Victoria Police Values in Action
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INTRODUCTION

Victoria Police employees are expected to commit to the highest ethical standards, as demonstrated by the Victoria Police Code of Ethics:

I uphold the right in my role within Victoria Police by acting impartially, with integrity and by providing service excellence to everyone.

The Organisational Values of Victoria Police, discussed in this booklet, underpin Victoria Police’s policies, procedures and practices and the ways employees interact with the community and each other.

The Victoria Police Values are:

- Integrity
- Respect
- Leadership
- Support
- Flexibility
- Professionalism

Understanding how these values are actively demonstrated to the community and police colleagues reinforces high ethical and professional standards. The range of perspectives and descriptions presented in this booklet provide a comprehensive and insightful means of understanding how these value-based behaviours can be experienced by others. They describe the way in which the Victoria Police Code of Ethics may be practically implemented by demonstrating how integrity is perceived, how service excellence might be experienced and what it means to act impartially.

This booklet has been produced by the Office of Police Integrity for the Police Ethics Resource Kit with the generous contributions of the following people in early 2010, whose comments you will read in the following pages. Additional information about the participants, their work and their organisations is contained in the final section.
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Integrity can be demonstrated in everyday actions that show a connection to what you say about yourself and your work; you ‘walk the talk’. You do what you say you will do and you are responsible for your actions and their outcomes. You demonstrate consistency, show respect and act professionally. You have a positive influence on those around you.

Sometimes having integrity will mean speaking out about poor or unprofessional conduct and at other times, it will mean that you support those who do the speaking out. Having integrity means you show fairness, you take others’ perspectives into account and you are honest with yourself and others. Integrity may be showing commitment to the work you are undertaking as a police officer by demonstrating an interest in engaging with the community.

The following comments reflect the way in which integrity is reflected in actions and behaviours.

You can see it in a station, you can see the members that are straight up and down and just honest and who just come to work to work and do as best they can and they attract like-minded people. Then you see those that are deadwood or that want to cut corners or whatever. They repel them, and it’s really visible. They bring a light to the room and they’re full of ideas and they’re full of solutions and they’re full of assistance and commonsense. So for me I see brightness, shininess.

They’re the ones that take time to sit down with junior members and say, you know, “What you did today, there’s actually better ways we can do it and we can talk about it,” so they’re not criticising, they’re actually taking people along with them for the ride. They’re the ones that go out of their way to look for opportunities for others, as well as themselves, or the ones that on their own initiative develop opportunities to better themselves or the organisation or the community. They’re the ones that in their own time go to speaking seminars or the Blue Light discos, and they’re the ones that you feel really confident putting them in the van with someone who you know is perhaps not to a standard that you’re comfortable with because you know that they’ll do a good shift, and you know that some of it actually rubs off whilst they’re in that van which is really good. (Narelle Beer)
Our involvement as an organization with Victoria Police has been quite positive and, especially with the Migrant Liaison Officers we work with, there’s certainly a high level of commitment to the work that they do. There is a local police officer from Malvern who has been involved in organizing some soccer competitions with newly arrived Sudanese young men and that’s not even an area of work that he’s involved in directly. I think that integrity is demonstrated that way, in terms of actually being true to the sort of values and the sort of approach that people try and take. (Ross Buscemi)

I think, essentially, integrity is acting or behaving in a way that is true to what you value. And so for police, that’s about being honest about your actions and why you’re doing what you need to do. For example, if you value people’s human rights, then you’d act in a way that promotes and respects human rights. So it’s looking at, ‘what do I value?’ And ‘how am I behaving in a way that is real to what I value?’ (Vivianne Dias)

Well, I think integrity is demonstrated when people walk the talk so that what they’re saying in their resumes and what they’re saying about what wonderful people they are, matches and accords with their actual behaviour. Generally integrity indicates someone that you can trust because you know that what they say is what they mean and how they behave. It is about honesty and there are aspects of it that are around taking responsibility for your own actions.

I think we assume integrity when we first meet someone but then certainly over time, when there’s an opportunity for it to be demonstrated, it either confirms what you hoped you would see with that person or disappoints you if it’s absent. I think for many of these as well it’s not about having one fantastic example of where it’s been demonstrated, it’s more that integrity is something that you see in little behaviours consistently all the time. Like not only taking responsibility for your own actions but acknowledging the input or the work that’s been done by other people because that indicates that you’re honest and up-front about who work belongs to.

I suppose integrity is about not undermining the things that you say you stand for with your behaviour. So if you’ve said that you stand for fairness and developing other people and treating people equally and then if you don’t act in that manner, it undermines those things that you’ve said about yourself. (Tracie McDonald)
INTEGRITY

I think integrity’s got a community standard to it, which is important for the police to understand. There are various standards of integrity depending where you sit. I think integrity for police officers is something that must be held very highly by them because it’s the basis of how the public is going to form a perception about their dealings with them. To have integrity you’ve got to be perceived to be fair – fair in your approach to the people you are dealing with. And integrity means, particularly in the modern policing environment, not singling a group out because of race, creed, religion or other characteristics. (Michael Brett Young)

Police officers with integrity would behave in a consistent way, whether they were dealing with a young, newly arrived African boy, or an 80 year old woman who had some issue that she’s needed to call the police with. The same level of professionalism, and respect would be demonstrated regardless of the cohort that the member is dealing with and regardless of whether it’s a victim, witness or suspect – that same level of response across all three. (Georgie Ferrari)

To me, integrity is about putting yourself in a like-minded frame of mind and what I mean by that is we’re faced with situations every day that normal people - and I say normal people as in civilians that are not police members - aren’t faced with. Integrity is about having empathy and understanding about the fact that you’re about to do something or ask someone to do something in which they may or may not want to do, they may or may not like you, they may or may not understand. Integrity is about behaviour as much as it is about classification. Integrity comes from within and it also comes from without. It’s what you accept in and it’s what you give out. (Anthony Mercer)

Integrity, to me, covers a broad spectrum. It’s treating people with respect. It’s treating people with honesty and fairness, being open and transparent, acting without fear or favour, and consciously or subconsciously not judging a person by his or her appearance. (Frank Guivarra)
Integrity for me, would mean that an officer is really aware of the power imbalance between them and either other community members or offenders, or whoever it is that they’re dealing with, because there obviously is a power imbalance and we all know that in the sense of how the community actually responds to the officer. I would want an officer to be really aware of their role and when they’re being manipulated or influenced. (Theresa Banks)

I think it’s got to do with a consistency of high moral or ethical conduct. (Brigid Foster)

Integrity is directly linked to honesty. So, I think of transparency and honesty. I think everyone’s perception of integrity or honesty or all that is going to be different. Really the level you’re at yourself is how you would view someone else. So, someone that’s not very honest or has no integrity would probably view the policemen in a different light to someone else. My personal values on integrity are simply that I just like people to be straight up and honest and say things the way they are.

Get’s me into trouble sometimes but I’m just happy to do that. It’s the way I live my life, same with my kids, you know if they don’t like something - tell me straight away and we move on. You know when I tell them off for doing something we deal with it and move onto the next topic and we don’t dwell on things. (Peter Baranow)

Having integrity, for the members, is to just do the right thing. If they do make a mistake just say they’ve made a mistake, rather than trying to cover it up; whether it be by not saying anything at the time or, you know, sort of telling you later, try to put a gloss on it that’s not there.

You roll up on time, finish on time. You do what you’re supposed to do. If you say you’re going somewhere, that’s where you go. You treat everyone pretty much on an equal basis, regardless of who they are or your own personal views of what the matter is that you’re investigating and dealing with. (Brian Nolan)
I think working respectfully with people would be number one for me. I think however bad the behaviour being investigated or whatever the allegations. I’m looking for the police to be better than being judgemental or being aggressive. I’m hoping that they are going to be as gentle as circumstances allow and looking for them to be aware that the right sort of attention can act to minimise a situation. There are times when a police officer can act a particular way and inflame a situation, there are also times when they can back off or they can let somebody else who knows the young person a little bit better, intervene or support that young person in the situation. I’m looking for the police to respectfully allow that process at times. I think it is more about treating young people respectfully and, more broadly, also treating those people that are there supporting those young people respectfully. (Johnny King)

I think it actually ties in a little bit with some of the other values that are there – leadership, respect and professionalism. I think in particular, integrity is showing the defendants respect and treating people equally. It’s being professional about their job; turning up to court on time and always maintaining a civil and respectful attitude to defense practitioners, not seeing us as the enemy. We don’t see police as the enemy in any way shape or form. We see them as performing a very important role in the community. And I think we really are in a position where we’re working together, even though it’s clearly from opposite sides. Responding to requests we make and disclosing all of the evidence are very important aspects. (Tim Gattuso)

I think the old saying, “treat people the way you would like to be treated yourself,” is a good approach in all walks of life. I think that saying can apply to anybody, including police who do a difficult job. I think that is a good starting point for people. Integrity is about doing the right thing, treating people properly, respectfully, and it’s also about understanding the other person and not using your authority incorrectly. (Tony Hall)

They talk to you on a level basis and not that you’re the scum. That is what I think puts peoples backs up. We are all equals on being people. They might not be equals in the law one is laying down the law to the other one. But you’re still equal and you need the respect just like they do. (Jan Bryar)
When it comes to integrity, when we make our decisions, we take the person’s name out of that decision-making. We’ve seen members actually stand up and make complaints about fellow colleagues, and we’ve supported those members. I’ve got to say, it doesn’t matter which way you paint it, it’s still a very difficult decision to make, to be, you know, talking out about your colleagues. I think you’d have to be very strong.

That integrity needs to be supported because it’s a very difficult decision. You’d expect members to be supporting their colleague, to look into their welfare, probably pay them more attention than they ever have in the past which sometimes can have a negative effect but really step up to the mark and, you know, not discuss it in the work environment, or don’t discuss it at all; support their colleague; don’t take sides. It’s about stepping up to the mark and saying, “Well, no, that’s not good enough. We don’t do it that way anymore”, and be prepared to stand up and be counted. (Ian Gillespie)

One of the key things about integrity is standing up for injustice. It is incredibly important for people to stand up when they see something that’s done wrong. Most of these incidents never come to light because there are not enough people with the courage to stand up and do something about it. I think one of the key things around integrity is not standing by while injustice is perpetrated by the worst elements of our human nature. (Hugh de Kretser)

I think the crucial thing we would expect with our client group – which can be people with significant disabilities in mental impairment, either through mental illness or someone with an acquired brain injury or someone with an intellectual disability – is the capacity to listen. I think to act with integrity for a police officer would be to know the situation and to know why the person might be behaving in the way they are and to try to determine how they came to be in that situation, and then to be able to de-escalate it. (Phil Grano)
LEADERSHIP

Leadership involves demonstrating a number of characteristics. You are seen as a leader by the community and will be relied upon to manage a situation or to be a role model. You may work with other police members who show leadership or you may aspire to be a leader yourself. Leadership is about setting an example, showing patience and understanding when dealing with different people and being a positive influence.

There are many positive things that good leaders will achieve and facilitate, and among the most important of these is bringing out the best in the people around them. Being a role model for the community is an acknowledgement of the trust and respect that the community holds for police. The greater the trust, the more effective any law enforcement education or problem-solving strategy will be. Leadership is important around vulnerable people, such as those with physical or intellectual disabilities. It can be demonstrated in the way you interact with these people.

Leadership is acknowledging the role of others, providing feedback on both good and bad behaviour but especially acknowledging and recognising the good work of others around you. Leadership is required when matters relating to misconduct are raised. Providing firm and consistent guidelines in these situations acts to provide the confidence needed to be open and honest about problems. Responding to a situation with respect and flexibility shows leadership and can lead to positive outcomes for all involved.

The following comments reflect the way in which leadership is shown through actions and behaviours.

I had a really good example of leadership about three years ago when one of the young guys that I worked with was spiraling out of control into some quite serious levels of crime. Not violent crime but property crime. The police knew it was him and they were looking for him and it was pretty hot for a while. They knew his family...
well and some of the uniformed officers from the police station had called around on the family and were quite aggressive with the family members. And obviously this wasn’t going to help bring the young guy in. Essentially what then happened was the Criminal Investigations Unit got involved and there was a Sergeant down there who was fantastic. He essentially reined in the uniformed officers who had been acting the way they wanted to act, he said no, we’re going to back off and negotiate this young guy coming in with the appropriate people. We are not going to use his family because they have a vested interest, it’s not fair, and they have been through enough. He called me and said look what are we going to do? We talked about the situation, what are the parameters or how much time have I got? He said “well if you could get him in, in the next day or so.” “He needs to understand that if he’s coming in he won’t necessarily go in but we need to charge him and we need to talk to him about if he has got a valid option for bail.” Otherwise we have got to stop this or it is going to get out of control.”

I was able to communicate that to the young man and negotiate, I picked him up – he was in hiding and had dyed his hair and all sorts of things. I met him in this pub in Fitzroy and got in the car and took him across to the CIU. He had to direct me to where it was because he knew where it was, it’s an unmarked building and we went in there and they kept him in there. He looked pretty shocking but he also was really respectful with them, he met them with respect. They had a word with me and said “we’ve got enough here to keep him in but he has also said he is interested in this detox unit and you have helped him with a referral.” I said, “Well that’s true, he can go in there tomorrow.” They said, “If you are prepared to support that detox referral we are prepared to give him another shot on bail.” They bailed him, there was plenty there that they didn’t need to bail him.

So that was great, but what it meant was that that police officer had essentially given his family a different experience to the police service. Because they had been a family that had a lot involvement with police over the years, and I mean generational trouble or issues with the police. So they had a completely different view from that one experience with the police. He was treated with respect but he also gave them respect back. So, I felt that was really managed well. But that single officer displayed the leadership and without him I don’t think would have happened, I don’t think we would have had that response, I think it could have only escalated and got worse. (Johnny King)
I think it’s about understanding and leading themselves first and foremost, and providing themselves with a mindset that you’ve actually got to stand up and be counted and that’s for their own development as well as for every other aspect. You see some that expect, “The organisation needs to do this for me,” or, “The organisation has let me down because of this.” Well, the organisation is made up of people and they’re one of them. I can think of a member who came to me and said, “Look, I want to get promoted but I’m in a rut and I’m not sure where I’m at.” I said, “Write a list. What are your strengths, what are your weaknesses, and then come back and see me and then tell me what you think the strategies are for each of those to build on,” and when she came back and saw me she said, “Look, I think this is one of my weaknesses. I think this is a strategy, and I actually went and found out that I can do this course and that’s going to help me do this, and then I can do this,” and she’d actually planned - and I did nothing, she did all the work. That was very much self-leadership, but others saw what she did. When she got promoted, they went up to her and they said, “How did this work?” and she passed it on - so that was really leading by example. (Narelle Beer)

I think there’s an education function as well—the police educate people on a range of issues. I think that that’s really a part of the function of leadership. An issue like school bullying is an example. (Brigid Foster)

In the role of a police officer, trying to be helpful to people would be displaying leadership. Often people come to the police with a problem or an issue they want dealt with. Sometimes, the police come across people who are doing something they shouldn’t be. Police can be helpful and put up options for the person to deal with that issue or problem. To me, that is displaying some leadership – trying to be helpful, putting options to people, making suggestions that are in the interests of the people that the police are dealing with. That’s one way to do it that I can think of. I have seen a lot of police in group conferences that we hold, really have an interest in the young people and their families including making suggestions about how the young person can stay out of trouble in the future. I’ve seen police offer to help a kid get a job on occasions as a result of a group conference. That is one way a police officer can show leadership. (Tony Hayes)
I think leadership is about setting an example amongst your peers and colleagues; being a role model to other police members; taking initiative where you can. In the role that police play that can look very different in different situations. So it’s taking initiative where you can and promoting respectful values. And looking at the bigger picture and trying to change the culture that you work in as well, I think. Recognising where there may be things that could be done differently and putting that on the agenda and, in the way that you act, that’s setting the example for that sort of change. (Vivianne Dias)

Being a good role model in the community – respecting the laws and behaving in a way that’s showing leadership in terms of the behavior you want to see demonstrated. To constantly keep front of mind that police members are visible and it’s incumbent upon them to be role models. (Georgie Ferrari)

Through your own behaviour, how you role model your own behaviour to other members, whether they’re of senior or junior rank to you (and we have constables that are confirmed constables and that are trainee constables – there’s still a rank structure.) I think leadership is something that is shown and displayed, it’s something that you must believe and it’s something that you must aspire to. To join our occupation, whether you’re sworn or unsworn, you have a leadership capacity. Everyone needs, desires, wants leadership.

A leader shows confidence, not arrogance. A leader shows ability and is consistent, someone who you know is knowledgeable, has enough emotional intelligence to understand their own strengths and weaknesses. So leadership is about being honest with yourself, as much as being honest with the people that you lead. (Anthony Mercer)

If they needed to sort something out, it depends what the situation is. If it was a situation of, say, a community dispute, a dispute between two factions of the community and that, to take an impartial view, or not only a view, an impartial stance, then they could show leadership, and be open, fair and transparent. (Frank Guivarra)
I think it’s difficult, this one in some ways. Leadership for the police can often be seen as exercising strength and courage and those sorts of things. With this client group, I think that could be interpreted as an exercise of power and therefore the person could interpret that as a put down. And because they’re powerless people anyway, so often when they meet someone exercising power they’ll want to push back to that. So, leadership I think again comes to being able to say here, “maybe the exercise of power is not necessarily the way to go.” Leadership could be listening, taking perhaps a compassionate approach, trying to work through with the person what’s going on so that you get an understanding. I think with this group, leadership could be saying, “Let’s be strategic about the way we intervene.” (Phil Grano)

Leadership is shown by competently addressing issues when it is within your power to do so, or by promptly referring them to someone who can.

Leaders have got to be truthful, no spin, and be brutally honest. When they say, “We’ll deal with it,” that’s what a leader should do. They don’t go to ground or let someone else deal with it. (Brian Nolan)

Leadership can mean just being able to deal with people appropriately when they’re in a drug or alcohol affected condition, even if that means waiting until tempers have cooled down before interviews commence. Which I think generally happens. Relating to integrity and professionalism too, it’s making sure that records of interview aren’t conducted until people have sobered up, for example. Or making sure that people aren’t drug affected, or if there is any suspicion that there’s a mental illness or mental impairment, to have a doctor confirm whether or not someone is fit to be interviewed. (Tim Gattuso)
I think rewarding good behaviour is incredibly important. We always try to commend that. So when I had an awesome response from one police officer at Sunshine, I made sure I rang back his supervisor and said just wanted to let you know this particular Senior Constable was fantastic. So I think it’s about encouraging that culture of recognising good behaviour and rewarding it. I think leadership involves tackling bad behaviour and rewarding good behaviour; noting good behaviour and showcasing it. (Hugh de Kretser)

There have been a number of situations where issues have come to the Police and Community Multicultural Advisory Committee (PACMAC) and within a very short period of time they have been addressed at the local level. I mean I’ve always said to the chairperson of PACMAC how refreshing it is to see an organisation that has the capacity to actually deal with something there and then, and they take those issues seriously. So at that level I think that there’s a lot of leadership. (Ross Buscemi)

Nothing gets swept under the carpet. If people are prepared to come out and speak up about things, well, they get investigated.

For example, a member about to be interviewed over disciplinary matters contacted me and I gave him the ground rules right from the word go. I said, “If you’ve got something to say, you say it. So if you’ve got something you want to reveal or put your cards on the table, my advice to you is you put the cards on the table. You really don’t need to discuss this with me because that’s the way that I want it done. You’ll be open and honest, and if it causes other people grief, concern, open up a can of worms, so be it. You know, we don’t have a place for those people.”

You’ve got to be as straight as an arrow. You can’t afford to have a rule for one, a rule for another. If that’s the way it’s going to be, that’s the way it’s going to be for everyone.

(Ian Gillespie)
For police, setting an example I suppose is the Leadership part I think you're talking about. Police need to be seen in all aspects, they need to look professional, act professional. They need to do everything straight up and honest and it's a very difficult line. I couldn't do it. Dealing with the type of people police do on a day to day basis – huge temptation – you'd really like to punch a few of them out I'm sure or worse. It's a tough ask.

Good qualities for a leader are patience and understanding.
(Peter Baranow)

Leadership is about role modelling the appropriate behaviours and where leadership actually comes in is when they're in a situation where everybody else doesn't agree with them. Leadership for me is also about minimising the collateral damage on others when something has gone wrong.

Leadership is about, especially if you're a supervisor of others, creating a safe environment so people can say, "You know what, I've done something wrong," or, "I'm not sure about this," or, "somebody else hasn't acted appropriately." That's difficult though, especially if you're an organisation where your culture doesn't support that, but true leadership is when you do things when it is difficult and when it is hard.

You don't have to be a formal leader. There are lots of different types of leaders. Some leaders are about encouraging others to reach their potential and they can do that as a peer, and there are other leaders where it's around their specialist knowledge, so people go to them for advice, even if they may be of a lower rank to them, but they are knowledgeable in that area. So there's no one size leader fits all.
(Theresa Banks)
Leadership is about someone who has got quite clear values and vision and then demonstrates that in their behaviour. It’s someone who says, “This is what’s expected, and this is what you can expect from me,” and then the way they behave is consistent with what they’ve said. Throughout my career I’ve been fortunate enough to have a number of managers who have displayed really good leadership, and what’s been good about them is that it’s been clear what standards have been expected from the people who work for them, and you can rely on them because what they’ve said they’ll deliver to you is what they have delivered to you, and you know exactly what direction everybody is headed in. What’s acceptable behaviour and what’s not, and that’s consistent over time. It’s not just something they’ve written up for a resume but it’s how they’ve actually behaved. They have been genuinely concerned about helping everybody to achieve their potential, whatever that might be. So they have been genuinely concerned about giving people opportunities to try things and genuinely concerned about doing something about behaviours that don’t fit in with the standards that they’ve set. (Tracie McDonald)
Being flexible often means being open to different solutions. This may involve seeking some different perspectives, listening, being willing to try something new or being willing to accept that there are different ways of seeing a situation. Flexibility may come through experience, so it is important to consider your experiences as learning opportunities and to use them to inform your responses to future situations.

Flexibility is also about being responsive, aware of your options and able to implement different responses and to ask advice of others. You’ll learn how to choose the style of interaction and communication that will help you to achieve your objectives and decide on the best action to take. This requires keeping an ‘open mind’ – considering alternative options and points of view – so that you can respond to the best of your ability.

The following comments reflect the way in which flexibility may be applied to situations.

Flexibility I think is about being open to seeing if there are new ways that we can do things, and being open means even though we’ve done things a particular way for a long time we have to be open to the idea that there might be better ways of doing it. And sometimes the people who are in the best position to perhaps provide advice, or initiate ideas on what a good change might be, aren’t always people within Victoria Police. So part of flexibility is being open to the fact that there might be community members or other organisations, or even other areas within Victoria Police, that could have some valuable input around thinking of new ways about how we can do things. That’s about flexibility.

It’s about not being too rigid and being respectful of other people, and the fact that people have issues that arise and individual circumstances that don’t always clearly fit into really regimented, strict processes. So flexibility is about having a clear vision of where we’re trying to get to but then being flexible enough to accommodate different people’s needs, the different needs in the community, and perhaps different ways of getting to that end result. (Tracie McDonald)
Flexibility is keeping an open mind. That is actually a much harder thing to do than people realise. Because, when you’re keeping an open mind, people can be shouting at you, “This is the way it is, this is the way you must act.” And what you have to do when you’re keeping an open mind is to say, “Well, I’ve heard from your side, but I haven’t actually heard from the other side, I haven’t got the whole picture yet.” So, flexibility is saying, if there is time and opportunity, to step back and say, “Alright, heard that, understand what you’re saying is this, now I need to hear from the other person. Why have you taken, what’s your side of the story.” For our client group, that can be very important. (Phil Grano)

A police officer is going to interact with a huge variety of different people on the street. All of whom have different life stories and none of whom will merit the same response. So you absolutely need flexibility when dealing with members of the public and that flexibility will improve the ability to clear up crime and also promote community confidence in the police force. It will promote humane policing. Some good work has been done with migrant communities including setting up the Migrant Liaison Officers. Police need to try and consider the point of view of the different people they interact with and respond appropriately, whether it’s to people with disability, people from different cultural backgrounds, Indigenous groups, young and old people. (Hugh de Kretser)

Often police are dealing with people from a huge range of cultural backgrounds, and socio-economic sorts of problems where you have people who suffer extreme poverty and are committing offences for that reason, people who are suffering from drug addictions or alcoholism, and people who are in family crisis and are involved in disputes in the home with each other. I think they just have to have a flexible approach to deal with that broad range of – I say client – but defendant or accused person. And they have to really be sensitive to their needs and understand that these people have complex problems. (Tim Gattuso)
Flexibility is about where all parties agree on the outcome, but realises different paths or journeys to get there, and that’s okay – welcoming that and being open to the fact that one way is not the only way. There’s a lot of commonality between flexibility and respect because it’s all about understanding that everyone has a different way of doing things and that’s okay and it’s sharing ideas and sharing different ways of doing things and taking the best from both.

Someone needs to make a decision and then it’s about being flexible and knowing you can’t have it all, you have got to make a decision at some stage and making sure that the decision you make is about the greater good and that it’s futuristic looking.
(Theresa Banks)

Well, you have to be flexible every day, when you deal with members you have to be – because everyone has different personalities. It’s the same with victims and members of the public you deal with, you have to deal with them differently. So you have to be flexible with your language and body language. But essentially you just mould yourself to the moment.

You pick it up from other people over the years and see how they deal with things or don’t deal with them. So if someone deals with a situation well, you pick up that aspect of it. If someone deals with it poorly, then you say, “I wouldn’t go down that path.” Flexibility comes with experience.
(Brian Nolan)

I think flexibility is not just about work practices or work times, but it’s also about having the ability to seek some advice from someone other than your direct manager to get other opinions, to take time out of your workday to go and sit down with a mentor or a mentee which in the past never happened. I think they’re great opportunities that we actually need to really raise.
(Narelle Beer)
From my perspective, working with CMY (Centre for Multicultural Youth) – where we work with a lot of people from diverse cultures, it constantly requires thinking through how we have these relationships – it’s being flexible to accommodate and respect different cultural values, or ways of being. I think it comes from a basis of wanting to ensure that everyone has access to justice, regardless of their culture or social economic status, or any other form of diversity. It’s having an appreciation of the context that diverse cultures might be experiencing and having a willingness to learn and to explore. And being open to different ways of relating, recognising that the way I’ve done it in the past might not necessarily be the way to do it with this group of people.

Having a willingness to learn and develop skills around what we call cultural competency – negotiating those relationships and listening to the people in those communities about how they would like to be respected or what they think about the police involvement in their community. (Vivianne Dias)

There’s often a range of options in a certain situation and being able to understand the young person’s situation and to be able to really think about, “Well what’s in the best interests of this young person at this time?” I know a lot of police members actively do that, often, and are able to be flexible. They know that they’re allowed to exercise a range of options in that moment and they don’t always have to go for the most punitive and difficult and probably most administratively burdensome as well. I’m not advocating letting people off scot free all the time by any means, but it’s about building a bit of respect and a bit of rapport perhaps by being flexible in the options that are chosen. (Georgie Ferrari)
It is about options but I suppose, with the members themselves, it’s not about just saying yes or no, it’s sometimes about coming to an agreement. It’s about considering the issues, and asking “why am I going to take this certain course of action?”

(Ian Gillespie, Victoria Police)

Flexibility, for me, is about having a capacity to be creative or to not just be stuck with, ‘this is the process’. Maybe trusting the judgment or advice of other professionals is a good starting point – not just youth workers, but anyone else police might be interfacing with. I think essentially, understanding that they don’t hold all of the answers, they are the key holders of the legalisation if you like, but there are other people involved. I think that having that flexibility of approach where you could include other professionals perhaps, so the police don’t think it all sits with them.

So it’s around almost asking them to practice some patience and understanding but also to get the fact that in terms of our duty of care to the community and broader responsibilities that if something is clearly of threat then we would respond differently but it’s trusting our judgment as to what the situation demands or what our response needs to be. When it’s been more serious matters our response is entirely different.

(Johnny King)

For the kids to have respect and to know that they can go to police, they’ve got to get out in education and be out in the public. At things that perhaps aren’t all part of their real job. Need to be out in schools and see it’s not just a police officer, bring the car so the kids can see a car and have a go. The mounted police are very good because kids love the horses and I’ve found all mounted policemen have the time to talk to you. When kids come up to them have the time to talk and you get respect from them. They’ll grow up with it and know. They’ve got to be very flexible and once again, don’t talk down to them.

(Jan Bryar)
Traditionally, when we talk about flexibility, we talk about leadership flexibility, about supervisory flexibility. But in the sworn stream we talk about how our leaders and our managers need to be flexible and they need to take in other opinions and attitudes, they need to digest those and at the end of the day they still need to make a decision, but they need to give everyone input. Now, I understand that from a management perspective. I actually think for someone who is of lesser rank, they need to be flexible about the fact that management need to make decisions on the greater good.

So if I was a senior constable and I’m looking up to a senior sergeant and that senior sergeant has made a decision that I might not be considerably happy with, they need to display flexibility just as much as a senior sergeant does because at senior constable rank they need to understand that decisions are made for the greater good of the organisation or the workplace or the individual. So flexibility is a two-way street and the way you display flexibility is by being open and transparent and honest. Leaders need to make decisions that are difficult, that are not palatable to everyone. So true leadership is to be able to make a decision that is unpopular and translate that to people who can then decipher that into actions and that’s about flexibility on both sides.

If you’re rigid in this organisation, in no matter what capacity, in no matter what office you work in, if you are rigid you will either get left behind or you will not succeed. That’s my personal opinion, and I’m not talking about needing to be contemporary with the greatest computer knowledge or the most legal knowledge, or whatever, but if you’re not open to transition or you’re not open to learning then you’ll get left behind.

I think being flexible also, is as much about taking in other opinions and values even when you don’t want them. You don’t agree with them, or they don’t agree with you, but you still need to digest them, you still need to consider them. The outcome might be exactly the same as it would have been, but if you don’t take those into consideration, I don’t think you’re showing flexibility. (Anthony Mercer)
The police can ask the youth worker or the social worker: “I’ve got this particular issue, this problem, I’ve got to see this boy, what’s the best way we can do that?” Don’t be afraid to ask questions of other people in other organisations about what is the best way to deal with this. I think if police are prepared to do that they’ll get a good result. Rather than saying I’ve got to pick him up, where is he living? Why aren’t you telling me where he is? That sort of stuff. Instead, be prepared to ask a question, what’s the best way we can deal with this, that we can solve this problem. To me that is having flexibility. (Tony Hayes)

I think the flexibility of policing is to determine, for example in the area of traffic policing, whether or not you’re giving a ticket every time or whether you actually try and educate the people. If you’ve done a u-turn and it wasn’t dangerous—I’m not going to give you a ticket this time but the reason you shouldn’t be doing the u-turn is A, B, C and D. (Michael Brett Young)

I think that not being rigid in following certain protocols that you know, you respond and you’re flexible too, and you can change the way you operate. For us it’s been a conscious process, specifically with the newly arrived communities of establishing opportunities where they’re able to interact, not just with police, but also with other members of emergency services, be that the fire brigade, ambulance, just so that they understand the difference and also getting away from the fear that they have of people in uniform, which I think is something that is quite well understood with some of our refugee communities. (Ross Buscemi)

Flexibility is also considering other courses like diversion and warnings rather than just charging someone. It’s taking all the circumstances into account. I think the flexible approach engenders more respect for the police too, actually. Because it’s more sensible that somebody can listen to your point of view. (Brigid Foster)
In showing flexibility, they’ve got to be cognisant of community views and values, to be able to say, “Well, this is the police view. This is the community view.” Recognising that there’s more than one view – there could be a view from the community – and not just saying, “Well, that’s the police view. That is written in black and white and, you know, we can’t change.” (Frank Guivarra)
There are many ways to show respect and it can be demonstrated in every interaction that a police officer has with the community and with colleagues. Being respectful is very much about being polite and considerate, adjusting your language to suit the situation and communicating on a level basis. Showing respect toward others, who have different cultural backgrounds to your own, may require making an effort to learn about aspects of that culture, and what it means to be respectful of another’s culture. This applies to people with different life experiences and different orientations too – learning more about their situation will show you how respect will be perceived by them.

The following comments reflect the way in which respect is demonstrated in actions and behaviours.

I think about it in terms of respect for the enormous responsibility and significance of their role, so they need to respect the authority that comes with donning a uniform, and respect what it means to carry a gun and be able to take somebody’s life away. And respect means being very aware of the importance of the role and function that they are sworn to carry out. It’s similar to the doctors’ ‘do no harm’ – their Hippocratic Oath – it’s actually a really big responsibility to be in a uniform and to carry a gun and to do all of those things and to have real respect for the power and the authority that that carries with it, and exercise it carefully. (Georgie Ferrari)

For me respect is also just because someone has the right to ask you to get out of your car, they don’t have to do it in a rude way. So for me it’s about if that officer is having a bad day, it doesn’t mean that they take that out on to whomever they are dealing with just because they can. It’s about understanding that that person - the person they’ve pulled up as well is probably having a bad day as well. Hopefully they’re displaying some sort of empathy and trying to understand where that other person is coming from as well and that maybe they’re driving erratically, for example, for a reason. It doesn’t mean they should drive erratically, but there’s probably a lot more going on in that person’s life. (Theresa Banks)
I think people push people with a disability around because they are powerless. In fact, the more powerless you are, often the more inappropriate is the exercise of power. So a respectful exercise of power is, I think, rather important for the client group. It also doesn’t damage their self esteem which can be broken anyway, and they can just hate the world and just be really angry. I guess it’s difficult because the police are confronting a situation where there is all this emotion and they don’t know where it’s coming from. It might be generated from feeling powerless and hated and disaffected with life. So police are walking into this situation cold. Respect is saying this person has dignity, no matter that they have a mental illness. They have dignity despite the fact they might be behaving in a way that is on the surface violent or something like that, this person still deserves respect, and I think that is a way also of de escalating a situation. (Phil Grano)

I’ve seen respect demonstrated by Victoria Police in terms of the multi-faith dinners, with the Jewish community and also the Islamic communities and the new and emerging communities’ get-togethers that have been organized by police. I think that shows respect and also that there’s a willingness to learn and understand the culture of the various communities. We’ve had PACMAC (Police and Community Multicultural Advisory Committee) meetings at the Mosque, so the members there are quite interested in taking off their shoes and sitting, and following through with some of the traditions and understanding how important they are when interacting with various communities. (Ross Buscemi)

I think just trying to treat people as equals and understanding that just because someone has come from a disadvantaged background or has fallen on hard times or has turned to drugs and made the wrong decision or has committed an offence for whatever reason it is—not to think of them as a sub-class or a person who doesn’t deserve respect. We’re often dealing with people who have had horrific background histories themselves and have often grown up with very little support or education. And just to respect that those people have had such difficult lives and to treat them with compassion and concern about their well-being. (Tim Gattuso)
The way that I see respect is two ways: it’s given and it’s taken. I don’t believe that in our organisation you can command respect. I believe you earn it. I think respect is having the knowledge of how your actions affect other people, how the decisions that you make will affect other people, even though those decisions must be made or need to be made. It’s having the respect to deliver them in a respectful way, to carry them out respectfully and understand that those people will respect you more if you are open, honest and transparent with them.

It’s a difficult task at times to get that balance right, but I think respect is shown, and then earned. That’s how I see it. It can be as simple as being civil and polite. It can be as simple as using normal words. It can be as simple as “please” and “thank you”. It can be as simple as explaining a legal framework as to why you’ve pulled them over, but they may not understand that language, so therefore you use language likely to be understood by that person. Respect can be shown in many ways. I think it comes from - if you turn up to work and you’re having a bad day, you almost need to have an understanding of that yourself and how your action or inaction will reflect on everybody else. We all have bad days. (Anthony Mercer)

Well, it’s around confidentiality, particularly in small communities. You’ve got to be careful when you’ve got suspects or you’ve got people you charge who are right up there amongst the community members, you’ve got to make sure that’s not released in any manner but they’re treated with respect regardless. You’ve got to be very mindful. Like dealing with Koori communities, maybe it’s their culture, you’ve got to look at their culture. It’s not always about our perception of respect. Sometimes - and particularly around this area, when I was at Dandenong, you know, I had 151 different nationalities to contend with. You’ve got to look at many cultures and sometimes they cross over, sometimes they’re unique. The Koori community can be a bit unique.

Seek advice - we’ve got our own Aboriginal advisory unit and we do have trusted members of the community you can go to. You can just ask. (Ian Gillespie)
I think a lot of young people would say that it’s around how they’re treated when they come into police custody. For instance, are they thrown in to the back of a divvy van or are they assisted and talked to on the way in, those sorts of things. It’s around how they are handcuffed, how tight are the hand cuffs, what way are they being handcuffed, how are they being spoken to? The verbal is just as important as the physical in my view. I don’t think it’s enough to say well, we haven’t bashed him. To say that we treated him decently, I think there are decent ways to treat individuals.

I think it is just around being decent with people, common decency, by and large any young person I’ve ever known that has done the wrong thing has understood that there is a consequence and that the police are just doing their job. So I think it is really around police remembering that and giving them the benefit of the doubt. More especially if they can look at things like, is someone substance affected, is there really them or is this a drug that is causing the behaviour, maybe that helps them along the way in terms of them responding differently to the circumstances.

I’ve known of one young guy who was walking home drunk and he is one of our clients, he was actually at a train station at about five in the morning and came to the attention of the police. They said “what are you doing?” He said, “I’m going home,” they said, “well there is no train yet.” They did some checks and worked out who he was and he had only been released from custody a few weeks before. He was being polite and respectful to them, very drunk, they ended up driving him 30 kilometres home, dropped him off at his Mum’s. (Johnny King)

Respect for me is about caring and it’s about caring for yourself and having respect for yourself and demonstrating that, and it’s also about caring for those around you and demonstrating that. How that looks in my workplace is engaging in an environment where it’s okay to disagree, that it’s okay to debate an issue, that it’s okay to make a mistake and having an environment to allow people to make mistakes, so long as they’re evidence based, a good time, the right time that it was made for the right reasons. But to allow people to grow and learn from that as opposed to feel that they’ve done something wrong. So it’s about caring for yourself and then caring for those around you, for me. That is regardless of rank, regardless of job description.

It’s just about treating people the way you want to be treated yourself. (Narelle Beer)
I think most people genuinely respect police that are going about their day to day work and whatever. I think police are human and have the same troubles and day to day issues as anyone else. You know you have an argument with your partner in the morning and have a bad day and you know have a near miss or car accident on the way to work and the rest of your day is ruined or whatever it is. People sort of expect police to be above that. I don’t see why, they are just the same as anyone else really and have to deal with the same things. (Peter Baranow)

You know, a copper walking down the street runs into a bloke that he or she may have arrested a couple of days before for a matter, arrested and charged that person. Now, they don’t have to be all over the person, but nod to the person, “Hello. How you doing? G’day,” not “What are you doing?” or “What are you doing here?”

It’s acknowledgment of people but also showing respect to elders and people who have a long involvement in community and people who are held in high esteem in the community.

You don’t have to fawn over anyone or anything like that, or bow and scrape, but your actions and – well, as they say, actions speak louder than words. You don’t have to walk up to a person and look them up and down. There are a number of ways you could show respect by recognising the person and acknowledging their status in community. (Frank Guivarra)

If you keep banging on about respect to a young person you’re going to lose them pretty quickly. I think acting with integrity and in a non-judgmental, professional manner is important. I think the other values support respect. And I think it’s a two way street, so acting with respect to the young people – I know you hear police officers complain about the lack of respect that they get from people – you hear stories of people assaulting police officers, which is obviously extremely serious – I think the police force can promote respect for themselves by dealing with the community with respect. (Hugh de Kretser)
Perhaps the bottom line is that police have got to deal with people and if they approach these dealings – in the sense of having respect for people in the first instance – then there is a chance that the people will react in a favourable way with the potential for a positive result. If the police find that the other person is not respectful back to them, then the other person is given the options, we can do this two ways, sort of thing. You give them the options and that’s out of respect for the other person – so they’ve got to make a choice, assuming they are not drunk or on drugs and all that.

That’s the starting base – if you respect people, then it’s a chance it will be a reasonable interaction, but if you don’t respect people they’re going to start off in a negative way and it’ll escalate probably and then you have got trouble.

Respect means a lot of things but I think respect is conveyed in an attitude, it’s conveyed in how you behave, it’s conveyed in what you say and how you say it. I know there are a lot of police who, and I’ve seen this through the group conferencing, they want to help people, they want to help young people and they’re there to serve the public and that’s what they see their job is I assume. And for the safety of the community, they’ve got a job to do and I think it’s a very good value to have because it will help you in a lot of interactions, people will pick up if you respect them. I remember when I worked in the institution, kids would swear or have a very poor attitude towards me and I would say “hey, hang on, do I treat you like this?” they’d say “no” and I’d say “well don’t do it to me.” Then often the young person understood that I was not treating him badly. You just remind the young person, because they are only young and they don’t have that maturity, that this is what your expectations are. That’s respecting a young person by giving them the options about what they can decide or what they can make a choice about. (Tony Hayes)
I think it’s coming right back to respecting people’s essential dignity and worth. If you have that as a basis then you can have an appreciation for everyone, regardless – I was thinking about it in terms of someone who’s suspected of committing an offence – they’re a human being, therefore they should be afforded dignity. They have worth as a human being therefore they should still be afforded their rights, for example. So you don’t remove someone’s rights, because you don’t think very highly of them. But I guess that’s where it gets really hard, because even if someone’s done incredibly awful things, they’re still a human being and how can we still respect that person in a way that ensures their dignity is maintained? This can be extremely difficult. But that’s an extreme example.

I think it comes down to trying to understand people, seeing where there are differences and having some understanding of perhaps why there are those differences. And trying to still respect people even where there are differences that you don’t necessarily understand.

Even simple things like the language that they use in talking to a young person can communicate very clearly about whether or not that police member is showing respect towards them. So even with young people that could potentially be quite aggressive and verbally abusive, it doesn’t mean that police have to become verbally abusive back. Young people are young people, they will lash out verbally. They’ve got anger that they don’t know how to control or deal with. But, being a professional police member means that you shouldn’t lower yourself to their language or their way of communicating but maintain that standard of professionalism. It’s a really powerful thing. (Vivianne Dias)
Respect is about accepting that we have some overall goals that we’re trying to achieve but that many people within our organisation have a different focus that might all contribute to that end goal, but we might not all be trying to get there the same way. Respect is about accepting that despite the fact that other areas within the organisation, or other organisations or other community groups have different ways of doing things or different views, they can all make a contribution to what it is that we’re all trying to achieve. So it’s about respecting and valuing difference. Again, I know we mentioned that a lot of these values kind of overlap and they don’t really all stand alone, they’re part of a broader kind of cohesive thing, respect does link into flexibility because if you’re respectful of the fact that there are different ways to do things and novel ways to do things that you might not have thought of, or that people have different needs to you - despite the fact that we probably all have common goals - you’re not really open to seeing new ways of doing things. So flexibility and respect are very much linked, I think.

Times throughout my career where I’ve felt respected is where I’ve had an opportunity to voice a view and people have been willing to listen to my view and give it attention so that it seems that I’m valued, that people are interested in what I have to say, and that they value it - that’s what respect does for you. It gives you an indication that they value your knowledge and your experience and the things that you bring to the particular topic that’s being discussed. (Tracie McDonald)
Victoria Police members provide support to their colleagues and to the community. Positive support can enable better outcomes by empowering others and it is often demonstrated by successful teamwork. Support may be provided in the form of learning opportunities. These can come from your managers or other senior persons or from within the broader community or other areas of Victoria Police.

Support may need to be provided to those you interact with as part of your policing role. Support can start with an attempt to understand another’s situation and may be as simple as linking a person to another service so that they can receive specialist support – whether they are a member of the community, a victim, an offender or a colleague. Support can be about celebrating the diversity of your colleagues, valuing them and respecting their experiences and goals. When people feel supported, they are empowered to achieve their best.

The following comments reflect the way in which support is reflected in actions and behaviours.

"I think it’s an important value really, because of the nature of the job of a police person. I think in any work location it’s important to support each other and that is around teams. I think, in any work team that has support as a value, you will find that it’s a much better functioning team. People will be able to put up with a whole lot of stresses and pressures because of that support from their team, but that support should also come from the organisation they work for too.

I think it is really around caring and supporting for each other and helping each other develop. That’s what support is about. There is an old saying that people don’t care how much you know, they want to know how much you care. And when people know that their colleagues care and are concerned about them they feel supported. I’m sure that there are a lot of practices in the police force that will demonstrate that example. (Tony Hayes)"
Police do support the community. Just being seen I think is a huge support for a lot of people in the community and particularly elderly people love to see police and kids love to see police. It’s important they’re out there.

During the bush fires last year, we had a fire out the back of our place and lots of police and fire brigade and people moving horses and all sorts of stuff. It was good everyone was there helping. (Peter Baranow)

In the past when I’ve had dealings with the police, often they’ve utilised other members to support them. I’m particularly thinking about the MLOs (Multicultural Liaison Officers), so if an officer is unsure about, or not totally aware of cultural considerations, they’ll often work with the MLOs or the MLOs will work with officers and provide training, information and opportunities to learn about various cultures. The approach that Victoria Police have taken in terms of providing that human rights training, right throughout the organisation – that level of support that they are providing their own staff is not just about having policies that sit there. (Ross Buscemi)

Support is a difficult one, in that you don’t know the ins and outs of the police service, because we don’t – well, my staff and I are at the tertiary end when we come into contact with the coppers. But there are relationships that are built up around the place, but just because a police officer takes an interest in Aboriginal affairs and that, he doesn’t need to be labelled “Oh, he’s gone across to the other side.”

From an Aboriginal community point of view, passing on their knowledge of the community to new and incoming police officers into the area. When you talk about support, there are two things – you can have one instance where a new copper comes into the area, and the old hand says, you know, “Well, watch him. He’s an asshole,” or “Watch him. He’s a dead shit”, “this one’s a hard nut.” But then you could say, “Well, look. Those kids’ parents are trying. They’re on Struggle Street.” (Frank Guivarra)
For me, as a manager, I always see my role as an enabler for my staff, so providing support will be trying to remove whatever barriers or whatever issues that they have so that they can actually get their job done and do what they need to do. I think that is a huge support. I mean there are certain things that they’re not able to do and I see that as my role. But at the same time, it’s about acknowledging when people are not performing, but opposed to taking an attitude of how can I get them out, it’s about actually how can I work with this person to improve their performance and give them every opportunity to show that they actually can do it. And is it a training issue, or is it a personal issue, which obviously I can’t help that much with, or is it an organisational cultural issue? There must be something, and that’s my job, to try and support them, but at the same time make them accountable. So if all the barriers have been removed and everything’s been addressed, still following up and making them accountable, and I still see that as support because in a way you’re supporting the others because otherwise you keep leaning on your high performers, they’re the ones that pick up the slack when the others don’t. So it’s about support both ways and it’s not fair if you just lean on your high performers all the time.

Quite clearly we need a police force and I know that might be a strange thing to say, but it’s one of those services that the community definitely needs and without it you can imagine how things would be. And I’m not sure, even with the recruits, that we instil in them how important they are as an individual and as a whole force providing those services. Because for me support, if I’m going to call a police officer, it’s not going to be my best day, it will be one of my worst days to have to call that person and have them come and help me with whatever it is. So by them just even being there physically, even if they didn’t even say or do anything, is a huge amount of support and if they can, by a few words, make me feel safe and make me feel that I am important and that I’m going to be looked after, that’s huge. You can’t put a price on those and there’s only one organisation in Victoria that provides that. (Theresa Banks)
I think with the community, support is about liaison. So if our operational members have contact with community groups or members of our community and they actually show interest and they actually want to know what’s going on within their own community, I think community members will feel supported, therefore be supported. And I think what happens in our organisation is we tend to worry about support from above. We need support from beside, so we need to support each other first, and that’s look after each other, health, wellbeing, workload and then that will build the pyramid. (Anthony Mercer)

Often young people who might be offenders are also victims of crime or they’ve had family members that have had a history of criminal activity. And so wanting to support a young person starts by understanding that there might be other things going on for that young person that we might not see or fully understand. But trying to do what we can to help, even if it’s in little ways that we can, and try and link them into other services, or other supports. I think that’s a really good thing that’s coming through the Victoria Police Children and Youth Strategy – around diversion and being pro active in trying to make referrals to local services. I think that’s incredibly important.

It’s skills like empathy and listening, and seeing the other perspective where you can as well. But in working with peers it would be just checking in with your colleagues about how they’re going – just being open, to listen, to give them space, and for that to happen both ways – a mutually supportive relationship. I think the police culture of needing to be tough and in control perhaps might impact on how comfortable a police member is to actually feel that they can talk to someone openly about how much they struggled in a particular situation. I guess that it’s a cultural thing, so if you can create a supportive culture then that would be a good demonstration of the value of support. (Vivianne Dias)
I suppose it just comes down to availability at the time and in a perfect world it would be great to have the right number of police sent but we understand that can’t always happen. Support is also where police have been through perhaps a traumatic type incident. I think there does need to be a process that is followed through with after the police are involved in any type of serious incident. I don’t know exactly what that is at the moment. I assume that there is something and I think it’s appropriate for that to continue.

The other thing I suppose is – if it’s apparent that a defendant has a particular problem or a range of problems— not just putting them back out in the street or back in the home and perhaps linking them to various services instead. I know the role of the police isn’t that of a social worker but I think even if it’s providing a phone number or a direction for someone to look, rather than just popping them back out there. The same way sometimes criminal lawyers are expected to perform a bit of a social work role and link people into services – we sometimes do perform that role – I think sometimes police could point people in the right direction.

(Tim Gattuso)

I suppose it’s about looking at our staff, you know, without fear or favour. It’s about holding them to account, but it’s also about supporting them through sometimes bad situations. What appears to be bad for them doesn’t always appear to be that bad. That’s our role. You show them support through welfare and with respect again about privacy and confidentiality. Well, you get a lot more out of them. It’s really a no-brainer, but that’s our role. I mean, that’s down to leadership. They do cross over.

(Ian Gillespie)
That’s a really important one to me because I think if we’re going to make real changes in the community about police community relationships, we’re going to have to diversify our police force more and if we’re going to do that we need to be really supportive of the new types of people that come into the force. Women have paved the way for diversity – I know a police woman who said when she started, she was given a handbag to put her gun in. So, we’ve come a long way and women are no longer issued with handbags. But there is way more diversity in the world than just gender diversity, so I hope that we are cultivating a force where gay and lesbian members are not just tolerated and given the gay and lesbian liaison officer role but are actually right throughout the police force and management positions and treated no differently; that we have Vietnamese and African members and I’d like to see lots more Aboriginal police, and not just Aboriginal liaison officers within police, but actually sworn members, out on the beat, doing the work and they will only be attracted to that and stay, which is more important than just training, but actually be retained in the police force if we have a culture of support, and not just tolerance but celebration of diversity. (Georgie Ferrari)

I think it’s absolutely vital that managers and leaders or supervisors within our organisation understand what the concept of support is. The concept of support to me is having contact with your staff, having empathy with your staff and making them believe that you’re there for them. (Anthony Mercer)
I think what support looks like within Victoria Police is that - again referring to some of those other values - it’s where people feel that their experience and their goals and ambitions and their views are valued and that the people who are managing them are concerned not only about producing work outcomes but also about helping people to develop by being respectful of what their ambitions are and providing opportunities for them to demonstrate the things that they’re good at, but also providing them opportunities to learn new things that will help them achieve their ambitions. It’s also supportive, not just in terms of your professional development but also supportive of things that are going on in your life. That links back to flexibility, because everybody has times where there’s a crisis outside work, or even without a crisis, there’s just a change in your circumstances that would make a really rigid approach to work quite difficult for you. So if you had a supportive manager, someone who had been quite flexible and understanding that things change in your personal life and we need to, as far as we can, allow things to fit in with your personal circumstances. I have recently had a number of very supportive managers and as well as all the things that I’ve mentioned what all those behaviours result in is that you feel really positive about what you can do presently, like what you’re actually contributing, and you also feel really encouraged to try a bit harder that you can be successful with the goals that you’ve set for yourself. It’s very motivating.

When all the other values are operating well it is much easier to be supportive, I have to say, and that’s because if you feel that you’re being helped along the way, I think that helps people to be more generous and see that they should be patient, because other people have needs as well. We can’t all be given an opportunity at that exact moment. But also if you’ve been valued and respected and your contributions are acknowledged, then you’re quite happy to help other people with their work because you know that it’s not just going to benefit them but people will see the work that you’ve put into that and it’s really a team thing where everyone gets some acknowledgment of their contribution. They are interlinked. Being supportive is about being respectful. (Tracie McDonald)
I think of support in terms of victims of crime. So a police officer should be easy to get in touch with, professional and courteous. They should keep the victims informed about the process – the progress of applications, investigations and prosecutions if it goes to that stage. That’s where support’s incredibly important; the Victim’s Charter obviously is a step in the right direction there. And the sensible principles in that are to provide a better experience for the victims in dealing with the criminal justice system because often they feel like they’re left out. Email is often underused by the police as a way of keeping people in the loop.

Support from the police officers point of view is again rewarding those officers who respect these values. It’s also supporting officers who go through trauma in the course of their work. Obviously it can be an incredibly difficult job and you would want to see the appropriate supports for that. (Hugh de Kretser)
PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism can be displayed in every part of your policing role including from the way you wear your uniform to the way you communicate with others. Behaving professionally demonstrates accountability and responsibility.

Professionalism is about being responsible for others and fulfilling your duties with care. It is about displaying the highest standards in the way you interact with all members of the community. These professional standards are applied with fairness and impartiality to every aspect of your work. Above all, professionalism is about continual self-improvement and about learning from others around you, so that you can do the best job you are capable of.

The following comments demonstrate how professionalism is reflected in actions and behaviours.

I think it’s essentially about knowing that you’ve got a public role – a very public role. And that you are accountable and you’re representing the State in a sense, wanting to create a better society. And so if that’s why you’re in the force then you need to be accountable in everything that you’re doing. And knowing that you are under public scrutiny as well is really important. But in the positive sense it’s about engendering trust amongst the community and the public. It’s about basic things like adhering to procedure and your code of conduct.

An example is our volunteers who go out and support young people in police interviews. And, we get some volunteers coming back saying “This police member was very professional, they communicated clearly with me, they were respectful of why I was there. They understood my role and communicated an appreciation for me being there. They treated the young person fairly and with respect and they followed their procedure.” Those are the kinds of things we hear from volunteers that would indicate police professionalism. (Vivianne Dias)
I think if you are punctual, you are prepared to work, you are ready to work, the way in which you work will be second nature and I think professionalism is something that is innate in you, you have it or you don’t. Some people can learn it, some people can’t, but I think within our organisation professionalism is a non-negotiable. It’s something that you will display, you must display - and it comes in different forms, I understand that - but to me professionalism and being a police member, whether it’s sworn or unsworn, that’s what you must have. (Anthony Mercer)

The people that I’ve looked at throughout my career who I would describe as having high levels of professionalism are the people who exhibit a combination of all the values but they look the part and they behave in a manner that they know would stand up to scrutiny, both from people outside the organisation but also from all the members within it, and we’re often the harshest critics. So they’re the people who aren’t going to be described later on as posers or who stood on other people to get where they are. They’re the ones that are really professional. They really care about having a good underpinning knowledge of the job. They are really interested in making sure that Victoria Police is a professional organisation, and that means that the people in it have to do their job well, and it’s very hard to do your job well unless you have a lot of the values that we’ve discussed. (Tracie McDonald)

It’s almost about them standing tall.
(Michael Brett Young)

I think it’s about leaving your personal views out of it and doing the job. Stepping above it.
(Brigid Foster)
That’s displayed by being able to communicate effectively, why and what they’re in the process of doing, and I think that’s an important thing. Even if you turn up to the local police station because you want someone to sign a ‘stat dec’ for you, and if it can’t happen, that level of, “Well, this is why it can or can’t or this is what you need to do” – it’s that feeling you’re being treated as you would with any other profession, with dignity and respect. (Ross Buscemi)

It’s about the way you project yourself. If you go to work saying, “Oh, the job’s buggered,” and you want to kick the cat and everyone else, I don’t know if it’s about your emotional intelligence, it’s about how sometimes you need to step in and say, “Hang on, this is not the way. Maybe these are the options.” Sometimes you don’t have to step in till after. You know, it’s not that severe but you need to make sure that they’re aware that you’re not happy with the options they took. (Ian Gillespie)

It’s about going out there and being professional and polite and courteous like the first time you meet your partner’s parents. You’re on your best behaviour.

You want to have a good impression, you want them to like you. So policing is not about having people like you but it’s about having them like what you do. For me that’s professionalism. It’s the way they word their emails or the way they re-read their emails to ensure that the communication that is meant is actually what’s received. It’s not sending off haphazard communications or haphazard emails, or not having a comment without thinking how it could impart or could impact on other people. Even it’s how people dress, it’s how people interact with each other. If they can’t interact with each other in the workplace in their own environment then, you know, I have doubts that they’re going to interact properly with people in the community. But it’s also about being flexible in that interaction. So if I’m talking to somebody who is an academic then, you know, I’m going to talk to them very differently than if I’m talking to a child who’s lost. It’s having that flexibility to still maintain that professionalism and to be shiny, but to actually get that communication across. I think that’s really important. (Narelle Beer)
I’ve witnessed a lot of professionalism in the police force. Quite recently I had some contact with a robbery squad detective who was looking for one of my young men and he appeared to already have an awareness and understanding of what this place is and what we do. But also we were talking about some very serious charges, so he had bottom lines around this stuff, he had his managers breathing down his neck saying, “you’ve got to act on this, you’ve got to do this, you got to work on this,” and so on. What he managed to do was, in spite of that pressure, was to maintain a degree of being respectful to me and understanding my position as someone who is essentially trying to, through a third party, get a young person to co-operate but is getting absolutely nowhere. Yet he still didn’t up the ante or get a different response. He just continued to phone each morning. I’d get a call at 8:30 each day, asking “have you seen him yet? Any sign? He was meant to have turned up yesterday, we didn’t see him, what next, I’m going on leave next week”, that sort of stuff. He managed to retain professionalism about him. So when the young guy was eventually caught – he had to be caught, he didn’t do the right thing, he didn’t hand himself in – myself and this officer spoke and I just thanked him for the way he had handled things and so on and he did the same thing back to me. And he said “well it was a difficult situation for everyone and I understood your situation and I certainty wasn’t going to try and make your situation any harder for you.” So in a way I felt that was an example of him displaying professionalism, and I have no doubt that he was under considerable pressure on this. (Johnny King)

There is a part of policing which is safety of people and protection of the community and helping people which may not end up in court, but your role there as a professional I think is that these people are taken very seriously and that even though you might not end up with a conviction there is a way in which this has been treated with such seriousness, that the perpetrator is well aware that if this is really happening that this behavior must stop. But, also the person who is the victim is valued and cherished and protected and held safe in some way, because often people feel devalued. And that is a real dilemma for us, and we find it hard to protect those people and I’m sure the police do too. But, we have to find ways of affirming those people so that they can recover from their experience of criminal activity. (Phil Grano)
A non-judgmental attitude, courtesy, clear communication and understanding the paperwork associated with the job is part of being professional about accountability and monitoring the use of the extreme coercive powers that are granted to police by the State. So with those powers comes a responsibility and with professionalism comes fulfilling that responsibility to be accountable for those powers. I think that’s really important. The Safety First Principles that Victoria Police have relate to professionalism and the overriding principle being that the success of an operation is to be judged by the extent to which force is minimized is an incredibly important value to underpin a police officer’s interaction with the community. (Hugh de Kretser)

Professionalism is about knowledge. So you’re doing what you’re trained and what you know to do. So I don’t want to see people making stuff up, in other words. And if they’re aware of what they don’t know, they’ll go and seek guidance, as opposed to giving somebody bad advice or just acting in a way that they think is appropriate, and that’s where some people get caught out. A professional goes, ”This is what I know and this is how, you know, it needs to be done, and when I don’t know, I will find out.” That’s what I would expect from a professional. (Theresa Banks)

It’s being able to do the job quite quickly, good time management - deal with people, juggle your jobs, like to be multi-tasked. You always like to know what you can solve and what you can’t solve. So it’s professional where you tell people, ”I can’t take this matter any further,” where it’s unprofessional if you say to them - you give them that false hope, and you can do that with other members as well.

You’re doing the right thing, and even if you get criticised which inevitably you do, not all the time, but you’ll get backed by your bosses and the department ultimately because - and that’s the main thing – you just do it to the best of your ability and don’t take short cuts. (Brian Nolan)
Professionality for me resonates with integrity and leadership and respect. If I saw a police member operating professionally, I would be impressed with their manner and their ability to work with a range of people in the community, and the ability to treat people with the same level, regardless of their background, ability to speak English etcetera. If they were professional they would do what they say they’d do. They would follow up; they would treat my call to the station with the level of importance that’s needed and respond appropriately and politely. (Georgie Ferrari)

In going to police stations, I’ve never had a copper act in an unprofessional manner towards me. I think, in all my dealings with the police, they’ve dealt honestly. But if you hand the ball to our customers, well, I suppose if a copper wasn’t acting in a professional manner, there’d soon be a complaint to someone about the manner in which they acted. (Frank Guivarra)

I think in terms of being professional with defense practitioners, professionalism is forwarding the brief of evidence when it’s requested and to prepare the brief as completely as it can be prepared. We understand that sometimes there are difficulties in getting statements and there’s a push at the moment for a summary brief – a shorter version of a brief. But that’s going to hinge very much on the integrity and professionalism of the police in how they prepare it.

The other aspect of professionalism is to investigate all matters impartially, not to decide that a particular person is guilty and then investigate around them but to investigate the matter before determining someone’s guilt – any person’s guilt. Even if there isn’t a great deal of substance in a particular complaint, just making sure that police treat each complaint with – perhaps not the same level of seriousness because there are more serious complaints than others – but impartially and not determining without investigating whether or not something warrants an investigation. (Tim Gattuso)
We had a guy from our warehouse who just joined the police force, about 4-5 months ago now. He was trying and trying; he really wanted to be a policeman. Felt that was his calling. He said he really liked the administrative side and he would like to be able to get things co-ordinated so the media got the right information. He just felt that was the thing that he could add his bit to and we were saying you just want to go out and shoot guns and he goes “nah”. (Peter Baranow)

To me, professionalism is about doing the best job you can (in a difficult job), and doing the best you can for your station, your colleagues, the society and the organisation. That means you have to know what you are doing, you have to try and improve yourself, do study, get experience, go through a whole range of situations in the job that you may not have done before. If you are not sure you ask people and that’s why your seniors are there to ask, because they have the experience. It is just doing the best you can with your abilities and your training and your knowledge and within the boundaries of the position. Policing is a hard job and you have got to have some framework in which to do your job and the values is one point of that framework that helps you do the job and know what to do. They might sound a bit airy fairy but they are very important and about real life. (Tony Hayes)
PARTICIPANTS

Theresa Banks
Manager, Learning Research Services, Education Department, Victoria Police

I have been with Victoria Police just over a year. Prior to that, I was with the Department of Justice for over seven years, so I have a background in justice agencies. My role here is to manage learning research services as part of the new people development. We manage the Registered Training Organisation, design and develop the curriculum. We conduct evaluations, undertake a quality assurance role in regards to courses outside of people development and focus on how we can improve the learning opportunities for recruits, sergeants, detectives – the whole range that come through education – and ensure that they’re actually able to transfer those learnings on the job.

Peter Baranow
Vanbar Photographics and Scouts Australia

I run Vanbar Photographics with my wife and we have thirty-odd employees. In my spare time, I’m a Scout Leader. I’ve been a Scout Leader for fifteen years and I thought a while ago that I would retire from being a line Scout Leader or in charge of scouts directly and take a quiet position. Then someone fooled me into becoming the head of the Banyule Districts. I’m now a more important Scout Leader that seems to have no time to do anything. So between work and scouts and five kids I’m pretty busy.

Narelle Beer
Inspector, Organisational Change Management, Victoria Police

I’m currently an inspector at Organisational Change Management. Throughout my career I’ve done a bit of everything. I’ve been a law instructor, a detective around Heidelberg West and Greensborough police stations and I’ve worked in policy at the Collision Investigation Unit. So I’ve had a bit of a broad brush experience. I’ve been with Victoria Police for 23 years.

Michael Brett Young
CEO, Law Institute of Victoria, and
Brigid Foster,
Criminal Policy Lawyer, Law Institute of Victoria

The LIV is the peak professional organisation representing approximately 14,000 legal practitioners. It’s goal is “To be our members’ essential professional partner, whilst advocating justice for all.”

Michael manages a staff of approximately 150 people. The LIV provides legal and policy submissions to governments and statutory authorities; conduct Continuing Professional Development for its members; offers a free legal referral service; runs events for members; provides an ethics advice service, and, on delegation from the regulator, issues practising certificates and investigates complaints and conducts trust account investigations.

Jan Bryar
Ivanhoe Girls Grammar and Scouts Australia

I am a trained primary teacher although I don't do it as a profession anymore. I actually work in the sport department as a teacher at Ivanhoe Girls Grammar in the secondary division. I’ve been involved in scouts as a cub leader since I was 18. I’m in the same group that my father was a member of when he was 8. My brother went through the Group and I became a leader at 18 – the first female in the whole group. I do a lot of other work with the Scouts, once again with 11-15 year olds, and I do many camps with them. I’m taking some kids to Sweden as part of the World Jamboree next year. I coach junior netball on Saturdays and have done since I was about 22. I select for Warrandyte Club and have a lot to do with
primary school interschool sport with umpiring netball. We've also had international exchange students. We've had three of those for a year at a time. I've just joined my first adult leisure activity which is the Royal Doulton club of Melbourne and I have every fourth Saturday afternoon off from Netball and I go to Royal Doulton club in Brighton.

Ross Buscemi  
Director, New Hope Foundation

The New Hope Foundation has been operating since 1981 under various names. Originally we were the Prahran Migrant Resource Center, then we became the South Central Region Migrant Resource Center and then we changed that name to the New Hope Migrant and Refugee Center and now we're the New Hope Foundation. Predominantly we work with migrants and refugees and we have offices and locations ranging from the Mornington Peninsula, Frankston, Oakleigh, Bentleigh, Clarinda, Prahran. We've got staff out-posted in Collingwood and Fitzroy and we have other centers in Footscray and Werribee. So, a lot of the work we do is with newly arrived refugees. We also do quite a bit of work with older migrants with, you know, through our aged services programs. We run some employment programs, community development programs, and various community centers.

Vivianne Dias  
State Coordinator,  
Youth Referral and Independent Persons Program (YRIPP), Centre of Multicultural Youth (CMY)

I manage the YRIPP program, which involves supporting the regional staff across Victoria and working closely with program partners. YRIPP trains and supports volunteer ‘Independent Persons’ to support young people through interviews with the police where a parent or guardian is unavailable. Independent Persons provide support, information about legal rights and referral options for young people in custody. YRIPP provides police with access to Independent Persons 24/7, multilingual resources for parents, and (in partnership with Victoria Legal Aid) a free 24-hour legal advice line for young people in custody.

YRIPP is a partnership program of the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, community legal centres, UnitingCare, Victoria police, and other agencies.

Georgie Ferrari  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YAC Vic)

YAC Vic is the peak body for young people and youth issues. We have a membership of about 300 or so. Our main functions are to advocate for the sector and for young people to government and on behalf of our members, and on issues that are relevant either to young people directly or the sector that supports them. So we're involved in some work force development and some advocacy around youth workers—the work that they do and the importance of that—and then a lot of work around issues that relate directly to young people.

Tim Gattuso  
Co-chair, Criminal Law Section  
Law Institute of Victoria

Tim is a private practitioner and Director at Slades and Parsons. At the Law Institute, we have monthly criminal law section meetings, where we chair a meeting of interested defense practitioners who want to be involved in the meetings and contribute in one way or another. We have input on a range of different user groups such as court user groups and the sex offence list, and have guest speakers on topics such as DNA and how that's impacting on evidence in certain trials. There's a whole range of areas we discuss and often we're asked to comment in various areas of the media on particular issues.
Ian Gillespie
Inspector, East Gippsland
Victoria Police

I’m Inspector Police Service Area Manager for East Gippsland. I’ve held that role since March 2009, newly promoted into that role. I was fortunate enough to go to East Gippsland. Prior to that, I was the officer in charge at the Dandenong Police Station for eight years. Prior to that, I was a relieving senior sergeant. I was a sergeant at Ethical Standards on secondment and at Nunawading, West Heidelberg and Heidelberg Police Stations. I’ve been a couple of years in the traffic section way back, 20-plus years ago. I’ve been with Victoria Police for 30 years this October.

Phil Grano
Principal Legal Officer, Office of the Public Advocate

The Office of the Public Advocate is based around the role of the Public Advocate, Colleen Pearce. She is a Statutory Office under the Guardian and Administration Act. Her main role is to be an advocate for people who have a disability and to be a guardian for people who can’t make decisions for themselves, but only as a last resort. The Public Advocate has over 500 volunteers and these volunteers go into places where people with a disability live and work, and they report back to the three boards of which she is the chair. Then those boards report to Parliament and the Public Advocate herself reports to Parliament.

The role of the Principal Legal Officer is to give advice to the Public Advocate and her staff.

Frank Guivarra,
Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS)

I’ve been involved in Aboriginal Justice for many years. My role is to run the day-to-day operations of the Legal Service throughout the state. We have Client Service Officers who are based in regional areas, and I’m involved with the access to justice on a national basis with various committees.

Tony Hayes
Manager, Brosnan Centre
Jesuit Social Services

I’ve been in this role for approximately seven months. I’ve been at the Brosnan Youth Services Program for the last seven years. I was involved in the group conferencing program, which is where I’ve had a lot of contact with police who have attended group conferences during that time. I’ve worked in the youth justice and child protection areas for a long time. The Brosnan Youth Services program, which has been going for 33 years works with young people in the Adult Corrections and Youth Justice fields. This includes a program for Indigenous people being released from Adult prisons. In the younger age group Brosnan staff are working with high risk young people who are on statutory community orders or getting out of youth training centres, youth justice centres.

Johnny King
Coordinator, Young Adult Programs, Brosnan Centre,
Jesuit Social Services

The Brosnan programs are related to young adults aged 18-25 years old coming out of custody:

Link Out is for men exiting adult prison;

Wisp works with young women coming out of prison;

Konnect is a state wide aboriginal post release service, which is being wholly managed at Brosnan Youth Services; and

Tails is a small project which works mainly with remand prisoners, chiefly a referral program for young men on remand, trying to find them options for bail or community-based orders when they have been sentenced.
I’ve been here for about 5 and a half years. I was a case manager with the pre-cursor to the Link Out program which was called Bridging the Gap. I was doing post-release case management with young men coming out of prison for a number of years and then moved into a number of roles and now I’m in this coordinating role.

Hugh de Kretser
Executive Officer,
Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria

We’re the peak body for Victoria’s 51 community legal centres. We’ve got a national association that we’re a member of. There are more than 200 community legal centres around Australia. In our law reform and advocacy here at the Federation we try and draw on the client experiences of the lawyers who are out there on the ground. And to do that we have working group structures – so community legal centre workers will come together and collaborate and share experiences and then work on recommendations to improve the system. It’s our job to coordinate and lead that in order to try and change the system for the better.

Tracie McDonald
Snr Sergeant,
Victoria Police

I’m in my 21st year with Victoria Police. I’m ordinarily a detective sergeant at detective training school, but at the moment I’m upgraded to acting senior sergeant on Project AIM, which is a project having a look at how we deliver investigation across our organisation, and I’m in the chief commissioner’s office doing that at the moment. Most of my career has been in investigations in one area or another. I have been at ESD. I’ve been a divisional detective, I’ve been at the Crime Department, and now I’m at detective training school, so that’s tended to be my focus during my career.

Anthony Mercer
Sergeant, Instructor, Centre for Investigation Training,
School of Applied Policing, Victoria Police

I’ve been in this organisation 20 years. I’m an instructor at what we used to call Detective Training School, now we call the Centre for Investigation Training. I’ve been there just over two years. I facilitate several subjects, which include note taking, explosive and arson investigation. I co-facilitate ethics and values training and I am the human rights representative for the whole of education. I deliver human rights training packages across all the ranks that come through the academy, from recruits all the way up to senior sergeants. At the moment I’m actually performing some upgraded duties in charge of one of the crews down there. My career spans over that 20-year period, obviously 14 years as an investigator or detective, but I’ve been a uniform sergeant at Collingwood; a uniform senior constable at Fitzroy and Richmond; been a divisional detective at Fitzroy and Richmond; and I’ve worked inner city for three years at Melbourne East and Melbourne West.

Brian Nolan
Sergeant,
Victoria Police

I’m currently at the Monash CIU (Criminal Investigation Unit) which has just amalgamated with Glen Waverley Oakleigh CI, so I’ve been there six years. Prior to that I was at Malvern CI for two years and I was at ESD for three. I was a uniform sergeant at Prahran for just over a year and have had roles at various CIs, including transit CI and Prahran CI.

OPI thanks all of these participants for their valuable contributions to this project.
To me, professionalism is about doing the best job you can (in a difficult job), and doing the best you can for your station, your colleagues, the society and the organisation. That means you have to know what you are doing, you have to try and improve yourself, do study, get experience, go through a whole range of situations in the job that you may not have done before. If you are not sure you ask people and that’s why your seniors are there to ask, because they have the experience. It is just doing the best you can with your abilities and your training and your knowledge and within the boundaries of the position. Policing is a hard job and you have got to have some framework in which to do your job and the values is one point of that framework that helps you do the job and know what to do. They might sound a bit airy fairy but they are very important and about real life.

(Tony Hayes)