# Episode 23 - You Cant Ask That - v4.mp3

**John Pratt:** [00:00:05.68] Hello and welcome to Tasmania Police's podcast, This is Tas Police. I'm Inspector John Pratt and I'll be your host as we chat to a wide range of Tasmanian police officers about why they joined the job and why others should too. We're coming to you today from Lutruwita, Tasmania. And before we start our conversation, I'd like to respectfully acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land upon which we work and pay our respects to elders past and present. We recognise the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the continuing custodians of the rich cultural heritage of Lutruwita, Tasmania. Today's episode of This is Tas Police is the last of series one, and we thought we'd take a different approach. Today we're going to ask some of the questions you've been curious about, but never felt brave enough to ask. You'll hear first hand from officers on the job about the qualities we are looking for in potential recruits, including fitness and age requirements, as well as education requirements and driving abilities. Let's get into it.

**Tash Freeman:** [00:01:14.06] Do you need to be big and strong to be a police officer? No, you do not. There is no specific thing that you need to be a police officer because policing is such a broad and vast skill set. So there are many different things that people possess that offer policing really, really good opportunities to excel. So communication skills, negotiation skills, it is a practical job. So it's important to be fit and healthy and resilient too, to be a police officer. But there's no specific physical requirement.

**Tania Curtis:** [00:01:47.36] Can you be too short or too old or young to join the police service? I think you can apply at 17.5, but you can't start until you're 18 and retirement is 65. But anywhere in between is fantastic. Time to join.

**Harriet Green:** [00:02:01.44] There's no height requirement anymore. Also.

**Fiona Russell:** [00:02:04.11] Police work requires people who are physically imposing. That's not correct. It's almost quite the opposite, really.

**Nikki Macintosh:** [00:02:12.30] Definitely. No.

**Matt Smith:** [00:02:13.14] So that's not correct.

**Fiona Russell:** [00:02:14.73] That's not what we're after at all. We're more about making the public feel safe and being able to identify with the average person and physically imposing people probably aren't the average person.

**Nikki Macintosh:** [00:02:27.39] I'm a relatively small person myself, and I don't think policing requires you to be a large person in order to get results from the jobs you go to. There are many positions in Tasmania police that a variety of people can fill. So it's not just about being a big and physically imposing person and communication is a major part of what we do. So that I think comes before any physical attributes you may or may not have.

**Matt Smith:** [00:02:55.11] Generally, the first response should be to try and talk and calm as opposed to being physical with someone. So yeah, certainly not.

**John Pratt:** [00:03:03.87] Members of Tasmania Police always try and resolve things as calmly and as quickly as possible, so it's not always essential to have to end up rolling around on the street with people. There's no ideal recruit in terms of age, size or strength and abilities. As long as applicants can comply with all of the requirements detailed on the recruiting website. We look for a wide range of people who have varying backgrounds and experiences, and our training provides them with the necessary skills to be an effective police officer and carry out policing duties as safely as possible. Applicants can apply from 17.5 years of age, but they must be 18 before starting in a recruit training course. Currently we have 96 recruits undertaking training and the youngest of those recruits is 18 and the oldest is 50.

**Josh Tringrove:** [00:03:46.89] Do you have to stay fit to stay in the force? That's a really good question and I'm sure there would be a lot of diverse answers. I would say yes. I think staying fit so that obviously our bodies and minds are better than the people that we're dealing with so that we can be more robust and resilient when it comes down to the nitty gritty of things.

**Harriet Green:** [00:04:06.47] So as a recruit, you do a lot of PT and there's obviously the requirements of your fitness levels to get into the force. Throughout my time working in busy stations like Launceston at Glenorchy, you do a lot of there's a lot of foot chases and yeah, there's some fence jumping, so it's always very beneficial to stay fit so that you can keep up with the work that's required of you.

**Harriet Green:** [00:04:28.01] Ordinarily, I would probably say it's relative to what area you're working in. The area I'm currently in, we do have to have a fairly high level of fitness, and majority of people that work with me are fit in everyday life and they maintain some kind of fitness because they personally want to, which then flows on into fitness for work. Obviously it's a lot easier and makes it safer for us, the fitter we are in our role. So generally we try and stay fit, so we make our job as easy as possible for ourselves.

**Troy Morrisby:** [00:05:02.58] Can you join if you have a criminal record, for example, drink driving? Well, you can join Tasmania Police if you have prior convictions. I think the most important thing is in regards to how serious those prior convictions are. I think if you've got a few speeding or parking tickets, I think you're pretty safe.

**Will Broadbridge:** [00:05:20.55] There's a complicated answer to that, which is low level criminal offences will be reviewed sort of case by case. The important thing is to just disclose those things early and be honest and truthful about them. And look, you know, people have done silly things in their earlier years and that's not going to be completely individual to that person. So as long as you disclose them early, they can be discussed and yeah, you can go from there.

**Callum Herbert:** [00:05:44.43] These things are all assessed on a case by case basis and you obviously have to provide all your records when you apply for Tas Police.

**John Pratt:** [00:05:51.29] It's important when you're making an application to join police, you detail any prior convictions that you may have. Applicants who have prior convictions for drink driving and serious driving offences and other matters can be excluded from being able to progress through the police application process. The full details of what sort of offences may prevent you from being a police applicant or delay your progress through the application process can be found on the police recruiting website.

**Harriet Green:** [00:06:17.22] Is it difficult to be a mother and a police officer? I think being a mother is difficult in its own sense, and I think being a police officer can also be difficult, I guess combining the two. It's just all about, I guess, balancing both kind of hats at work. I've definitely since having a baby, I've definitely become a bit of a mother to my colleagues and at home, I think I can definitely be a bit of a police officer. It's just a matter of balancing the two and incorporating them both into your normal life.

**Kristy Eyles:** [00:06:45.36] Can a woman do the same physical things in Tasmania Police as a man? Short answer, yes. Men and women are absolutely different and that's recognised early on through the recruiting phase where there are different physical standards applied and that's to recognise physiological differences between men and women. However, in the job I'm in search and rescue and I also ride the police motorbikes and both of those things are physically demanding and taxing. And I have met the exact same criteria that men have met and had no different barriers in place. For me to be able to excel in those areas, we're treated as equals and we're expected to be equally contributing members of the team. But that doesn't mean we all have to do the exact same thing. So the short answer to that question is absolutely yes.

**John Pratt:** [00:07:38.60] Tas Police offers flexible working arrangements where possible, making it easier to juggle family commitments and working commitments. Currently, around 37% of police work force are females. This is carried into the training environment where we currently have a recruit course of 77 recruits, 43% of those being female. We currently have Tasmania's first female commissioner and a considerable number of females holding the commissioned ranks of commander and inspector. In the operational areas we have females as motorcycle riders, search and rescue personnel, police divers, members of marine and rescue helicopter crew and nearly all other sections of Tas Police.

**Shannon Foden:** [00:08:16.66] Is being a police officer like it's portrayed in Brooklyn Nine-Nine or NYPD Blue? I wish it was. No, it is not. Sadly, it is. It is a bit of fun with your colleagues sometimes and in between jobs. But obviously there's times that you take it very seriously and, you know, you've got to be on on your A-game when you attend jobs and things like that. But there's always time for a bit of fun or joking or banter with your colleagues or even members of the community sometimes. But you've got to be on your A-game. So no, no, it is not. Unfortunately.

**Felicity Boyd:** [00:08:42.04] I would hope not. To be honest, I try and stay away from police related movies and shows. I just live and breathe policing, so I try and give myself a bit of reprieve there.

**John Pratt:** [00:08:54.28] Tv shows have unfortunately set up a very unrealistic expectation of what public can expect from police. Unfortunately, not all major crimes or serious incidents can be resolved in 60 minutes plus with ad breaks. And there's a lot more work that goes on behind the scenes than is actually shown.

**Troy Morrisby:** [00:09:10.81] Do police applicants need to already know a lot about self-defense laws and using firearms? No. I joined myself at 18 and and I had never, ever handled a firearm before. And so it was pretty confronting to to do it in the first stage, but it was done in a safe way. And I didn't know much about I didn't know anything about self-defense. In fact, I'd only been in a fight in school once. I learned a lot in self-defense here. And the instructors are outstanding. But don't be worried. You'll get taught in the academy. You don't need to know any of that before starting.

**Matt Smith:** [00:09:41.83] The training that you get at the academy pretty well covers that off. I certainly didn't know much about any of the laws or firearms before I went to the Academy.

**Will Broadbridge:** [00:09:49.03] Yeah, no, I don't think that any of those things are completely necessary. I mean, having a skill set in firearms, for example, might be helpful, however, we want to teach our police our way. So we sometimes you have to undo the bad habits and instill the way of training and the way of policing that we want to do. So, certainly not. That's what the courses are for, and you don't need to worry about not having experience in those areas.

**John Pratt:** [00:10:14.80] As part of all recruit training courses, recruits undergo a significant period of operational skills training, which encompasses firearms training, driver training and defensive tactics training. These skills enable police officers to safely undertake their duties when they're operational. Whilst the police officers are equipped with all these items, communication is still one of the greatest ways of dealing with incidents.

**Olivia Palmer:** [00:10:39.07] Do you need to be a really good driver? Standards being to join the police service is to have your provisional licence. So for me personally, I love cars. That's my passion. Outside of work, I'm into cars and going for drives and I've got a couple sitting at home that I'm working on at the moment, building up. But no, you don't need to be a really good driver. You do get the training provided to you here for, you know, urgent duty driving and defensive driving. So you'll be taught that from scratch.

**Shannon Foden:** [00:11:06.91] It pays to be able to be a careful driver. Obviously you need a bit of a good record. If you've got a bunch of demerit points against your name. I can't imagine that being real great. But yeah, I'd say it'd be good driver because obviously high pressure situations need to be able to be safe and secure. And obviously for members of the public and yourself.

**John Pratt:** [00:11:21.39] As part of their duties, members of Tas Police spend a lot of time on the road and driving vehicles in adverse conditions, poor weather and sometimes at speeds above the posted limit. For that reason, it's essential that our members are trained to drive safely and effectively, not only for themselves but for members of the public. During driver training, our recruits undertake manoeuvring vehicle training at slow speeds and driving at higher speeds for urgent duty driving situations. They also spend a significant time in the skidpan where they learn to manoeuvre and control cars in adverse situations. Like all aspects of policing, recruits that join Tasmania, police aren't expected to have high skills in relation to their driving when they commence, and the training that's provided throughout a recruit training course will give them that training and those skills to enable them to safely complete their duties.

**Tania Curtis:** [00:12:12.75] Do you need to have finished college or have a university degree? No, but it's really helpful if you can study and apply yourself to studying.

**Richard Sochachi:** [00:12:20.68] In short, the answer is no. It's been about 25 years since I've been at college, so the studying side of things is a bit rusty. However, there are plenty of staff on board, especially with Utas and all the academics there, that they give you all the help that you require. So don't worry if that's the thing that's going to stop you, join.

**Harriet Green:** [00:12:40.12] You definitely don't have to have a university degree to get into Tas Pol. There's some university that you'll study once you get in as a recruit in terms of finishing college. It'll just depend on the age of the applicant. Whilst it's preferred that you have finished year 12. If you're an older applicant and you have completed such things as an apprenticeship or likewise, and if you've only finished year ten, that's also fine.

**Josh Tringrove:** [00:13:02.74] No, I know that there's many ways to to come into the police force. In instance, I finished college, but a lot of my fellow colleagues have not finished college or haven't used university degree. Obviously throughout the police, you can get a university degree and they can help in that way, but it's not necessarily a must to have.

**Shannon Foden:** [00:13:21.13] What do you learn at the police academy? Everything. Everything you need to know. It's a bit of a crash course, so to speak, in the sense of you get taught a lot and there's a lot to take in. All the legislation and policies, procedures, general defence tactics, you know, obviously how to talk to people, how to if you have to go hands on and sort of wrestle with someone, you get taught that. Driver training, how to use a firearm if you've obviously never used them before. Yeah, you learn everything that was required to be able to go and be an operational police officer in a safe and orderly manner and, you know, to protect yourself and the wider community and colleagues. So it is jam packed, but it is you learn everything you need to learn.

**John Pratt:** [00:13:58.81] Currently, our recruit training courses are around 30 weeks in length and depending on where the recruits live, decides on whether they live at the academy or not. There's an early start for physical training, so people do need to be able to commence duty at about 6 am and work through until about 4.30pm. Recruit training consists of in lessons in relation to legislation, police practices and procedures, operational skills training. They also undertake a period of on the job training at the stations around the state. At present we also have a campus which operates in the north of the state that enables them to undertake their training in the Launceston area, which prevents them having to travel to Hobart. As well as the standard recruit training course, there's also an accelerated training program which is available for police officers from other police jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand who have done a minimum of four years duty post their graduation. This is a 12 week course which provides them with the necessary skills and familiarisation, with practices, procedures and legislation in Tasmania. Also to help people enter Tas Police is the career development program which enables students in years 11 and 12 to come to the academy for five days and have a snapshot of what it's like to undertake a recruit training program.

**Donna Adams:** [00:15:17.12] Do you have to cut your hair really short? The answer to that is you do need to have a hair style that is professional and that won't cause any work health and safety issues when you're operational and out in the field. We do expect our officers to have their hair off their collar. And for a female, if that means putting it up in a ponytail or a bun and for a male the same, then that reinforces the professional standards that are expected in the community, but also keeps you safe by not having your hair in a situation that could cause a work health and safety issue when you're grappling with an offender.

**John Pratt:** [00:15:53.84] Tasmania police have a high standard in respect to our dress and appearance. Having said that, we are moving with the times and we've recently updated our dress and appearance standards. Tattoos are now permitted unless they are on the face, hand and neck. Anybody with any questions in relation to how this would apply to them should contact the police recruiting office and discuss the situation with them.

**Troy Morrisby:** [00:16:16.64] We've all heard the stereotype about police loving doughnuts. Is it really true? Yes, it is very true. In my world, I don't want to live in a world where police don't like donuts and I don't want to work in a police force where police don't like donuts. So I want to be very strong about this. Yes, we are donut loving police.

**John Pratt:** [00:16:37.16] Thanks to The Simpsons, there's definitely a perception that police do love donuts, but that's not always the case. Some people do and some people don't. It's just an individual preference.

**John Pratt:** [00:16:54.30] That's it for today's episode. The final one for season one of this is Taz Police. In this series, we've chatted to our commissioner, Donna Adams, our recruitment services team, some new recruits, and we've experienced a day in the life of a constable on the beat in Launceston. We've also heard from an investigator of a long term missing persons case and jumped aboard one of our police vessels and heard what it's like to work for marine and rescue services. There have been some interesting and inspiring conversations from people who have experienced everything police has to offer. If you like what you heard today, please subscribe on your favourite podcast app. And while you're there, consider leaving us a review or a rating to let us know how we're going. You can also listen to all of our podcast episodes on our website at recruitment.police.tas.gov.au/podcast.