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30 May 2011

Bruce Colcott
Senior Project Officer
Multicultural Advisory Unit
Victoria Police centre
Level 9, Building A
637 Flinders Street VIC 3005

Dear Bruce,

Thank you for asking the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) about religious and cultural obstacles facing potential police recruits in Victoria. As the roof body of Victorian Jewry, the JCCV represents the mosaic of religious, political, cultural, welfare, educational, religious and social associations operating in Victoria.

In our response, we have taken the liberty of outlining issues regarding uniform and the religious practices that may be obstacles to a career in policing.

In all cases of religious observance, it should be noted that people observe and practise their religion to varying degrees. In this respect the Jewish people are no different and hence some of the practices below will vary according to custom and individual culture. These practices involve:

1. [Shatnez](#) - a Jewish law that prohibits the wearing of fabric containing both wool and linen in one garment. This would need to be taken into consideration with regards to the Victorian Police Uniform if this is current policy.
2. Many orthodox women require a modest uniform so that all shirts cover the elbows and all skirts are at least 'knee length'. Trousers are not permissible for these women.
3. Most observant Jews will wear a head covering to fulfil the customary requirement that their head be covered at all times. Although these coverings can be worn under a police hat, they are included here to avoid any misunderstandings.
 - a. Men may wear a '[kippah](#)' or '[yarmulke](#)' which is a hemispherical or platter-shaped skullcap, usually of cloth.
 - b. Married women may wear a '[sheityl](#)' (wig).
4. Observant Jews will wear a [Tzitzit](#) or prayer shawl worn under clothing with or without the fringes out. The entire Tzitzit can be hidden under clothing although some people prefer to wear the fringes out.

5. Jewish people do not work on Jewish festivals, especially the High Holy Days ('*Yom Tovim*') and the Sabbath. These celebrations start on the evening prior, just before sundown and conclude on the final night of the festival, just after sundown. Consideration must be given to Jewish employees to ensure that they have these dates and times off work and some may request preparation time.
6. The provision of kosher food should always be made available where necessary (at functions or times away).

The above represents the issues VicPol will have to manage if looking to increase their recruitment. I stress again that religious practices and customs are highly individual and at all times when recruiting members from the Jewish community, it is about the best person for the job and being flexible and adaptable to accommodate.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute and please call if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Searle', written in a cursive style.

John Searle
President