



Towards a holistic approach to policing, community health, and public safety

Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron*

It is a privilege for me to open this issue, as incoming contributing editor to the journal. As a policing scholar, the role police play as part of community safety and well-being is one that I continuously scrutinize and interrogate with my Australian police students, as well as in my research. The point has been made in previous issues of the journal that the language around policing is shifting from strict law enforcement to more sophisticated, multi-faceted policing, crime prevention through social investment, and public health intervention.

This special issue continues this discussion and brings about new knowledge and insights about the evolving landscape of policing and public safety. Today, we bring together a diverse range of articles that reflect on policing structures and processes, with a particular focus on trauma-informed practices. As we explore these themes, it appears that the future of law enforcement lies in a holistic approach that not only prioritizes public safety but also recognizes the complexities of individual and societal vulnerabilities. And if you know me, this issue of vulnerability is one topic about which I am particularly passionate in my policing work.

But as I was saying before, the policing landscape is undeniably changing. The first contributions to this issue highlight some profound reshaping of policing structures and connection to communities. Christopher O'Connor and Ian Pepper's commentary on volunteering within Canadian policing highlights the potential for community engagement to strengthen policing efforts. Volunteering offers pathways for members of the public to actively and meaningfully participate in public safety, fostering trust and collaboration between law enforcement and communities. This piece serves as a reminder that policing is not a solitary endeavour, and instead, one that benefits from collective effort. Connor Fraser, Sarah Feutl, and Tala Ismaeil delve into the impacts of cannabis legalization on organized crime in Ontario and British Columbia. Their research provides a nuanced understanding of how policy changes can reshape criminal activities and influence law enforcement strategies, and their piece provides critical insights into some unintended consequences and necessary adjustments for law enforcement. The first section of this issue finishes with an article by Rosina

Mete, Brandon Djukic, and Christine Nielsen on the needs of medical laboratory professionals through the CSMLS Mental Health Toolkit. The article addresses the unique challenges faced by this often-overlooked group of practitioners. Their work underscores the importance of providing mental health support across various areas of specialization, recognizing that the well-being of those who work behind the scenes is just as crucial as that of those on the front-line. The toolkit they propose offers practical solutions for addressing the mental health needs of medical laboratory professionals, contributing to a more comprehensive approach to workplace wellness.

In February 2024, it was my privilege to help organize the Trauma Informed Policing and Law Enforcement Conference in Melbourne, Australia. It was spearheaded by Professor Peter Miller's extraordinary team at Deakin University. The conference was hosted by the Deakin University Centre for Drug use, Addictive and Anti-social behaviour Research (CEDAAR), alongside the Global Law Enforcement & Public Health Association Inc. (GLEPHA), and the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (TILES) at the University of Tasmania.

For a few years now, police have increasingly looked at becoming trauma-informed, and some have done so haphazardly. While some jurisdictions globally have started training their staff in it, some have started to include trauma-informed practice in their operating protocols and policies. The conference acknowledged that trauma-informed practice is of relevance to police, in a variety of ways, and was a first effort to consolidate and disseminate trauma-informed practice knowledge to police (and other) organizations about its application in the context of law enforcement and criminal justice. The second part of this special issue features contributions from some of the conference participants.

Ranjeeta Basu's article features her research on POWER training. The program is designed to improve officers' autonomic health, mindfulness, and social connection. In a profession marked by high stress and exposure to traumatic events, such training is essential for enhancing officers' resilience and overall effectiveness. Basu's work showcases the importance of supporting the mental and physical health

Correspondence to: Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron, Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies & Head of Discipline, Policing, School of Social Sciences, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia. **E-mail:** isabelle.bartkowiaktheron@utas.edu.au

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of officers to ensure they are equipped to serve communities with compassion and competence.

In a similar vein, the article that I contributed with one of my TILES colleagues, Cameron Atkinson, showcases our evaluation of trauma-informed policing from recruit training onward. Tasmania Police has embarked on a strong trauma-informed trajectory, and is pioneering an organization-wide series of training and professional development events to equip its entire membership with trauma-informed skills. Our study demonstrates the transformative potential of integrating trauma-informed principles early in an officer's career, preparing them to better understand and respond to the needs of vulnerable people. This approach benefits the public and also promotes a healthier work environment for officers, fostering a culture of self-care within law enforcement.

Katherine J. McLachlan's social innovation narrative on the ABCs of trauma-informed policing provides a compelling and comprehensive overview of its principles and practices. McLachlan's work serves as an essential primer for law enforcement professionals asking the "but how?" question, especially those who are seeking to implement trauma-informed practices in their work.

Kelly-Anne M. Humphries, Cher J. McGillivray, and R. A. Line Christophersen propose trauma-informed practice and response in policing as a means to reform how law enforcement addresses child sexual abuse and exploitation. Their article rethinks traditional policing methods and advocates for a trauma-informed response to survivors. Their work highlights the importance of protecting our most vulnerable and calls for systemic changes in how police are trained and supported.

Tebeje Molla's article, "Policing at the Speed of Trust," examines the interactions between police and trauma-impacted youth. It recognizes that effective policing requires patience, empathy, and a deep understanding of the challenges these individuals face. By fostering trust, police can play a pivotal role in supporting the healing and development of trauma-impacted youth.

A good issue of our journal would naturally finish on a book review. The one by Tirelo Modie-Moroka, Musa Dube, and Tumani Malinga presents an ecological system and

eco-feminist perspective on the associations between violence against the Earth and violence against women's bodies. The article challenges us to think beyond traditional boundaries of criminology and public safety, urging us to consider the broader environmental and societal contexts in which violence occurs. The authors offer what I thought is a powerful framework for understanding the interconnectedness of various forms of harm and the need for integrated responses.

Upon reading this extraordinary compilation of articles, I am pondering the systems landscape that they present. Policing is certainly becoming more sophisticated, but not necessarily complicated. What is certainly happening is that policing is increasingly on the right trajectory. It is learning from its past mistakes and adapting to societal change. The articles featured in this special issue certainly reflect this: a growing recognition of a more holistic approach to policing and public safety. One that is informed by a better, more acute understanding of trauma, of diverse social and environmental contexts, and of the importance of mental health and well-being for all. As law enforcement continues to evolve, it is embracing these insights and working towards a more compassionate and inclusive model of policing. The contributions to this issue offer valuable perspectives and practical solutions for advancing a new shaping of law enforcement, and provide a roadmap towards the future of community safety and well-being.

I am excited to join the impressive Contributing Editor Community as JCSWB prepares to enter its 10th year of publication. I encourage my worldwide colleagues in scholarship and practice to continue to add to our body of knowledge in LEPH and CSWB and to stay tuned for an intriguing new theme for 2025 in our open call for papers.

Happy reading!

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

*Director, Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies & Head of Discipline, Policing, School of Social Sciences, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia; Vice President, Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association.