



# Summary of our report

## Response of the New Zealand Police to the Commission of Inquiry into Police Conduct: Final monitoring report



In 2007, the Commission of Inquiry into Police Conduct (the Commission) criticised the historical conduct, including sexual conduct, of some police officers and their associates. The Commission recommended comprehensive changes to the way the New Zealand Police (the Police) worked.

The Government asked the Auditor-General to monitor, for 10 years, the Police's progress on the Commission's recommendations. This is our fifth and final monitoring report.

### **The Police have acted on all the Commission's recommendations**

The Police have made a real difference to the services they provide to the public. The Police have also made a difference to how they operate as a place to work.

During the 10 years, the Police's response to the Commission's recommendations has matured – moving away from a concentration on activities towards a focus on results, public service, more professional behaviour, and a diverse culture based on the Police's values. The Police have acted on all the Commission's recommendations, although sometimes in different ways than the Commission envisaged.

Throughout the 10-year period, the Police have been transparent about their results and have been open to scrutiny. We consider that being open to scrutiny has contributed to the Police's improvement and encourage them to continue now that formal monitoring of their progress on the Commission's recommendations is over.

The Police are now a fundamentally better organisation than they were in 2007. There was a broad consensus among organisations and individuals we spoke to that the police culture has changed significantly. People said that the Police have passed a "tipping point", meaning that it is unlikely that the Police's gains from the last 10 years will be lost. We agree with that view.

### **Improvement needs to continue**

Our audit work showed that the Police have a firm basis for continuing to improve. The Police are aware that the end of the 10-year monitoring period does not mark the end of

#### **Vital statistics:**

- 82 pages
- Presented to Parliament on 19 December 2017
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their progress. The Police Commissioner describes 2017 as “the end of the beginning”. This should provide reassurance to the public about the Police’s commitment to make further improvements.

Although we have not made any specific recommendations in this report, there are some important areas of performance where the Police need to keep focused.

If the Police are to become more representative of the communities they serve, they know they need to employ and retain more women and people from minority groups.

Although the Police have made substantial progress in the way they treat adult victims of sexual assault, there is variability in the service victims get, depending on where they live. The Police need to improve the consistency of service for victims.

We saw the Police taking decisive action on poor conduct by police staff. Although there will always be a risk of some misconduct, we expect the Police to further reduce instances of inappropriate behaviour when they fully set up their new performance framework approach. The public and police staff need to have confidence that the Police do everything they can to prevent misconduct from happening.

### **Risks that the Police need to manage**

We saw that the Police are moving from a mostly “command and control” style of organisation to one based more on values and good leadership. That leadership has to be sincere and effective at all levels in the Police. All leaders need to act consistently with the Police’s values to avoid undermining progress.

Some police staff are not yet convinced that the Police always deal effectively with bullying, harassment, and discrimination. There were also a few police staff who were struggling to accept the direction the Police were moving in. They might not behave badly enough to warrant disciplinary action, but could undermine the Police’s efforts. In our view, if the Police apply the high-performance and values frameworks well, it could help them deal with low levels of poor attitude and behaviour.

### **Concluding comments**

We encourage the Police to keep measuring important aspects of organisational health and show the results to the public.

This report marks the end of our 10 years of monitoring the Police. We will continue to watch the Police’s organisational health and work, reporting if and when needed on issues of importance to the public’s continuing trust and confidence in the Police.