

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tighter leash on use of general purpose police dogs

The Corruption and Crime Commission has tabled a report in State Parliament today focussing on the use of four-legged members of the WA Police Force – general purpose police dogs who are trained to locate people and bite.

The WA Police Canine Unit acknowledges the use of a police dog may result in serious injury and considers the level of force to be between a taser and firearm.

The use of police dogs is restricted to qualified handlers who are obliged to take all reasonable measures to ensure the dog doesn't injure anyone or damage property. But injury can and does happen.

In 2021, the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission recommended that the Commission undertake an audit of police dog bite incidents to determine whether the use of force was justified and adequately reported by WA Police.

The Commission has now completed its thematic review which included data analysis and case studies.

Over the past five years, the WA Police has undergone a reform of its Canine Unit and implemented a number of improvements to police dog capability, training practices and visibility. However gaps still remain.

The Commission has made two recommendations to WA Police. The first is to develop and implement WA Police Canine Unit policy, procedure and/or guidelines; and the second is to undertake further analysis of police dog use to explore and address reasons for the higher representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in police dog deployments.

WA Police Force have acknowledged the need to develop formal Canine Unit Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines and to review all policies related to Canine Unit operations, and have also committed to reviewing the higher representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons involved in police dog deployments.

The Commission will review the WA Police response to its recommendations in 12 months' time.

ENDS

Read the report

[A report on the deployment of police dogs](#)

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