

Concerns over police contract

By JONATHON DART

POLICE in Canberra will be more expensive to fund and less accountable under a new contract signed last week, according to the Opposition and civil liberties groups.

The updated Police Purchase Agreement was signed between the Australian Federal Police and the ACT Government, outlining \$117.3 million to be spent over the next financial year.

The contract includes a

spending increase of \$19.4 million, which will cover the cost of the 40 additional police this year, and increased wages.

But Civil Liberties Australia director Lance Williamson criticised the contract this week for dropping key performance indicators.

He said that unlike last year, the number of complaints made against the police would not be factored into their performance rating.

"Vague accounting" methods had made it difficult

cult for the public to analyse police expenditure.

"You don't get any sense of where the money is going.

"They've made a big deal about the increase in police numbers, but there's also a cost increase of more than \$17 million, but there's no mention of where those costs are actually going.

"When you look at the performance measures, a lot of them have either been dropped or have stayed the same. So we haven't actually improved anything."

Mr Williamson also

criticised the Government for not spending enough on crime prevention. The \$3 million announced in the recent purchase agreement was a 25 per cent decrease from the previous year.

Opposition Leader Bill Stefaniak said he was "generally concerned" about the contract.

"There's vague measures. The older agreements specified how many activities the police would undertake each year, including random breath testing and traffic patrol hours," he said.

"We need something that's more measurable."

But ACT Police Minister Simon Corbell defended the high costs in the contract, pointing to the increased number of police on the beat and increased wages.

He also said that complaints against the police would be handled by the Federal Government's newly formed Law Enforcement and Integrity Commission, which would make the AFP more accountable, not less.

"We have a strong inde-

pendent watchdog and the number of substantiated complaints have always come in at well below the targets we set," he said.

"In 2004-2005, we had a target of 25 complaints, and received only four, which were substantiated. I absolutely back our police on the job they have done."

Mr Corbell said a detailed breakdown of expenditure would be included in the AFP's annual report, expected in September.