

Police add specialist vehicles to existing fleet

It's big, bullet proof and designed to withstand a bomb, and the Western Australia Police hope their new armour plated beast will help them battle terrorists and better respond to emergency situations.

Police today took carriage of the \$331,000 (\$230,000USD) Lenco Bearcat armoured police rescue vehicle and a second purpose built vehicle, a \$650,000 forward command vehicle which will act as a communications and

control centre for emergencies and other major events.

Weighing in at nine tonnes and powered by a V8 turbo diesel engine, the four-wheel-drive Bearcat can be used to rescue seriously injured people who may be helpless and unprotected at a major incident.

Western Australia Police Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan said that New South Wales police had a similar vehicle to the Bearcat*and used it regularly. He said the vehicles can be used in siege situations and natural disaster situations.

The Bearcat can be driven close to a victim and provide cover as officers recover injured people and remove them to safety.



The Bearcat replaces the obsolete World War II designed Saracen armoured personnel carrier that is now more than 40 years old.

Mr O'Callaghan said the forward command vehicle enabled full remote access to the police network, live video feeds from incident scenes and geospatial mapping capabilities.

Police Minister John Kobelke said the State Government funded the vehicles in response to heightened threat of terrorism.

"We do need to be aware that terrorism is possible and therefore we need to make sure that we have this equipment and its available should the need arise," he said.

* Lenco note: New South Wales Police does in fact own a 2004 Lenco Bearcat.