hour shifts for between 86 to 92 per cent of general duties officer shifts. Shorter shifts are used primarily for training, attending court and for officers in smaller rural stations that are not open 24 hours.

Our survey of commanders found similar results. Sixty per cent of respondents indicated that 12-hour shifts made up 85 per cent or more of general duties shifts. This means that on average officers work less than three shorter shifts in a six-week roster period. Five metropolitan commands report they use only 12-hour shifts.

We found only two commands that routinely use some eight-hour shifts to better match officer numbers with demand.

Working hours are arranged inflexibly

We also found that shifts tend to start at either 6 am or 6 pm. Once shifts for court attendance and training are excluded, a similar number of officers are rostered on day and night shifts.

For example, the Sutherland command did not stagger shift start times, although it did roster additional officers on Friday and Saturday nights. For the remainder of the week the same number of officers were rostered on regardless of demand, which resulted in an over and under-supply of officers on duty.

Exhibit 3. Sutherland command general duties roster
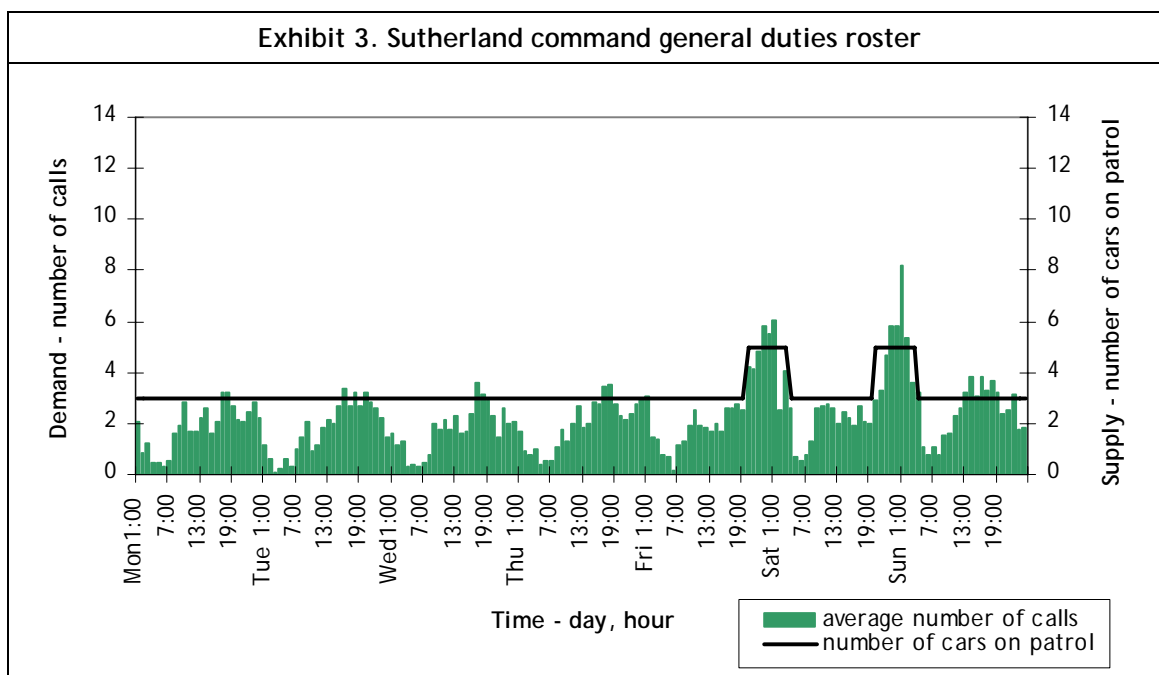
Source: Sutherland Local Area Command. February 2007.

Note: On average a car attends one call an hour. Sutherland subsequently negotiated a new roster that staggers shift start times to better match demand.

Ideally, rosters should minimise the gap between demand and supply particularly during the early hours of the morning (see Exhibit 2 for an example of this).

Over half of the commanders who responded to our survey indicated that rosters did not deploy officers flexibly to meet operational needs. This opinion was more prevalent in large metropolitan commands.

The impact of such rosters on the community and victims is discussed further in Chapter 2.

We found that officers typically work and rest alternate blocks of four or more days. This is not in accordance with the parameters limiting the concentration of working hours agreed between the NSWPF and the NSW Police Association. The impact of such shift patterns on officer welfare is discussed in Chapter 3.

Exhibit 4: A typical 12-hour block roster							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Officer 1	12 h	12 h	12 h	12 h	Rest	Rest	Rest
Officer 2	12 h	12 h	12 h	12 h	Rest	Rest	Rest
Officer 3	Rest	Rest	12 h	12 h	12 h	12 h	Rest
Officer 4	Rest	Rest	12 h	12 h	12 h	12 h	Rest
Officer 5	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	12 h	12 h	12 h
Officer 6	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	12 h	12 h	12 h
Officer 7	12 h	12 h	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	12 h
Officer 8	12 h	12 h	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	12 h

Day shift 6.00 to 18.30	Night shift 18.00 to 6.30	Rest day

Source: Audit Office research 2007.

1.5 What does the NSWPF do to promote flexible rosters?

Our assessment

The NSWPF released parameters for flexible rostering in 1995 and the FRPA for minimal staffing levels in 1997. But since then the NSWPF has not done much to promote flexible rostering in practice.

The NSWPF requires commands to review data on demand and adjust their rosters where appropriate. This should occur at least once a year. Although commands routinely review data on calls for attendance and crime rates, they reported difficulty in getting officers to agree to changes to the roster.

The NSWPF do not routinely monitor or review roster arrangements across the 80 commands. And commands have no criteria or tools to evaluate rosters which would provide an objective basis for negotiating changes to the roster with officers.

The NSWPF is currently reviewing flexible roster policy and report that this work will be completed in 2007.

Commands find it difficult to renegotiate rosters

All of the commands we visited had routinely reviewed data on calls for attendance. We found evidence that commands had sought to introduce more shifts of shorter length and staggered start times so that the number of officers on duty varied in response to demand.

The commanders reported that they were not always successful in reaching agreement with officers who wanted to continue working a 12-hour block roster. The Award provides that the existing roster must be maintained when the commander and officers do not agree on changes.

When we visited, three of the four commands had not revised their staffing levels in the last 12 months, as required by the NSWPF. One did not have a FRPA in place setting minimum staffing levels and two were using rosters negotiated in 2003 and 2004 (one of these has since renegotiated its roster to include staggered shifts).

Over 60 per cent of commands that responded to our survey had not reviewed their FRPA staffing levels in the last 12 months.

Commands need support to change practice

The NSWPF acknowledges that it can be a challenge for commanders to change rosters that have become entrenched over 13 years and that commanders may need additional support to bring about change.

Victoria Police, which is currently reforming its general duties rosters, helps its commands to:

- identify and train staff in roster best practice
- train commanders and officers to identify and manage fatigue
- pilot new rosters to demonstrate their effectiveness
- resolve disputes over rosters.

The NSWPF does not evaluate the rosters in use

The command is responsible for developing a roster that is appropriate for policing its local community. As a result, the quality of the roster relies heavily on the skills and ability of people within the command.

The NSWPF reviews the performance of commands in regard to crime levels, overall response times, complaints, officer welfare and expenditure but does not routinely use this information to review rosters.

Unlike other jurisdictions, the NSWPF does not have criteria or tools to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the rosters in use. For example, UK commands have a framework for evaluating rosters which helps commands balance a number of objectives when building a roster.

GOOD PRACTICE

Exhibit 5: The UK framework for evaluating rosters	
Does the roster match the number of officers to demand? - Is the number of officers rostered on duty sufficient to respond to urgent calls? - Does it include patrols to improve police visibility?	**Does the roster manage officer welfare appropriately?** - Does it meet occupational health and welfare legislation and good practice? - Are the fatigue levels of different shift patterns within an acceptable range?
Is the roster manageable? - Is it overly complex? - What is the impact on officer satisfaction, retention, absence, overtime, etc?	**How does the roster affect others?** - Does it allow sufficient time for case management and support for victims and witnesses? - Are officers available for court, training programs etc?

Source: Adapted from UK Home Office study of police resource and rostering arrangements 2004.

In October 2007, the NSWPF developed a training program for roster officers and a tool to assess how commands manage and deploy officers. The NSWPF is also reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of flexible rosters in terms of:

- meeting local FRPAs
- deploying police at times of most need
- meeting the reasonable amenity of officers
- the effect of roster patterns on officer fatigue, health, welfare and safety.

The purpose of the review is to:

- simplify the parameters for flexible rostering
- encourage commands to develop rosters that better support operational policing through a variety of shift patterns
- encourage commanders to regularly review rosters
- develop objective criteria to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of rosters.

Recommendation   We recommend that the NSWPF by July 2008:

- complete its review of rosters and develop a set of best practice roster principles to guide commands
- provide commands with a methodology to assess local rosters against these principles and identify gaps
- support commands in their negotiations with officers to change rosters to meet best practice principles.

We recommend that by July 2009, the NSWPF should have rosters in place that are consistent with best practice principles.

## 2.	Are rosters good for the community and victims?

At a glance	**The key question we wanted to answer was:**
	Are current rosters good for the community and victims of crime?
	Our assessment:
	Effective rosters should help officers respond rapidly to calls, manage cases and support victims. The rosters used by NSWPF do not always do this.
	The number of urgent calls for assistance has increased by 33 per cent over the last four years to more than 110,000 calls. In 2006-07, police attended 80 per cent of these calls within 12 minutes 25 seconds, failing to meet its target response time of 80 per cent within 10 minutes.
	Many variables affect response times. Rosters are one of these variables yet commands do not review response time to identify if the roster contributes to delays. Nor do they use response time performance as a test of whether the roster is efficient and effective.
	The current block roster gives officers only two day shifts every eight days. These day shifts are the most effective time for following up victims, witnesses, and other police who work standard (non-shift) hours. The limited opportunity for follow-up under the current roster may affect the timeliness of investigation and victim support.
	The NSWPF has procedures in place for case management and victim support and has set minimum standards for the review of open cases. Even so, compliance with these standards is variable. Over 25 per cent of complaints to police were about customer service in 2006-07, compared to 15 per cent in 2002-03. Common complaints were that it was difficult to contact the officer handling their case and that calls were not returned.
	Of the commanders we surveyed:
	▪ 70 per cent said current rosters did not support the continuity of investigation. This rose to 86 per cent for commanders whose officers predominantly worked 12-hour block rosters
	▪ 66 per cent said current rosters did not enable officers to manage their caseloads effectively
	▪ 70 per cent said the rosters did not facilitate victim support.

2.1 Do the rosters support a timely response?

Our assessment

Between 2002-03 and 2006-07 the number of urgent calls rose by one third. On average, police now take 27 seconds longer to attend a call than they did four years ago. Officers attend 80 per cent of urgent calls within 12 and a half minutes, outside NSWPF's target of 10 minutes.

Rosters determine the number of officers available and will affect the time taken to attend a call. Commands do not consider response times when reviewing rosters to judge if the roster is efficient and effective.

NSWPF is not meeting response targets

There were nearly one million calls for police assistance in 2006-07. Over 110,000 of these calls were for urgent attendance. The proportion of urgent calls increased from nine to 11 per cent in the last four years.

Exhibit 6: Urgent calls for attendance statewide
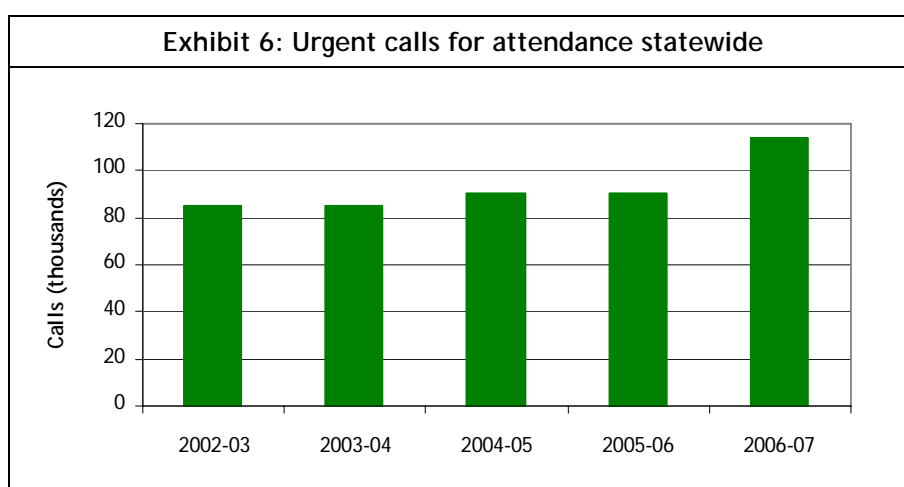
Source: NSWPF 2007.

The average time taken across New South Wales to attend 80 per cent of urgent calls rose by nearly four per cent since 2002-03 to over 12 minutes in 2006-07. The target is ten minutes.

Exhibit 7: Statewide response time for urgent calls
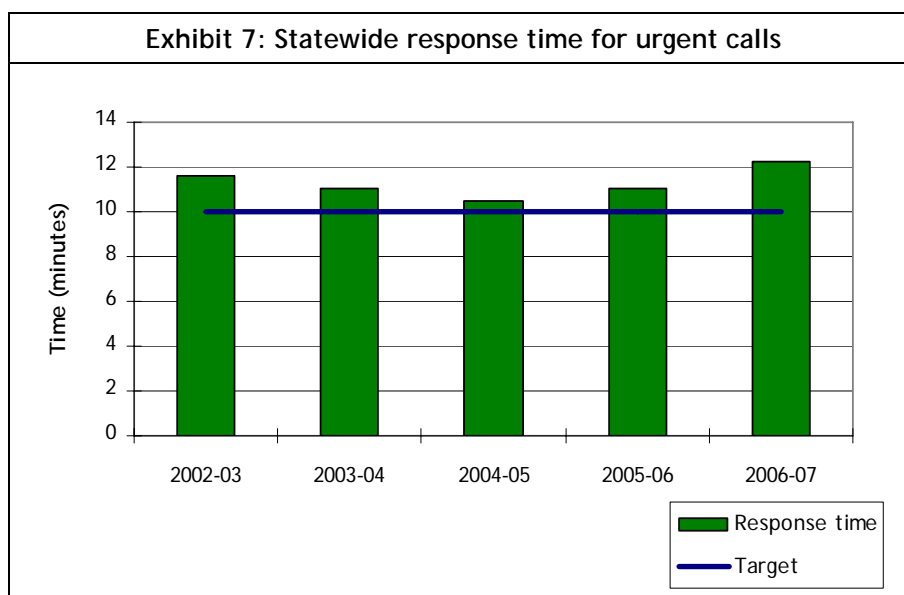
Source: NSWPF 2007.

The number of non-urgent calls increased by around 31,000 (over three per cent) and the average time taken to attend to 80 per cent of these calls rose from 51 to 64 minutes. The target for attending non-urgent calls is 60 minutes.

Commands monitor response times against targets that are specific to local conditions. These targets are adjusted to take account of local conditions such as population, access and the location of crime hot spots. For example, the Lower Hunter command is 7,000 square kilometres with high levels of crime. The target response time for urgent calls is 16 minutes while the Rocks command, which occupies five square kilometres, has a target of 7:21 minutes.

Exhibit 8: Response times for urgent calls- April to June 2007		
Command	Average response time (minutes:seconds)*	Target (minutes:seconds)*
The Rocks	8:06	7:21
Sutherland	12:48	9:30
Griffith	10:37	13:00
Lower Hunter	19:06	16:00
NSW	12:25	10:00

Source: NSWPF 2007.
Note: * time to respond to 80 per cent of urgent calls.

Three of the four commands we visited were not meeting their response time targets for the period.

Police should use response times to test rosters

Response times are affected by a number of variables including the availability of officers as determined by the roster. Some emergency services and police forces review responsiveness at different times of the day and week to identify when performance is poor so that the problems can be addressed.

The commands reported that response times were worse when demand peaked and when shifts changed over. However, none of the commands we visited reviewed response time patterns to isolate the factors affecting performance and to see if the roster was a contributor.

Recommendation

We recommend that the NSWPF require commands, as part of its best practice roster principles, to review patterns of response times to better meet the demand for police.

Practices around shift changeover affect response time

Practices around shift changeovers impact on response time. In two of the commands we visited, shifts started and finished at the same time. Thirty percent of the commands that responded to the survey also indicated that this practice was in place.

One commander commented that:

> ...the lack of staggered shifts results in service delivery gaps in the changeover period during the last hour of a shift and the first hour of the oncoming shift. During this time, the finishing shift tends to be in the station completing their paperwork and COPS events [in the NSWPF database] to enable them to complete duty on time. There is a marked reluctance to attend any jobs with the exception of urgent jobs during this period. Conversely, the oncoming shift has equipment to sign out, briefings to attend etc and similarly tends to be in the station during the first hour of the shift unless attending to urgent jobs.

Recommendation We recommend that NSWPF include, in its best practice roster principles, a requirement for commands to use different shift lengths and stagger start times to better meet the demand for police.

2.2 Do the rosters support case management and victim follow-up?

Our assessment The current rosters limit the effective time officers have to follow-up cases and victims. Police officers working twelve hour blocks can be difficult to contact.

Officers typically work two day shifts in an eight day period. On the other six days they are either on night shift or on days off.

While the NSWPF has procedures and minimum standards for case management and victim support, compliance is variable.

Some police forces use rosters that take into account the need for officers to follow-up cases, victims and witnesses during normal business hours.

Officers have limited time to follow-up cases and victims Commands generally roster the same number of officers to work on either the day or the night shift. Officers on this roster typically work two day shifts and two night shifts every eight days.

The two day shifts provide the most opportunity to contact victims, witnesses, detectives, other police and other agencies if this is needed to progress an investigation.

The night shift has limitations for follow-up. In the evening, officers are busy attending calls. And late at night, when demand drops, it is not always convenient to contact victims, witnesses and others.

Police have procedures to manage cases The NSWPF has procedures and systems in place for case management. Officers are required to record incidents in the COPS database before going off duty, contact victims within seven days of the crime being reported and review open cases every 28 days. A panel of supervisors and senior investigators monitor compliance with these procedures and review cases that have had no action taken in the preceding 28 days.

At the commands we visited, we found that officers had not always:

- recorded incidents in COPS before the end of their shift. This can delay the investigation until the officer returns to duty and completes the record. In addition, a victim or a witness may have to wait until the officer returns to duty to get information about their matter
- reviewed open cases within 28 days. In one of the commands we visited, 137 open cases (22 per cent) had not been reviewed after 28-days.

In general, serious matters, particularly crimes involving violence are dealt with promptly. However, commanders reported that the time off between day shifts on a 12-hour roster can cause delay, and may affect the quality of investigations and make it difficult for victims and witnesses to contact the investigating officer.

In the commands we visited the average period between day shifts (excluding leave) was over seven days. And we found gaps of up to 20 days when officers had more rest days and worked more night shifts.

Of the commanders we surveyed:

- 70 per cent thought current rosters did not support the continuity of investigation. This rose to 86 per cent for commanders whose officers predominantly worked 12-hour block rosters
- 66 per cent said current rosters did not enable officers to manage their caseloads effectively
- 70 per cent said the rosters did not facilitate victim support.

GOOD PRACTICE

Exhibit 9: Improving the quality of investigations through the roster
The Northern Ireland Police changed the rosters for general duties police from 12-hour block rosters to variable rosters earlier this year.
The variable roster is made up of: - shifts of different lengths   - staggered shift start and finishing times   - more shifts starting in the afternoon so that officers have time to contact victims, witnesses or other police units or other agencies during business hours while also being available to respond to the peak evening demand.   One of the main reasons for the change was to improve service delivery and the quality of investigation. Officers now have more hours when they can effectively follow-up forensics, interview witnesses and keep victims informed of progress.

Source: Northern Ireland Police 2007.

A common complaint is that it is hard to contact officers

Complaints data suggest that police have problems managing cases and supporting victims and witnesses of crimes and these may be compounded by the current roster. Over 25 per cent of complaints to police were about customer service in 2006-07, compared to 15 per cent in 2002-03. Common complaints were that it was difficult to contact the officer handling their case and that calls were not returned.

The NSWPF is working to improve its analysis of complaints and is trialling a new case management system that prioritises cases and prompts follow-up, review and victim contact according to the risk profile of the case.

The NSWPF acknowledges that rosters need to provide officers with greater opportunity to follow-up investigations during customer friendly times. This has been achieved in some commands, such as Brisbane Water, where rosters provide officers with more hours in the afternoon and include some dedicated shifts for managing on-going cases (see Exhibit 2).

The NSWPF advised us that its current review will examine the impact of rosters on case management and the follow-up of victims and witnesses.

Recommendation We recommend that the NSWPF require commands, as part of the best practice roster principles, to:
- provide officers sufficient opportunity to follow-up investigations, witnesses and victims at customer-friendly times
- review the roster's ability to support the needs of the community and victims by monitoring such indicators as complaints, community satisfaction and the timeliness of case follow-up.

3. Are the rosters good for officers and the NSWPF?

At a glance	**The key question we wanted to answer was:**
	Are current rosters good for officers and the NSWPF?
	Our assessment:
	A good roster meets the operational needs of the business, minimises the risks of shiftwork to staff and allows employees to balance their work and private lives.
	The 12-hour block roster is popular with general duties police. It provides more time off and by concentrating working hours allows officers to have longer breaks from work. Officers report that these rest periods allow them to recover from the stresses associated with policing.
	Yet rosters can negatively affect employee health and welfare and there are specific risks associated with shift work that need to be managed.
	NSWPF officers take more sick and injury leave than officers in forces that have different roster arrangements. The NSWPF is currently analysing how its rosters affect officer welfare.
	The NSWPF does not have a fatigue management policy, but it has parameters that limit the number of 12-hour shifts worked to three shifts in a week. These parameters are not adhered to. Officers typically work four 12-hour shifts in four days and we found some officers working six 12-hour shifts in seven days.
	Fatigue may be reduced by the long rest periods between shifts but this also makes it easier for officers to have a second job. If this happens, then the opportunity for rest may be lost. One in ten police officers has approval to work a second job but others may work without approval on their rest days.
	The NSWPF does not provide guidance to commands assessing requests for secondary employment in terms of fatigue management. There is no limit on the maximum hours that can be worked. We found one case where an officer had approval to work at a mine for up to 30 hours a week on his rest days.
	The NSWPF is currently reviewing the impact of rosters on officer health and welfare and is developing a fatigue management policy.

3.1   Are the rosters good for officers?

Our assessment   The current roster is popular with officers because it can concentrate working hours allowing longer blocks of time off-duty. Officers report that this provides them adequate rest to recover from the stresses of policing.

Even though these shift patterns are preferred by officers, it does not diminish the NSWPF's responsibility to manage and minimise the impact of shiftwork on officer health and welfare.

The NSWPF parameters limit the number of 12-hour shifts that can be worked to three shifts in a week, but this is not adhered to. Officers typically work four 12-hour shifts in four days. We found some officers worked 72 hours (six shifts) in seven days.

The current roster provides longer blocks of time off-duty   When the NSWPF introduced flexible rostering in 1995, it recognised that policing is a stressful job and anticipated that officers would benefit by having more days free of work.

Under the Award, officers get a minimum of 15 days off in a six week (42 day) roster period. Officers working only 12-hour shifts get 23 days off in a six week period.

In commands we visited, officers reported that they liked the current roster because, by concentrating working hours, they could get longer blocks of time off-duty. Officers said that the 12-hour block roster helps them balance work and family life and allows them to recover from the stresses of policing. These shift patterns also allow them to live further away from where they are stationed and to reduce their travel costs by travelling to work less often.

These findings are consistent with the NSW Police Association's survey of 400 officers working 12-hour shifts. These officers also strongly support the existing arrangements.

OH&S requires employers to manage shift-work hazards   Even though these shift patterns are preferred by officers, it does not diminish the NSWPF's responsibility to manage the risks to officer health and welfare associated with shiftwork.

Shift work can disrupt sleep and cause fatigue. Fatigue impairs decision-making and reaction time and increases the risk of accidents. Over time fatigue also increases an employee's risk of developing gastrointestinal and cardiovascular disease and psychological illnesses such as depression and stress.

It is essential that rosters allow employees adequate rest. The NSW WorkCover Authority recommends that rosters limit the concentration of working hours, minimise night work and consecutive night shifts and allow for sufficient rest. Employers are encouraged to develop guidelines to address the risks specific to the work performed.

The seven consecutive eight-hour night shifts worked by officers before 1995 were not considered to be in the best interest of officers. The introduction of flexible rosters was meant to ensure that officers had more opportunity for rest. The NSWPF and the Police Association agreed on parameters for flexible rosters based on the NSW WorkCover Authority recommendations.

The parameters seek to minimise the risk to officers arising from shiftwork by limiting the extent that working hours could be concentrated. The parameters restrict the number of 12-hour shifts that can be worked. But we found that the rosters in use do not comply with all of these parameters.

Exhibit 10: NSWPF roster parameters		
Shift pattern	**Parameter**	**What we found**
Number of 12 hour shifts in a week	No more than three*	Usually four but up to six
Number of consecutive night shifts	No more than two	Usually two but up to four
Free weekends	At least one in four	Nearly two in four
Overtime	Minimal	Minimal
Break between shifts	At least eight hours	Usually 11.5 hours excluding overtime

Source: NSWPF and audit fieldwork 2007.

Note: * Except for one week in six when four 12-hour shifts can be worked. This allows an average 38 hour week to be maintained.

The parameters are not followed by commands

The four commands we visited, as well as over 90 per cent of the commands we surveyed, used 12-hour block rosters that are made up of at least two day shifts, followed by two night shifts, followed by four or more days off.

The 12-hour block rosters, in part because of their popularity with officers, have become entrenched practice in most commands. However, these rosters do not comply with the existing parameters that no more than three 12-hour shifts should be worked in a week.

The risk of fatigue to officer may be heightened when working hours are further concentrated. In two of the commands we visited, some officers had worked:
- five consecutive 12-hour shifts
- four consecutive 12-hour night shifts
- six 12-hour shifts in seven days.

And in response to the survey, one commander commented:

> Most blocks by choice of the officer are five to six [12-hour] shifts in a row followed by five to eight days off work. By working a straight block which could be 60 hours plus can lead to OH&S issues.

Recommendation   We recommend that the NSWPF ensure commands comply with the current roster parameters regarding the number of 12-hour shifts that officers can work. We also recommend that by July 2008, the NSWPF review the parameters and develop best practice principles that are consistent with contemporary practices for managing the risks to the health and welfare of officers arising from shiftwork.

3.2   Do the rosters help manage fatigue?

Our assessment   The NSWPF has parameters for flexible rostering and is currently reviewing the impact of rosters on officer health and safety.

But to date the NSWPF has not done much to help commands manage fatigue. There is no specific fatigue management policy. Under the current roster, an officer's opportunity to rest may be limited by the concentration of shifts, commuting and secondary employment.

The NSWPF is currently developing a fatigue management policy that aims to address these risks.

NSWPF does not have a fatigue management policy   Contemporary practices around managing the risks to employees' health and welfare arising from shiftwork generally focus on fatigue management. Although the NSWPF has parameters for rosters that are supposed to guide practices in commands, the NSWPF does not yet have a specific fatigue management policy.

Commuting and secondary employment can reduce the opportunity to rest   Fatigue can be reduced by rest and sleep. Twelve-hour shifts provided more rest days and when the shifts are worked in blocks officers get longer breaks away from work.

The long breaks make it easier for officers to live further away from where they are stationed. During our visits, commanders expressed concern about the fatigue and safety of officers who had worked a block of 12-hour shifts and had to drive significant distances home.

These long breaks also make it easier for officers to take on a second job. In response to our survey, 86 per cent of commanders indicated that the 12-hour block roster encouraged officers to have a second job.

The NSWPF has a policy that requires officers to seek approval to work a second job. The policy focuses on addressing risks arising from secondary employment such as allegations of corrupt conduct, potential conflict of interest and impacts on policing duties.

One in ten police officers (over 1,300) had approval to work a second job in December 2006. The commands we visited had approved secondary employment for between seven and 17 per cent of general duties officers and the surveyed commands reported that up to 50 per cent of officers had approval to work when off duty.

There is a risk that officers work second jobs without proper approval. One of the commands we visited managed this risk by requiring officers, who did not have approved secondary employment, to declare that they do not work while off-duty. This was introduced after an officer died while working at an unapproved second job.

During the course of this audit, the NSWPF has requested all commands to adopt this procedure. The NSWPF reports that it has also:

- trained commanders in managing secondary employment
- commenced an audit of secondary employment records.

The policy on secondary employment is silent on how much rest an officer needs between the second job and starting a shift. And the policy does not set a maximum number of hours that can be worked in a second job.

We found commands had approved some secondary employment where the officer had not indicated how many hours were involved. In one case, we noted that an officer was approved to work 30 hours a week in the mining industry.

The NSWPF acknowledges that it needs to do more to ensure the safety and welfare of its staff.

GOOD PRACTICE

Exhibit 11: Best practice principles for managing fatigue
Other industries and police in other jurisdictions have developed a number of principles to guide the development of rosters to make sure that rosters protect the health safety and welfare of employees. Some of the principles relevant to NSWPF are: - reviewing the need for night work and reduce it where operationally possible. For example, having fewer officers on duty after 2.00 am   - minimising the number of consecutive shifts that are long (greater than nine hours) or at night   - limiting the amount of driving done on long shifts   - using quantitative fatigue indices to assess whether some shift patterns are riskier than others   - managing fatigue caused by external factors, such as travelling time and secondary employment   - training staff to identify and manage their own fatigue   - improving officer safety by increasing the number of officers available to provide back-up when needed.

Source: Audit Office research 2007.

In 2006, the NSWPF established the Safety Command to improve the management of officer health, safety and injury. The Safety Command is currently reviewing rosters, fatigue management and the impact of shift arrangements on sick leave, injury and workplace safety. The NSWPF reports that it will complete the first phase of this project by December 2007.

Recommendation   We recommend that by July 2008 the NSWPF introduce a fatigue management policy that meets best practice principles and includes:

- training for commanders and officers in how to identify and manage fatigue
- a minimum amount of rest taken before resuming duty.

3.3 Do the rosters help NSWPF meet organisational needs?

Our assessment   The popularity of the current roster with officers is reportedly helping to attract and retain general duties police. However, commanders report that general duties officers are reluctant to move to specialist units that do not use 12-hour rosters.
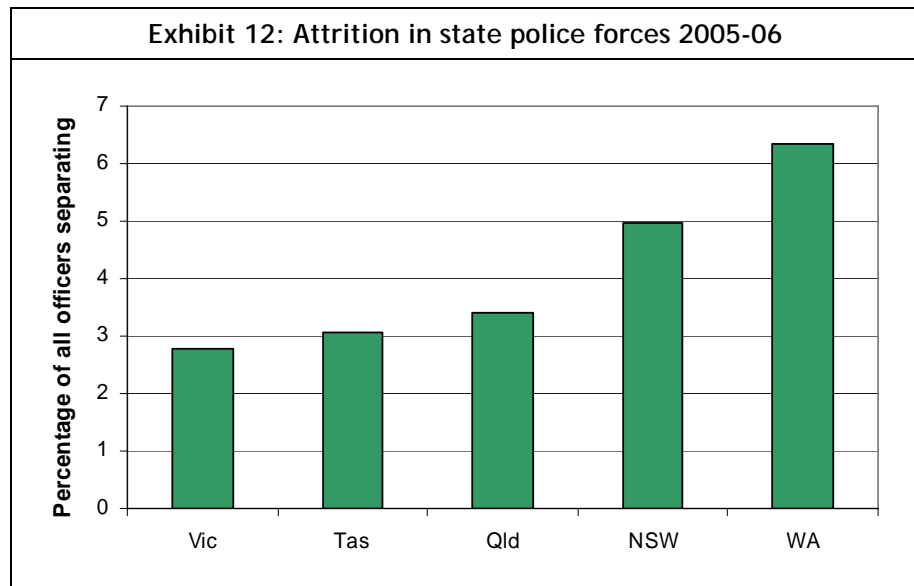
Rosters can also negatively impact on the health and welfare of officers and subsequently, the amount of sick and injury leave taken. The NSWPF is yet to assess what impacts its rosters have on officers, however, the indicators are not good. Officers in the NSWPF take more leave due to sickness and injury than police in other states that have different roster arrangements in place.

Roster may help to attract officers   A good roster can influence the health and welfare of employees as well as help an organisation to attract and retain staff.

Almost forty per cent of commanders responding to our survey said the current roster helped attract general duties police. This view was shared by the NSWPF executive who reported that local recruitment campaigns have successfully attracted sufficient applicants while police forces in some states have had to go overseas to recruit officers.

According to the NSW Police Association, 12-hour shifts are an important and popular working condition and officers would consider leaving general duties policing if there were no 12-hour shifts.

However, the attrition rate for NSWPF officers is higher than the national average of around four per cent.

Exhibit 12: Attrition in state police forces 2005-06

A bar chart showing "Percentage of all officers separating" on the vertical axis (0 to 7) for five states:

State	Percentage
Vic	~2.8
Tas	~3.05
Qld	~3.4
NSW	~5.0
WA	~6.35

Source: Police Agencies HR Benchmarking Report 2007
Note: South Australia did not participate in this study.

Commanders also reported that general duties officers were reluctant to transfer to specialist areas that did not work 12-hour shifts. Three of the four commands we visited had vacant detective positions that would normally be filled by general duties applicants.

The NSWPF has not assessed the impact of rosters

As discussed above, shift-workers show more signs of ill health than people on fixed day work and they are more prone to fatigue which can impair judgement and slow response times. Consequently, the rosters used to organise shift work can affect the amount of sick and injury leave taken.

Most of the commanders who responded to our survey believe that 12-hour shifts fatigue officers and increase the amount of sick leave taken.

In 2005-06, NSWPF officers took an average of 121 hours sick and injury leave. This was over 50 per cent higher than the 79 hours which was the average leave taken by officers in Australian state forces. The other police forces do not use 12-hour shifts to the extent that the NSWPF does.

Exhibit 13: Sick and injury leave per police officer 2005-06

Source: Police Agencies HR Benchmarking Report 2007.

Note: South Australia did not participate in this study.

* The NSWPF advises that its:
  ▪ benchmarking data was inflated by eight hours of carers and other leave
  ▪ relatively high level of sick and injury leave is partly due to the compensation and superannuation entitlements unique to police in New South Wales.

The NSWPF advised the audit team that it has reduced the amount of reported sick leave by 18 per cent in 2006-07 by improving the management of sick and injured staff and the recording of leave.

The NSWPF is currently analysing the impact of its rosters on officer welfare, sickness and injury.

There has also been an increase in the number of medical retirements in New South Wales that warrants investigation.

Good rosters can be cost effective

Rosters can help commands reduce costs by the well planned allocation of resources.

For example, a well balanced roster can reduce the need for calling officers in on their rest days to work overtime to cover absences caused by sick leave, court attendance, training and other duties.

Some shift patterns are more expensive than others. Shifts that start between 6 am and 10 am do not attract a penalty allowance. All other shifts do.

Overtime has halved over the last three years yet rosters have remained the same

We found that commands had halved overtime expenditure over the last three years to $8.5 million in 2005-06. Shift penalties have remained reasonably constant at around $21 million.

It is difficult to attribute these savings to the rosters. The commands we visited and the respondents to our survey indicated that their rosters had been in place for some time. The cost savings must be due to some other variable or changes in practice.

Annual leave liability is a concern but can not be attributed to the roster

There is also concern around the amount of recreation leave owed to NSWPF employees. This has increased by 88 per cent over the last four years to 4.7 million hours and represents a significant debt. The NSWPF report that it is working to reduce this liability by 2008.

There has been some public comment that the leave liability is due, in part, to the 12-hour block roster because officers with more rest days have less need to use recreation leave.

However, in the commands we visited officers who worked under different roster arrangements were more likely to have excessive leave balances than general duties officers working a 12-hour roster.

Recommendation

We recommend that the NSWPF include, in the best practice roster principles, a requirement for commands to monitor the effect of rosters on such organisational indicators as retention, injury and sick leave, overtime, shift penalties and annual leave.

Appendices

Appendix 1   About the audit

Audit objective   The audit's objective is to assess whether current rostering arrangements (including the use of 12-hour shifts) support efficient and effective policing.

Lines of inquiry   In reaching our opinion against the audit objective, we sought to answer the following questions:

1. do current rostering arrangements provide for the flexible deployment of officers?

2. do the current rostering arrangements help police meet the needs of the community and victims of crime?

3. what impact have current rostering arrangements had on officers and the NSWPF?

Audit focus   The audit focused on rostering arrangements for general duties officers. General duties officers provide first response policing, have the most contact with the public and make up around 50 per cent of all sworn staff.

Audit criteria   In answering the lines of inquiry, we used the following audit criteria (the 'what should be') to judge performance. We based these standards on our research of current thinking and guidance on better practice. They were discussed and agreed with NSWPF during the planning phase.

For line of inquiry 1, we assessed whether:
- roster arrangements reflect current policy
- rostering arrangements support the flexible deployment of officers
- rostering could be improved.

For line of inquiry 2, we assessed whether:
- rosters support customer service and responsiveness?
- rostering arrangements support continuity of case handling and care for victims and witnesses.

For line of inquiry 3, we assessed whether:
- rosters are consistent with OH&S legislation and good practice
- rates of satisfaction, attrition, sick leave, injury and secondary employment changed
- expenditure on overtime and shift penalties and the provision for recreation and long service leave changed.

Audit exclusions   The audit did not examine:
- the rosters of non-general duties officers
- the determination and allocation of officer strength
- whether planned staffing levels were maintained and the impact of absences
- the tasking of police
- rostering software and applications.

Audit approach   We acquired subject matter expertise by:
- conducting structured interviews with executives and staff responsible for HR strategies and employee policies, rostering polices and procedures, managing general duties officers
- reviewing NSWPF data and documents including policies and procedures, plans, reports and budgets, rosters and demand data, performance data
- engaging Orima Research to survey all 80 Local Area Commanders about rosters. Orima achieved a 70 per cent response rate and analysed the results
- interviewing officers and reviewing evidence at four commands (the Rocks, and Sutherland in Sydney, and the Lower Hunter and Griffith in country NSW). We spent three days at each LAC
- meeting with, and reviewing a submission from, the Police Association of New South Wales
- interviewing selected officers at another three commands
- reviewing literature and practices in other jurisdictions. In particular, we visited Victoria Police and corresponded with Northern Ireland Police.

Audit selection   We use a strategic approach to selecting performance audits which balances our performance audit program to reflect issues of interest to Parliament and the community. Details of our approach to selecting topics and our forward program are available on our website.

Audit methodology   Our performance audit methodology is designed to satisfy Australian Audit Standards AUS 806 and 808 on performance auditing, and to reflect current thinking on performance auditing practices. We produce our audits under a quality management system certified to International Standard ISO 9001. Our processes have also been designed to comply with the auditing requirements specified in the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*.

Acknowledgements   We gratefully acknowledge the co-operation and assistance provided by the NSW Police Force. In particular, we wish to thank Inspector Chris Goddard, and the commanders and officers who participated in interviews and assisted the team by providing material relevant to the audit.

Audit team   Our team leader for this performance audit was Michael Johnston, who was assisted by Bettina Ocias. Jane Tebbatt and Rod Longford provided direction and quality assurance.

Audit cost   Including staff costs, printing costs and overheads the estimated cost of the audit is $400,000.

Appendix 2   Glossary

Block roster

Pattern of consecutive shifts with starting and finishing at set times, for example at 6 am and 6 pm.

COPS

Computerised Operational Policing System.

Deployment

To place police officers in readiness for action.

Flexible roster

A roster that has a variety of shifts lengths and start times.

FRPA

First Response Policing Agreement.

General duties officers

Police officers who are the first point of contact between the public and the NSW Police Force. They work in Local Area Commands.

LAC

The Local Area Command is the basic organisational unit for local operational policing.

NSWPF

NSW Police Force.

Response time

Time taken to attend calls for assistance. It is a major performance measure contributing to the objectives of: a high level of public trust and confidence; reduced crime and violence; improved public safety; and improved work practices.
The NSWPF measure response time as the average time taken to respond to 80 per cent of calls.

Safety Command

A command of NSWPF that is responsible for developing and implementing safety systems in accordance with legislative requirements to improve safety performance throughout all areas of operation.

Staggered shifts

Shifts that start at different times. This avoids a single changeover time when officers finishing and starting shifts are all at the station.

Performance audits by the
Audit Office of New South Wales

Performance Auditing

What are performance audits?

Performance audits determine whether an agency is carrying out its activities effectively, and doing so economically and efficiently and in compliance with all relevant laws.

Performance audits may review a government program, all or part of a government agency or consider particular issues which affect the whole public sector.

Where appropriate, performance audits make recommendations for improvements.

If you wish to find out what performance audits are currently in progress, visit our website at www.audit.nsw.gov.au.

Why do we conduct performance audits?

Performance audits provide independent assurance to Parliament and the public that government funds are being spent efficiently and effectively, and in accordance with the law.

Performance audits seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government agencies so that the community receives value for money from government services.

Performance audits also assist the accountability process by holding managers to account for agency performance.

What are the phases in performance auditing?

Performance audits have three key phases: planning, fieldwork and report writing.

During the planning phase, the audit team will develop audit criteria and define the audit field work.

At the completion of field work we will meet with agency management to discuss all significant matters arising out of the audit. Following this, we will prepare a draft performance audit report.

We meet with agency management to check that facts presented in the report are accurate and that recommendations are practical and appropriate. Following this, a formal draft report is provided to the CEO for comment. The relevant Minister is also provided with a copy of the final report. The final report, which is tabled in Parliament, includes any comment made by the CEO on the conclusion and the recommendations of the audit.

Depending on the scope, performance audits can take several months to complete.

Copies of our performance audit reports can be obtained from our website or by contacting our Office.

How do we measure an agency's performance?

During the planning phase, the team develops the audit criteria. These are standards of performance against which the agency or program is assessed. Criteria may be based on best practice, government targets, benchmarks, or published guidelines.

Do we check to see if recommendations have been implemented?

Every few years we conduct a follow-up audit. These follow-up audits look at the extent to which action has been taken to address issues or recommendations agreed to in an earlier performance audit.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) may also conduct reviews or hold inquiries into matters raised in performance audit reports. Agencies are also requested to report actions taken against each recommendation in their annual report.

Who audits the auditors?

Our performance audits are subject to internal and external quality reviews against relevant Australian and international standards. This includes ongoing independent certification of our ISO 9001 quality management system.

The PAC is also responsible for overseeing the activities of the Audit Office and conducts a review of our operations every three years.

Who pays for performance audits?

No fee is charged for performance audits. Our performance audit services are funded by the NSW Parliament and from internal sources.

Further information

Further information can be obtained from our website www.audit.nsw.gov.au or by contacting us on 9275 7277.

Performance Audit Reports

No	Agency or Issues Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
91	University of New South Wales	*Educational Testing Centre*	21 November 2001
92	Department of Urban Affairs and Planning	*Environmental Impact Assessment of Major Projects*	28 November 2001
93	Department of Information Technology and Management	*Government Property Register*	31 January 2002
94	State Debt Recovery Office	*Collecting Outstanding Fines and Penalties*	17 April 2002
95	Roads and Traffic Authority	*Managing Environmental Issues*	29 April 2002
96	NSW Agriculture	*Managing Animal Disease Emergencies*	8 May 2002
97	State Transit Authority Department of Transport	*Bus Maintenance and Bus Contracts*	29 May 2002
98	Risk Management	*Managing Risk in the NSW Public Sector*	19 June 2002
99	E-Government	*User-friendliness of Websites*	26 June 2002
100	NSW Police Department of Corrective Services	*Managing Sick Leave*	23 July 2002
101	Department of Land and Water Conservation	*Regulating the Clearing of Native Vegetation*	20 August 2002
102	E-government	*Electronic Procurement of Hospital Supplies*	25 September 2002
103	NSW Public Sector	*Outsourcing Information Technology*	23 October 2002
104	Ministry for the Arts Department of Community Services Department of Sport and Recreation	*Managing Grants*	4 December 2002
105	Department of Health Including Area Health Services and Hospitals	*Managing Hospital Waste*	10 December 2002
106	State Rail Authority	*CityRail Passenger Security*	12 February 2003
107	NSW Agriculture	*Implementing the Ovine Johne's Disease Program*	26 February 2003
108	Department of Sustainable Natural Resources Environment Protection Authority	*Protecting Our Rivers*	7 May 2003
109	Department of Education and Training	*Managing Teacher Performance*	14 May 2003
110	NSW Police	*The Police Assistance Line*	5 June 2003
111	E-Government	*Roads and Traffic Authority Delivering Services Online*	11 June 2003
112	State Rail Authority	*The Millennium Train Project*	17 June 2003

No	Agency or Issues Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
113	Sydney Water Corporation	*Northside Storage Tunnel Project*	24 July 2003
114	Ministry of Transport Premier's Department Department of Education and Training	*Freedom of Information*	28 August 2003
115	NSW Police NSW Roads and Traffic Authority	*Dealing with Unlicensed and Unregistered Driving*	4 September 2003
116	NSW Department of Health	*Waiting Times for Elective Surgery in Public Hospitals*	18 September 2003
117	Follow-up of Performance Audits	*Complaints and Review Processes (September 1999) Provision of Industry Assistance (December 1998)*	24 September 2003
118	Judging Performance from Annual Reports	*Review of Eight Agencies' Annual Reports*	1 October 2003
119	Asset Disposal	*Disposal of Sydney Harbour Foreshore Land*	26 November 2003
120	Follow-up of Performance Audits NSW Police	*Enforcement of Street Parking (1999) Staff Rostering, Tasking and Allocation (2000)*	10 December 2003
121	Department of Health NSW Ambulance Service	*Code Red: Hospital Emergency Departments*	15 December 2003
122	Follow-up of Performance Audit	*Controlling and Reducing Pollution from Industry (April 2001)*	12 May 2004
123	National Parks and Wildlife Service	*Managing Natural and Cultural Heritage in Parks and Reserves*	16 June 2004
124	Fleet Management	*Meeting Business Needs*	30 June 2004
125	Department of Health NSW Ambulance Service	*Transporting and Treating Emergency Patients*	28 July 2004
126	Department of Education and Training	*School Annual Reports*	15 September 2004
127	Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care	*Home Care Service*	13 October 2004
128*	Department of Commerce	*Shared Corporate Services: Realising the Benefit including guidance on better practice*	3 November 2004
129	Follow-up of Performance Audit	*Environmental Impact Assessment of Major Projects (2001)*	1 February 2005
130*	Fraud Control	*Current Progress and Future Directions including guidance on better practice*	9 February 2005
131	Follow-up of Performance Audit Department of Housing	*Maintenance of Public Housing (2001)*	2 March 2005
132	Follow-up of Performance Audit State Debt Recovery Office	*Collecting Outstanding Fines and Penalties (2002)*	17 March 2005

No	Agency or Issues Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
133	Follow-up of Performance Audit Premier's Department	*Management of Intellectual Property (2001)*	30 March 2005
134	Department of Environment and Conservation	*Managing Air Quality*	6 April 2005
135	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Sydney Water Corporation Sydney Catchment Authority	*Planning for Sydney's Water Needs*	4 May 2005
136	Department of Health	*Emergency Mental Health Services*	26 May 2005
137	Department of Community Services	*Helpline*	1 June 2005
138	Follow-up of Performance Audit State Transit Authority Ministry of Transport	*Bus Maintenance and Bus Contracts (2002)*	14 June 2005
139	RailCorp NSW	*Coping with Disruptions to CityRail Passenger Services*	22 June 2005
140	State Rescue Board of New South Wales	*Coordination of Rescue Services*	20 July 2005
141	State Budget	*In-year Monitoring of the State Budget*	28 July 2005
142	Department of Juvenile Justice	*Managing and Measuring Success*	14 September 2005
143	Asset Management	*Implementing Asset Management Reforms*	12 October 2005
144	NSW Treasury	*Oversight of State Owned Electricity Corporations*	19 October 2005
145	Follow-up of 2002 Performance Audit	*Purchasing Hospital Supplies*	23 November 2005
146	Bus Transitways	*Liverpool to Parramatta Bus Transitway*	5 December 2005
147	Premier's Department	*Relocating Agencies to Regional Areas*	14 December 2005
148	Department of Education and Training	*The New Schools Privately Financed Project*	8 March 2006
149	Agency Collaboration	*Agencies Working Together to Improve Services*	22 March 2006
150	Follow-up of 2000 Performance Audit	*Fare Evasion on Public Transport*	26 April 2006
151	Department of Corrective Services	*Prisoner Rehabilitation*	24 May 2006
152	Roads and Traffic Authority	*The Cross City Tunnel Project*	31 May 2006
153	Performance Information	*Agency Use of Performance Information to Manage Services*	21 June 2006
154	Follow-up of 2002 Performance Audit	*Managing Sick Leave in NSW Police and the Department of Corrective Services*	June 2006
155	Follow-up of 2002 Performance Audit	*Regulating the Clearing of Native Vegetation*	19 July 2006

No	Agency or Issues Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
156*	Fraud Control	*Fraud Control Improvement Kit: Meeting Your Fraud Control Obligations*	20 July 2006
157	Roads and Traffic Authority	*Condition of State Roads*	16 August 2006
158	Department of Education and Training	*Educating Primary School Students with Disabilities*	6 September 2006
159	NSW Health	*Major Infectious Disease Outbreaks: Readiness to Respond*	22 November 2006
160	NSW Health	*Helping Older People Access a Residential Aged Care Facility*	5 December 2006
161	Follow-up of 2003 Performance Audit	*The Police Assistance Line*	6 December 2006
162	NSW Health	*Attracting, Retaining and Managing Nurses in Hospitals*	12 December 2006
163	Legal Aid Commission of NSW	*Distributing Legal Aid in New South Wales*	13 December 2006
164	Department of Juvenile Justice NSW Police Force	*Addressing the Needs of Young Offenders*	28 March 2007
165	Homelessness	*Responding to Homelessness*	2 May 2007
166	Follow-up of Performance Audit Department of Education and Training	*Using Computers in Schools for Teaching and Learning*	9 May 2007
167	Follow-up of 2001 Performance Audit: Ambulance Service of New South Wales	*Readiness to Respond*	6 June 2007
168	Ministry of Transport	*Connecting with Public Transport*	6 June 2007
169	NSW Police Force	*Dealing with Household Burglaries*	27 June 2007
170	RailCorp	*Signal Failures on the Metropolitan Rail Network*	15 August 2007
171	Department of Premier and Cabinet Department of Commerce	*Government Advertising*	29 August 2007
172	Department of Primary Industries	*Improving Efficiency of Irrigation Water Use on Farms*	21 November 2007
173	NSW Police Force	*Police Rostering*	December 2007

* Better Practice Guides

Performance audits on our website

A list of performance audits tabled or published since March 1997, as well as those currently in progress, can be found on our website www.audit.nsw.gov.au.

If you have any problems accessing these reports, or are seeking older reports, please contact our Office Services Manager on (02) 9275 7116.