



# Garda Representative Association

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Dear Member,

Today's meeting of the Central Executive Committee was dominated by talks on the ongoing Rosters impasse and the actions taken by the Garda Commissioner in the past few weeks.

As stated in our last update, we received correspondence on behalf of the Commissioner last week which stated: *"... the Commissioner is of the view that all the internal mechanisms available through the Dispute Resolution procedures have been exhausted and he has now sought the assistance of the Conciliation Service of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)".* It also stated that Garda management would not be engaging in any further discussions in relation to rosters pending contact from the WRC.

We have since received correspondence from the WRC inviting the GRA, along with the other garda staff associations, DPER and the Dept of Justice to negotiations/conciliation chaired by the WRC at a date to be agreed.

On Monday evening last, March 7, the Commissioner then announced an extension of the Contingency Roster until September 3, 2023, on the AGS Portal without first engaging with the Representative bodies. This extension is the 15<sup>th</sup> such move over the past three years.

The Commissioner then conducted a live Newstalk radio interview this morning where he made a number of statements that we firmly contest and caused consternation to many members, including:

**Rosters:** The Commissioner stated that there are 'No Red Line Issues' regarding Rosters and that he is open to negotiation. This is not correct. The Commissioner has not moved from his red line position that 8 hour tours for non-Core members must be included in any revised roster pattern. It remains our position that the Commissioner closed negotiations with the GRA and acted prematurely by referring the matter to the WRC as we contend that the internal and conciliatory procedures were ongoing and had not been exhausted.

**Retention & Recruitment:** The Commissioner also sought to normalise issues relating to Retention, claiming the 350-400 attrition rate was affected by a mix of lost recruitment during Covid as well as normal retirements some 30 years on from a 'surge in recruitment' and that the 109 resignations in 2022 compared well against other police services and employments.

To be clear, it is the CEC's position that AGS is facing a recruitment and retention crisis on an alarming and unprecedented scale. Relevant statistics are:

- Budget 2022 promised 800 extra gardai but delivered less than 300. Budget 2023 last September promised an extra 1,000 gardai this year, yet we will be lucky to recruit 800
- This is at a time when we lose almost 350 gardai each year to retirements and resignations so we are facing a year on year decline. The target was for over 15,000 gardai yet we have just over 14,100 so we are actually DOWN almost 350 gardai since 2020. It must also be noted that there is potential for over 800 qualifying for retirement by the end of 2023
- But the real issue is the recent trend of resignations... just 41 left the force early in 2017 while 94 quit in 2021 and **109 left in 2022** (107 rank and file and 2 sergeants), an increase of almost 170% in those 5 years.

The GRA have held discussions at Executive and Divisional levels with both current and former members and we are aware that the main issues facing our members include:

- The rising number of assaults on our members (in 2022 there were what we regard as **285 SERIOUS ASSAULTS** on our members (up from 243 in 2021, almost 20% rise year on year)
- Pay, Pensions and Conditions. We are consistently told that pay and pension entitlements do not fairly match the mounting work and challenges involved
- Falling numbers mean an increased workload on our members, meaning extra stress and loss of home/life balance
- The aforementioned issues with Rosters, which has been dragging on for almost 3 years, means less certainty and predictability for our members, again affecting work/life balance as well as your mental health and wellbeing
- The current disciplinary processes with many members out of action through lengthy suspensions without fair or due process. Members are also concerned at an increased reliance on a discipline regime which punishes individual members, without acknowledging the shortfalls in training and the increasing and unsustainable workload.
- We are told that morale within the membership is overwhelmingly low as a result of the issues listed above.

We will now respond to the Commissioner to make these points and demand an urgent return to negotiations prior to any move to the WRC.

Regards,

Philip McAnenly,

I/General Secretary