

2020 ANZPAA Trends Analysis

Ten shifts shaping the post-2020 police operating environment

ANZPAA

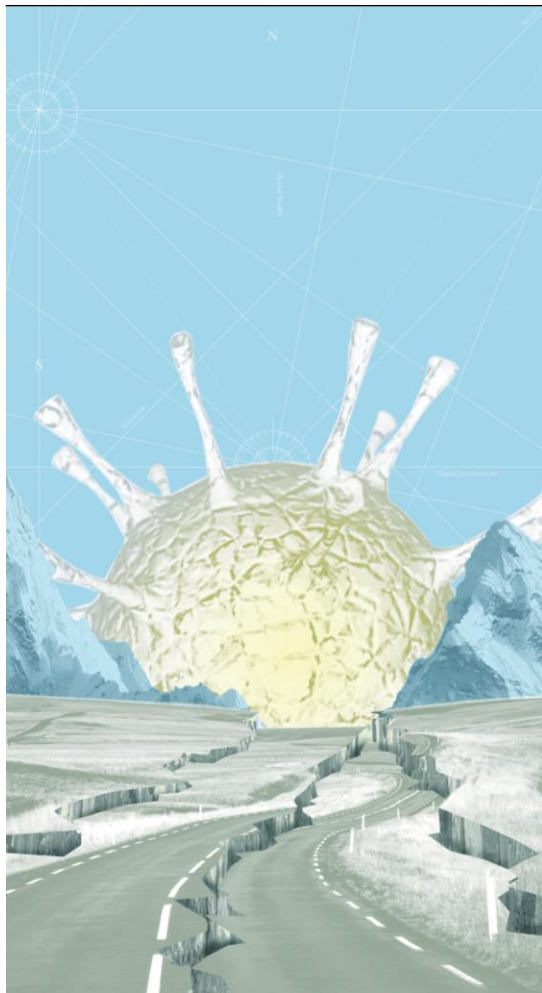
Australia New Zealand
Policing Advisory Agency

COVID-19 is likely to be the dominant force that shapes the operating environment for police in Australia and New Zealand over the short and medium term, and will create echoes over the long term.

A shock of the scale of COVID-19 has created cascading affects through our socio-economic systems, rapidly escalating the breadth and depth of complexity in the police operating environment.

What is certain is that we live in one of the most uncertain times in recent memory, and the full effects of the shifts we have collectively experienced throughout 2020 will not be fully understood for years to come. At present, we hover between the pre-COVID world and a new world that is still taking shape.

Ten significant shifts are expected to shape the police operating environment in the years ahead:



A new world (dis-) order	Tensions between global powers are escalating, posing a range of safety and security challenges.
The Great Covid Recession	A protracted recession will increase financial stresses on people, businesses and governments.
Big Government	Effective and trusted government has been key in 2020, but not everyone trusts, nor feels safe.
Borders and mobility	Changing dynamics in the movement of people could have lasting impacts on the allocation of police resources.
Digital acceleration	People and organisations have rapidly shifted online, with lasting impacts on cybercrimes and security risks.
Remote work	A normalisation of 'work from anywhere' will impact office footprints and organisational cultures.
Inequality and disadvantage	Socio-economic fault lines have deepened, and intergenerational tensions loom large.
Infodemic	The explosion of information, mis- and disinformation tests decision-makers, and will blur truth with opinion.
Social cohesion	Social bonds have been tested and individualists have emerged, challenging future collective action.
Mental health	Compounding stresses have challenged mental resilience but may have reduced stigma.

These shifts will shape the future of crime as well as a range of internal challenges like workforce and infrastructure management, capability development, and many others.

While some or many of these challenges may simply 'snap back' to pre-COVID levels once the pandemic has passed, many others may be forever disrupted or arrive at new equilibria. Old approaches to some perennial policing challenges may no longer be fit for the future.

Policing jurisdictions that can swiftly adapt to continuing shifts and rapid change – where 'change management' simply become 'management' – will be best placed to return value to the communities they serve well into the future.

Police cannot and should not seek to do it all alone. Strong and trusted relationships with government, the private sector, academia and the community are critical. In this future of complex and rapid change, partnership policing could be the defining paradigm of policing in the years ahead.