



Queensland
Human Rights
Commission

Strengthening the Service

Independent review of
workplace equality in the
Queensland Police Service



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The Commission thanks Professor Michelle Tuckey and Dr Yiqiong Li for their expert advice and contributions.

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Personal stories and narratives

The Commission heard from current and former QPS members who shared their experiences and perspectives during the Review's consultation phase. Many gave consent for their accounts to be published as short narratives or for their quotes to be used in this report.

To illustrate the experiences of people we spoke with, we present a selection of short narratives throughout this report. To protect the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms are used and information has been deidentified.

Some quotes have been edited for deidentification purposes.

Message from the Commissioner



The Queensland Police Service (QPS) is tasked with protecting all communities across the State – from Coolangatta to Saibai Island. Every day we hear about and see the challenging role police play in keeping people and communities safe. Police do this work day in, day out, often confronting very difficult situations, including crimes like domestic and family violence.

Recruiting and retaining a modern workforce equipped to protect all Queenslanders is not simple. The challenge is made harder by historical forces and systemic barriers that prevent QPS from drawing on the diversity and talent across our community.

In years past, law enforcement agencies valued attributes typically associated with traditional policing, involving the use of physical force. To this day attributes such as competitiveness, assertiveness, confidence and prioritising work over other commitments – traits more often modelled by white men than others in the community – are highly valued in QPS.

However, the nature of policing has changed considerably in recent decades. In 1990 Queensland Parliament sought to reflect the evolving role by changing the name of the Queensland Police Force to Queensland Police Service. QPS also changed its motto from ‘firmness with courtesy’ to ‘with honour we serve’. Yet the Service has continued to reflect a dominant male stereotype.

The impacts of this culture, including on community safety, were laid bare in A Call for Change – the landmark report of the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence. Judge Deborah Richards found ‘ample evidence’ of cultural issues within QPS that inhibit policing of domestic violence – including a culture where attitudes of misogyny, sexism and racism were allowed to flourish.

Our Strengthening the Service report marks the conclusion of stage one of a three-stage review into workplace equality in QPS recommended in A Call for Change. Already I have observed visible and promising signs of an organisation taking brave steps toward change. Commissioner Steve Gollschewski has shown strong support for the organisational change required to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce. Involvement with our Review from all levels of police demonstrates widespread recognition of the need for change.

A starting point to making inroads to any problem is first accepting, then reflecting on and learning from that problem. This Review has benefited from the clear findings of the Commission of Inquiry. We have therefore been able to focus our attention on systemic causes of workplace inequality within QPS, rather than making conclusions about the nature and extent of the problem. We know these issues are occurring. What we were interested in was why they are continuing and how they can be prevented from occurring in the future.

Change will not be easy, and leaders will need to continue to step up if they are to meet the challenges ahead, including resistance to change within QPS. This report makes a unique contribution in understanding the nature and location of resistance to measures that would improve workplace equality. This provides an opportunity for QPS to anticipate resistance when implementing recommendations and to harness episodes of resistance into opportunities for learning and cultural change.

This report also heralds a shift in the approach of the Commission in meeting its mandate to eliminate discrimination and sexual harassment. Recent amendments to Queensland's anti-discrimination law have created a positive duty on Queensland agencies and businesses, including QPS, to take steps to prevent discrimination and harassment before it occurs. Under this new framework, the Commission will work with duty holders to support and achieve compliance. The methodology adopted in this QPS project reflects this collaborative approach to effecting meaningful organisational change.

Collaboration is a two-way street, and I am extremely grateful to senior leadership within QPS for their willingness to welcome the transparency a review of this nature can offer. I am particularly grateful to former Commissioner Katarina Carroll and current Commissioner Steve Gollschewski for their personal commitment to this work. I also thank acting Deputy Commissioner Mark Kelly, who served as the Commission's contact point throughout the entire Review.

This Review has received invaluable guidance from our Advisory Panel members: Linda Williams, Thelma Schwartz, Kristen Hilton and Peter Forday, co-chaired by myself and the Police Commissioner. The Advisory Panel will continue to oversee the implementation and evaluation stages. I sincerely thank the panel for their generous contributions and their deep commitment to strengthening QPS. Their contribution is felt throughout this report.

The discipline of organisational psychology provided a critical lens for this Review, and we had the benefit of expert input from Professor Michelle Tuckey and Dr Yiqiong Li. I thank them both for their contributions.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to the team within the Commission who conducted this Review. Deputy Commissioner Jane Vasey led the Review from its outset, and this report is the product of her unyielding commitment to professional standards and the values of the Commission.

Lastly, and most importantly, I wish to acknowledge and thank all of the serving and former police officers who came forward to the Commission during the Review. Your experiences have shaped the report, and your bravery in coming forward reinforces the message my team so often heard – that you care deeply about your work and are committed to serving the State of Queensland.

I trust that we have made recommendations that will hasten the creation of a workplace environment where all communities in Queensland can be confident that they will be protected by QPS. I look forward to seeing QPS make that happen.



Scott McDougall
Queensland Human Rights Commissioner

Message from the Queensland Police Commissioner



My key focus as Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service is making our community safer and feeling safer, and better supporting our people and making them feel supported.

The two go hand in hand, and this report by the Queensland Human Rights Commission (QHRC) is an important step in the journey to future proof our organisation and enhance the service we provide to the community.

It is imperative that we meet community expectations and reflect the community we serve.

I acknowledge Commissioner Scott McDougall and his team at the QHRC for the collaborative manner in which they have approached this review.

I also thank the many members of QPS who provided their insights to the review by contributing to the survey, focus groups or other engagements coordinated by the QHRC.

It is integral that we learn from the lived experiences of our members when addressing issues of workplace equality.

Some of the information contained within this report is confronting. We must learn from this and build on the courage of those who contributed as we strive to become a more inclusive organisation.

I am committed to driving meaningful change within QPS, and this work will guide us in taking action.

This work will not happen in isolation but will progress in conjunction with a focus on transforming organisational culture and improving the wellbeing of our members.

I firmly believe that a more inclusive workforce will not only be better for our members but will ultimately set the organisation up to provide an enhanced service to the community.

I look forward to working with QPS members to progress these recommendations and drive a more inclusive culture that better reflects the community we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Steve Gollschewski'.

Steve Gollschewski APM
Queensland Police Commissioner

Message from the Advisory Panel

We are proud to have supported this Review and are confident that, if taken forward, it will lead to lasting change that strengthens the Queensland Police Service and improves policing in Queensland.

The Commission of Inquiry confirmed what many of those who have engaged or worked with QPS already knew: that workplace discrimination continues to afflict the organisation, directly impacting policing outcomes and corroding trust with the community.

The low numbers of women, First Nations and culturally diverse officers in the service is both a direct contributor to workplace discrimination and a consequence of it.

These challenges are not new and, sadly, they are not unique to QPS. Yet they must now be owned by QPS if the organisation is to meet the high standards the community expects of it.

We commend QPS for accepting the Commission of Inquiry's recommendation and engaging the Commission to undertake this Review.

We agreed to assist the Review because we each believe that increasing diversity and inclusion is essential to ensuring that police protect all members of the community. We engaged in this process because we believe it has the potential to generate positive change within QPS and within our communities.

Our confidence has been raised by the way in which the Queensland Human Rights Commission has steered the Review and the way QPS has engaged with this process.

This report represents a distinct step forward in the methodology and approach to independent reviews concerning workplace equality. This includes a focus on understanding attitudes within the organisation towards measures to improve workplace equality and how resistant views may be harnessed in generating cultural change.

The Queensland Human Rights Commission has brought to the surface the complex, systemic drivers of discrimination in QPS, which make a compelling case for change. Its approach is grounded in robust evidence, and from this evidence it has built a vision for the pathway forward, outlined in the recommendations of this report.

We have also been encouraged by the increasing commitment shown by the Commissioner of Police and the QPS leadership to owning the issues and taking forward the reforms recommended.

The commitment of leadership will determine whether QPS succeeds in these efforts, and we hope and trust that their commitment continues to grow beyond the publication of this report. Change will not be easy, and all stakeholders need to support QPS to prioritise and advance these reforms as a critical part of QPS's mission.

Queenslanders deserve a police service that represents and serves all members of the community, including police themselves.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the expertise and commitment to this work of Commissioner Scott McDougall, Deputy Commissioner and Review Lead, Jane Vasey, and the excellent team at the Queensland Human Rights Commission.

Kristen Hilton

Peter Forday

Thelma Schwartz

Linda Williams

Cultural acknowledgement

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of this land, their spirits and their legacy. The foundations laid by these ancestors – the First Nations peoples – give strength, inspiration and courage to current and future generations towards creating a better Queensland.

We pay our deepest respects to Elders past, present and emerging and their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities, and we acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

As we reflect on the past and hope for the future, we walk together on a shared journey of reconciliation where all Queenslanders will be equal and the diversity of Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities across Queensland are fully recognised, respected and valued by all.

We also acknowledge the historical relationship between First Nations people and the Queensland Police Service.

We would like to give special acknowledgment to those First Nations people who willingly gave their time for this review – as well as to those who felt unable. We thank you for your leadership and bravery.

Acknowledgement to police

The Commission is deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to this Review.

As an independent human rights agency coming into a police service to do a review, we are outsiders looking in. To obtain the depth of insights required for real change, we relied on the bravery, generosity and commitment of individuals to come forward to tell us about their experiences and their ideas for change.

We thank all the QPS members who participated in this Review through confidential conversations, focus groups, site visits and our survey. The experiences and insights you shared were the basis for our recommendations and we hope that you see the breadth of those experiences reflected in this report. We also acknowledge the officers harmed by sexism and racism in QPS over time who felt unable to share their experiences.

We are grateful to the many QPS officers and staff who assisted us in the Review, including through responding to information requests, publicising the consultation process and assisting with our site visits.

Where to go if you need help

The Commission acknowledges that the material in this report may cause distress. There are support services available for those who need them, including the services outlined in [Attachment A](#).



Glossary

Note on language

We know that language is important to our conversations about workplace equality. Words can reflect established power structures, enforce or disrupt myths, assumptions and attitudes, and shape whether someone's experiences are validated or ignored.

Inappropriate use of language can have stigmatising and other harmful effects. It can amplify individual experiences of discrimination, and it can perpetuate myths, stigma, and negative social attitudes that in turn may influence subsequent forms of systemic discrimination.

The use of language therefore has particular significance for this Review.

We also recognise that the meaning of terminology changes over time. We carefully considered the words we use in this report. Our intention is to use respectful, contemporary language.

Key terms

the Commission	The Queensland Human Rights Commission, including the team within the Commission with responsibility for carrying out the Review.
Commission of Inquiry	Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence.
Culturally diverse police	A person's cultural background is the cultural/ethnic group(s) to which they feel they belong or identify. This background may be the same as that of their parents, grandparents or heritage, or it may be the country the person was born in or has spent a great amount of time in or feels more closely tied to. ¹
Discrimination and experiences of discrimination	<p>During the Review, participants we spoke with referred to situations they experienced or witnessed which may amount to unlawful discrimination or sexual harassment. We did not investigate or inquire into allegations, receive or test evidence, or make any findings about potential breaches of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld). Such an approach is not within the Commission's jurisdiction and would be contrary to the purposes of this Review.</p> <p>We use the word 'discrimination' in this report to describe the experiences conveyed to the Commission by participants during the Review, including sex and race discrimination and sexual harassment. Those experiences may not always amount to conduct that would be considered a contravention of the Anti-Discrimination Act.</p> <p>We use the term 'experiences of discrimination' and not the words 'conduct that may amount to unlawful discrimination' or 'alleged discrimination'. Our intention is not to imply that all experiences of discrimination described in the report would amount to unlawful conduct. At the same time, we do not imply that those experiences are not unlawful, or to minimise them in any way.</p> <p>When discussing legal tests or thresholds, we have referred to discrimination within its legal meaning.</p>

<p>First Nations peoples</p>	<p>The words ‘First Nations’ and ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ are used interchangeably to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.</p> <p>We understand that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not comfortable with some of these words. We only mean respect when we used these words.</p>
<p>Participant</p>	<p>Any person who participated in a confidential conversation or focus group during the Review’s consultation phase.</p>
<p>Police from diverse backgrounds</p>	<p>QPS members who identify as women and/or First Nations people and/or from culturally diverse backgrounds. The term also recognises any additional protected attributes they may have. For readability we also use the term ‘diverse police’ throughout.</p>
<p>QPS members</p>	<p>Current, previous and prospective police officers and police liaison officers. The term does not include other staff members as defined in the Police Service Administration Act 1990 (Qld), such as protective services officers or officers of the public service assigned to perform other duties in the police service.</p>
<p>The Review</p>	<p>The activities and actions outlined in Recommendation 12 of the Commission of Inquiry report which have been authorised by the Commission and QPS.</p>
<p>Systemic discrimination</p>	<p>Policies, practices, norms or patterns of behaviour that are part of the structures of an organisation and create or perpetuate disadvantage for people with a certain attribute or attributes.</p>
<p>Workplace equality</p>	<p>Conditions in which all employees, including prospective employees, can fully participate in the workplace and access equal rewards, resources and opportunities. Achievement of workplace equality involves the elimination of structural inequalities and discrimination, including through substantive measures to achieve fair outcomes for those with protected attributes. Increasing diversity and inclusion contributes to greater workplace equality.</p>



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Executive summary

Our starting point

The 2022 Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence (Commission of Inquiry) found that discrimination is occurring and impacting the entire culture of QPS. Given that finding, our Review did not focus on identifying the nature and prevalence of discrimination in Queensland Police Service (QPS). Rather, we sought to understand why discrimination is continuing and what is holding QPS back from workplace equality.

The Queensland Human Rights Commission (the Commission) set out to identify the positive steps QPS should take to be a more equal workplace in which women, First Nations, and culturally diverse police are valued and included.

We focused on the system, seeking to identify how the structures, processes, culture and other elements of QPS work together to create a higher risk of discrimination and what steps can be taken to change that situation.

This report sets out a vision of systemic change that will assist QPS in moving forward along the inclusion continuum towards becoming a truly inclusive organisation. Our recommendations aim to create the conditions that will allow QPS to improve workplace equality across the service, aligning the vision of systemic change with operational priorities and the changing context of policing.

Key messages

The case for change is clear: workplace equality is an operational imperative	For QPS to become a modern police service that reflects the Queensland community and keeps it safe, it needs to redefine core values and address systemic discrimination and inequality. Without change, QPS will not attract and retain the best talent or make the most of the valuable police already in its ranks.
Systemic and cultural change is needed	The issues QPS faces are systemic and deeply embedded in its culture, formed over a long history. They cannot be solved with discipline or quick fixes. Bold leadership is needed to correct the course, tackle difficult cultural issues and set QPS on a path to workplace equality.
It is about protecting those who protect Queensland	Women, First Nations and culturally diverse police need to be safe at work. QPS needs to do more to proactively address the drivers of discrimination in its workplaces. They also need to support and empower those who experience discrimination to avoid further harm.

Diversity is a strength and needs to be a deliberate strategy

Police from diverse backgrounds remain under-represented, especially in leadership. This will not change until QPS dismantles structural barriers to recruitment and career advancement and brings standards in line with modern policing practice. QPS should use positive measures to uplift diversity and recognise disadvantage and past discrimination.

To become an employer of choice, QPS must embrace flexibility

Modern workplaces are changing. Increasingly, employees expect flexibility. This is not simple in a 24/7, 365 days-a-year policing environment, but QPS must innovate and meet the challenge to achieve workplace equality. By providing greater flexibility, QPS will attract more police from diverse backgrounds, promote the health and wellbeing of officers and reduce attrition.

About the Review

Establishing this Review

This Review was established following a recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry that QPS engage the Commission to undertake a program of work aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion of QPS members.²

In actioning this recommendation, the QPS leadership signalled their commitment to grappling with these issues to achieve meaningful change.

Scope and jurisdiction

The Review focused on the recruitment and retention of women, First Nations, and culturally diverse police.

As part of its statutory role and function, the Commission consults with organisations to assist them to prevent discrimination before it occurs. As this objective involves cultural change, often the best way to achieve our aim is by working closely with duty holders while maintaining our independence.

In working with QPS in this Review, we aimed to gain a deeper understanding of structural drivers of discrimination and identify systemic factors that will enable change. We undertook careful consultation to understand the operational environment and consulted with QPS on areas for change.

Governance

We established an Advisory Panel to provide expertise to the Review. The Advisory Panel was co-chaired by the Queensland Human Rights Commissioner and the Queensland Police Service Commissioner and included four external subject matter experts.

In undertaking the Review, QPS and the Commission committed to a series of guiding principles to support and inform decision-making.

Our approach

We undertook this Review between July 2023 and October 2024. We took a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to inform our recommendations.

During the Review, we gathered information by:

- conducting 137 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with QPS members, which we referred to as 'confidential conversations'
- visiting 21 police sites across Queensland, including regional and urban police stations and regional offices
- conducting a survey of current QPS police, Police Liaison Officers and recruits, which received 2,724 responses
- conducting five focus groups
- undertaking nine literature and desktop reviews
- requesting and reviewing 345 documents.



In developing recommendations, the Commission used a robust methodology to ensure they were targeted at achieving meaningful and systemic change and could be implemented effectively.

As part of this process, the Commission consulted on its recommendations before providing the draft report. This gave us sufficient time to refine and test recommendations, minimising the risk of unintended consequences and maximising the likelihood that they would be implemented.

The case for change

Addressing workplace equality in QPS is a business and operational imperative.

We identified four key benefits of workplace equality that will support QPS to keep its people and the community safe:

Address workforce shortages	In today's highly competitive labour market, making QPS a more attractive place to work and drawing from a wider talent pool is essential to addressing workforce shortages and ensuring QPS has enough police to do the job.
Build a safer, more productive workplace	Inclusive workplaces are safer workplaces. Preventing discrimination and reducing workplace harms helps to build an engaged and capable workforce that prioritises the health, safety and wellbeing of its members.
Create a capable and modern police service	Police are increasingly required to tackle complex social issues, and police from diverse backgrounds bring unique skills and experiences to the job.
Enhance community trust	A more diverse workforce creates a solid foundation for QPS to build trust and better reflect the community it serves.

Workplace equality is achievable but will not be easy

The Commission knows that it will not be easy for QPS to achieve workplace equality – QPS will need to grapple with some difficult issues.

There is unprecedented strain on recruitment in both Australian and international police services. We know QPS services are under increasing demand and pressure, and we acknowledge the critical services that police deliver to keep our communities safe.

This Review cannot address all challenges QPS is facing, but we are confident that the changes we propose will lead to better outcomes for the thousands of dedicated police who go above and beyond to serve Queensland every day.

We know that this is a long-term journey and that it will take time to address the issues we raise in this report. There are no quick fixes or blueprints to follow for QPS to get this right. It will require dedication over time, and there will be an element of trial and error.

QPS leadership, police at all levels, and key stakeholders, including unions and the Queensland Government, must make a collective effort to achieve a safe and inclusive workplace.

Four key challenges holding QPS back

Through our consultation during the Review, we identified four key challenges that are holding QPS back from becoming a more equal workplace.

1. The ‘ideal’ police officer is not diverse.

Historically, policing in Queensland has been dominated by white men. This has left a lasting imprint on QPS and has shaped its culture and ways of working. It has led to a particular identity being valued in the organisation – one that lines up with masculine norms, including competitiveness, assertiveness, and prioritisation of work over other commitments. This is influenced by social norms, including common perceptions that policing is a ‘naturally’ masculine occupation.

As a result, QPS rewards behaviour consistent with those norms and undervalues other attributes. This disadvantages police from diverse backgrounds, who feel like they cannot bring their full, authentic selves to work and need to conform to fit in. It also creates an environment that increases the risk of discrimination. Informal cultural power is concentrated in white male officers, creating power imbalances that can lead to discriminatory behaviour and prevent it from being challenged.

2. It’s not just a few bad apples – discrimination is systemic.

Women, First Nations, and culturally diverse police continue to face widespread, systemic discrimination in QPS. Most diverse police we spoke to had experienced workplace discrimination ranging from repeated negative interactions to serious, traumatic incidents. We heard about the profound and devastating impacts this has had on individuals and the organisation.

We observed an environment where discrimination was not only direct but also systemic and deeply entrenched in the culture of QPS. Workplace discrimination in QPS is often the outcome of systems, processes and practices that have been developed and reinforced over time – that is, it is systemic. This does not mean all or even most QPS members engage in discrimination. But the systemic nature of the discrimination means that it is able to thrive and continue, including in subtle forms. While QPS does need to root out problem individuals, it is systemic change that is most needed to address discrimination in the workplace. Systems produce what they are designed to produce, and right now, QPS’s systems discriminate against diverse police.

3. The organisation is stuck in the ‘merit trap’.

One of the key challenges holding QPS back from improving workplace equality is how ‘merit’ is understood, mythologised and implemented in the organisation. The idea behind merit – that everyone is treated the same based on their ability and experience – sounds fair on the surface. However, it covers over biases that disadvantage diverse police and preserve the status quo. In QPS, the application of ‘merit’ tends to favour those who resemble an ‘ideal’ police officer, and it is those officers who tend to get the most career development opportunities. By being so blind to diversity, ‘merit’ does not overtly discriminate, but produces unequal outcomes.

So equal treatment is never objectively equal. If QPS is to access the best talent and get the most out of its workforce, it will need to redefine merit and dismantle structural disadvantages. As part of this, it will need to address unconscious bias and introduce positive measures to ensure police from diverse backgrounds have a fair opportunity. This will not be easy – QPS members carefully protect merit and closely associate it with core values around fairness. Committed, sustained leadership will be needed to redefine merit in a way that fosters inclusion.

4. Many police want change, but there is resistance to real change.

The issues described in this report are longstanding and deeply entrenched in QPS's systems and culture. To address inequality in the organisation and achieve positive change, some of QPS's most deeply held values and ways of working must be reconstructed. This will permanently alter power dynamics and how benefits are distributed.

Any effort to make this kind of systemic and cultural change is likely to encounter resistance. Our survey on Workplace Fairness in QPS showed there are high levels of resistance to measures that would improve workplace equality. QPS members generally value diversity, but the survey showed many strongly believe that everyone should be treated the same and that any positive measures to uplift diverse police are unfair.

QPS should not avoid making real change just because it will encounter resistance, and it should not use resistance as an excuse to keep things the way they are. Resistance is a sign that real change is occurring. It can also be a platform for change. It presents an opportunity to hear from officers that are resistant or unsure about change, and unpack and reframe values that are often unquestioned and subconscious. If QPS fails to effectively harness resistance, the reforms recommended in this report will be much harder to implement and diverse police will be exposed to backlash and harm. This could set workplace equality efforts back.

The costs of not addressing discrimination

QPS must see change as a business imperative, because discrimination comes at a cost to its officers, its workplace and the community. It can lead to workforce challenges such as turnover, low commitment, absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, and physical and mental health problems.

Failure to address discrimination also affects QPS's reputation, undermining public perceptions and limiting QPS's ability to attract talent and investment. It can lead to grievances, injuries and litigation and have implications for performance.

Discrimination also harms the wellbeing of officers and can have profound and devastating personal impacts. It can take a mental and physical toll on officers, depleting their resources and making it more difficult to deal with the very challenging demands of policing. These impacts can also extend beyond the workplace, spilling over into personal relationships.

We also observed that discrimination can create a values misalignment for officers in that it creates a disconnect between their motivations for joining the police force and their experiences within the workplace. This can contribute to burnout and disillusionment.

Foundations for change

“ *I would completely re-evaluate our strategy to understand what diversity means to us. We really need to rethink what inclusion means and how we go about it.*³

Review participant

To realise workplace equality, QPS will need to create systemic and cultural change. This will require a fundamental shift in the way QPS thinks about diversity and inclusion.

It will require reflection and difficult conversations, and an understanding of how structures, cultures and ways of working give rise to discrimination and inequality.

Measures that focus on individual behaviours or technical fixes will not be enough – they may treat the symptoms but not the underlying causes.

To become a truly inclusive and diverse organisation, QPS must commit to continual improvement over many years. It will need to involve the whole of the organisation and its parts, especially its people.

During the Review, we saw that, increasingly, QPS recognised the level of long-term systemic change needed and the importance of prioritising workplace equality in its strategic agenda. This is an opportunity for QPS to pause, take stock of the recommendations in the report and chart a course forward before it responds.

To enable long-term, systemic change several foundational elements need to be in place.

Establishing a vision for inclusion

QPS has committed to improving diversity and inclusion, but it has not had a clear and compelling long-term vision for achieving it. Without a compelling vision to guide reforms, efforts will be rudderless and reactive.

To create urgency and importance, QPS must first understand that workplace equality is both a competitive advantage within a difficult labour market and core to its wider mission. It must see workplace equality as not just a corporate aspiration or compliance issue but something that will strengthen policing. And it must make the case for workplace equality to its stakeholders, including, first and foremost, its people.

In developing its vision, QPS must give police from diverse backgrounds a seat at the table. To rebuild their trust, QPS will also need to ensure their input is responded to with meaningful action.

The QPS Executive Leadership Team⁴ must own this vision and hold itself accountable for its implementation. This will send a clear and consistent signal that police from diverse backgrounds are valued and the organisation is serious about change. The Commission observed promising signs that the Executive Leadership Team is up to this challenge.

One of the Commission's key recommendations is that QPS translate its renewed vision for diversity and inclusion into a long-term workplace equality strategy. We are confident that this roadmap, supported by the recommendations of this report, can and will create change.

Planning and coordinating change

A strategic vision is critical to achieving workforce diversity. But the real challenge lies in implementing reforms.

Systemic change is more likely to be achieved when coordinated from the top. In an organisation as large and complex as QPS, systemic change will need to be carefully coordinated, and the focus will need to be sustained. Action will be needed at multiple levels and areas of QPS, and there must be cooperation among areas that have different priorities and lines of accountability. Many of the actions will be complementary to or conditional upon one another and will need to be carefully staged.

Strategies must be integrated into organisational planning at all levels of the organisation, including through regions, districts and local stations.

During our site visits throughout Queensland, the Commission learnt about many positive, locally led initiatives. These local solutions are cause for optimism and should be encouraged.

Redefining core values and harnessing resistance

When any organisation is trying to introduce widespread cultural change to address inequality, it is likely to encounter resistance. Resistance is not inherently bad. If there is no discomfort in making change, it is possible that is because that change is not meaningful.

Some may resist change to the status quo because they see it as compromising core values. This reflects the complexities and realities of uplifting workplace equality. Unfortunately, past efforts to increase diversity in QPS have led to confusion about whether initiatives are discriminatory or are necessary and justified to promote substantive equality.

QPS should anticipate that its workforce may resist initiatives to boost equality. It can use this as an opportunity to communicate its core values. Rather than expecting members to abandon values such as merit and fairness, QPS can redefine those values to show how they can assist in embracing diversity.

It will also be important to foster empathy, listen to people's perspectives and ensure officers have proximity to diversity. During our consultations, we identified that proximity to diversity can be a defining factor in whether people support diversity and inclusion initiatives. Several members reported that working alongside police from diverse backgrounds had broadened their understanding of the unique skills those members bring to policing and the challenges some can face.

QPS can and must secure support from champions for change. The Commission was encouraged by its consultations with many leaders and members who are already advocates for change and who hold credibility and influence.

Leveraging data and information

You cannot improve what you do not measure. QPS must have accurate data if it is to understand the issues that are holding it back from workplace equality and to inform strategic decision-making.

During the Review, the Commission observed limitations of the current workforce demographic data. Some of those issues stem from broader data limitations that affect the entire Queensland Government workforce.

By adopting a more systematic approach to data collection and analysis, QPS will be able to identify specific areas of concern and develop targeted strategies for improvement.

Monitoring and sustaining progress

We know that real change takes time.

The systemic reforms we call for in this report will take several years. While there is an urgent need for change and several priority actions need to be taken, most QPS members who spoke to the Commission understood that significant shifts would not occur overnight.

The pathway to workplace equality will be long and contain challenges. There will be roadblocks. Organisations like QPS are dynamic and constantly shifting, and they tend to revert to entrenched patterns of behaviour.

QPS will need to adapt and sustain both urgency and focus, in line with its overarching vision and strategy. To guide this journey and drive continual improvement, it is vital that QPS define and monitor outcomes, not outputs, and the indicators that demonstrate success.

Leading change

Leadership has a critical role to play in inclusion. Inclusion is about respect, and in a hierarchical organisation, respect is generated from the top down.⁵

Review participant

Leadership will make or break the reform agenda.

Committed, values-based leadership is essential for the type of systemic change QPS must make to realise workplace equality. Leaders must understand the current drivers of inequality so they are able to genuinely commit to the reform agenda. When making all strategic decisions, leaders must use a workplace equality lens so that diversity and inclusion are embedded in business as usual.

Throughout our consultations, leadership emerged as a common theme. We heard that there is a lack of faith in the senior leadership to act inclusively. We heard that measures to improve workplace equality have not been prioritised in the past. As a result, senior leadership has come to lack credibility.

To correct these issues, QPS leaders need to own the problem and actively dismantle its continuing legacy. It can do this by increasing diversity in the Executive Leadership Team, committing to exemplary behaviour, showing visible support for the reform agenda and being more accountable for genuine workplace equality outcomes.

Leaders will need to own the process of foundational change from the outset.

It is vital that the leadership is seen by the rest of the workforce as being united in the commitment to improving workplace equality. They must take individual and collective responsibility for the changes this Review recommends, set cultural and behavioural expectations, and meet those expectations themselves.

Senior leaders must make a long-term commitment to systemic reform to create workplace equality. They will need to resource this work sufficiently and remain dedicated even when change seems to stall.

That commitment is crucial for executing the change agenda, but it is not enough. Champions are needed across the whole organisation. We heard that middle managers⁶ are the cultural ambassadors of QPS – they are where the rubber hits the road, and they make individual decisions that really count. For example, they choose what shifts people work, who gets to work flexibly and who gets a training opportunity.

Planning is vital. In policing environments, there can be a 'bias to action' – that is, a tendency to immediately step in to 'fix' an issue or problem. QPS should resist this conditioning. It should not rush to action. Our recommendations afford QPS generous timeframes and enough discretion in how to best implement our recommendations.

The Executive Leadership Team needs to do some heavy lifting

If the Executive Leadership Team takes ownership of this work, its efforts will give it credibility with the QPS workforce.

The Executive Leadership Team itself needs to become more diverse. It is difficult for police from diverse backgrounds to imagine being a leader if they do not see others like them at the table.

The leadership pipeline will not become more diverse without intervention. There are disproportionately small numbers of women, First Nations and culturally diverse police in the commissioned officer ranks. QPS has already set itself a target of 30% for women in senior leadership roles. We recommend QPS establish minimum diversity targets for QPS members at each rank, including for sworn members in the Executive Leadership Team.

Pre-requisites for the leadership to drive this work effectively

Most importantly, leaders' behaviour must be exemplary. This means they must have a zero-tolerance approach to sexism and racism in any form, in any context. To rebuild trust with diverse members, leaders must act with integrity, show capacity for self-reflection and confirm ownership of personal history.

Leadership support for diversity and inclusion measures must be visible. What senior leaders say must be reflected in what they do. Leaders can also demonstrate commitment by making sure QPS members understand the benefits of diversity and managing resistant views.

Finally, accountability will help prioritise these issues for QPS. It is easy to make symbolic changes. What is much more challenging is implementing initiatives consistently and reliably, and with appropriate accountability mechanisms. Each of these aspects is essential for long-term success.

Modernising leadership styles

Command-and-control environments like policing can often be leader-centric and authority-dependent, and these approaches have a role to play. However, an authoritarian leadership style can be counterproductive when dealing with more complex actions, such as creating cultural change.

During consultations, we were told that some QPS members find it difficult to speak up under authoritarian leadership and that people do not feel confident or comfortable to express different opinions. People in the minority can feel that they must assimilate to get by rather than displaying the full advantage of their difference, and this is a loss for the organisation.

Modern leadership styles should be embraced. Inclusive leadership invites and appreciates the contribution of others. This style of leadership is likely to yield better results and create buy-in from the workforce who want to see real change.

Preventing harm and addressing risks of discrimination

“ *At no time have I ever felt like there’s a way that I can [report my experiences], where I’ll be in control, and if it’s too much for me, I can stop it. I don’t think that’s possible.*⁷

Review participant

During the Review, we heard that QPS’s response to discrimination largely relies on resolving complaints about conduct that has already happened – by the time a complaint gets to response stage, it will often have reached crisis point. This approach aligns with a perception of discrimination as an individual behavioural issue rather than a systemic one. For QPS to achieve workplace equality, it must shift its focus to preventing discrimination before it happens.

To make this shift, QPS needs to understand and take proactive steps to manage the risk of discrimination in its workplaces. This will be critical in mitigating the devastating impacts of discrimination and also meeting QPS’s legal obligations.

When discrimination does occur, QPS must have greater focus on early intervention to reduce the risk of further harm. It should use processes that are person-centred and trauma-informed so that police who experience discrimination feel heard, have their wishes respected and are not exposed to further harm when they raise an issue.

Proactively managing the risk of discrimination

Currently, QPS’s management of the risk of workplace discrimination is falling short. There appears to be limited understanding of their drivers or controls designed to manage them.

QPS needs to recognise and manage workplace discrimination as a significant organisational risk carrying individual, operational and legal consequences. As part of this, it must identify and manage factors in the QPS workplace that increase the likelihood of discrimination and harassment, such as the high stress environment, low levels of diversity, and power imbalances in the hierarchical structure.

To prioritise a preventative approach, it will be important to establish an organisation-wide prevention plan and direct greater investment into building preventative capacities through a dedicated team.

Building knowledge about discrimination and how to prevent it

It is important that QPS members understand what discrimination is and how to identify it in their working environment. They must also understand their rights and responsibilities.

In reviewing key workplace policies, we found that workplace behaviour policies are complex and legalistic and lack clarity and assurance. Policies that are available are not trauma-informed and do not support those who experience discrimination to understand the options available to them. For example, we heard from officers who felt they did not know how to report discrimination in a way that would allow them to retain some control over how it is handled.

To transfer organisational knowledge into action, workplace behaviours training needs strengthening. It is important that QPS cultivates a culture that supports its people to speak up and provides the resources to intervene safely. This will also support bystanders to become upstanders.

Supporting those who experience discrimination

QPS members who experience discrimination must have access to support options that meet their needs. They must feel safe and confident in accessing these options.


Even though several support options are available to QPS members who experience discrimination, we observed significant barriers to access, including a widespread lack of trust in internal services. A common concern was that sensitive information would not be kept confidential. Many officers said they worry that if they speak to a support person their information will be shared without their consent.

Some culturally diverse police also said they would be more likely to seek support if there were culturally appropriate support services available to them.

Mandatory reporting requirements may be having a ‘chilling effect’ – stopping people from seeking support. While these requirements are designed to ensure oversight over police conduct, the Commission heard that, in practice, people who experience discrimination do not have choice and control over how their complaint is managed. This can deter a person from reporting their experiences and probably leads to under-reporting. We recommend QPS carefully consider legal requirements governing mandatory reporting.

Responding to discrimination to reduce harm

Like the Commission of Inquiry and other internal reviews, we heard from many police who had never formally reported experiences of discrimination, including sexual assaults and other very serious incidents. The reasons for this were varied and depicted a culture in which reporting harmful conduct is not a safe or effective option for many diverse police.

 *The person who reports it ends up being the one who is targeted. I don't have the strength for that right now.⁸*

Review participant

We also heard about a culture of silence within the organisation that discourages police from reporting. Those who do report face backlash from their colleagues and the organisation. Several police told the Commission about instances when people who reported discrimination were labelled ‘dogs’ or faced similar abuse. Officers also expressed concerns that making a complaint would ‘put a target on their back’ and harm their career.

Concerns like these mean that discrimination is likely to be under-reported. Safer and more trustworthy reporting pathways are needed. The range of reporting options should be expanded so that officers can choose the pathway most appropriate for them.

When a report is made, systems in QPS to respond to incidents of discrimination are legalistic and often result in further harm. They focus on investigating individual behaviour and affording procedural fairness to perpetrators rather than ensuring the safety and wellbeing of those who experience discrimination. QPS needs more person-centred and trauma-informed mechanisms so it can intervene as early as possible, reduce harm and afford those who experience discrimination greater choice and control over how a matter is addressed.

Promoting accountability and performance

To effectively prevent and respond to discrimination, QPS needs to understand where discrimination is occurring, who is engaging in it, who is being impacted by it and why it might be occurring.

QPS data on discrimination and organisational responses in QPS is not comprehensive. Where it is collected, it is fragmented and spread across multiple teams.

There is a significant opportunity for QPS to invest in its capabilities to use data and intelligence to identify risks and patterns of discrimination and inform preventive actions and systemic interventions. Information about the nature and extent of discrimination, including case studies, should be shared with the workforce to provide transparency and build knowledge around standards of behaviour and individual and organisational consequences.

QPS should also develop a set of measurable indicators to assess how response systems are performing. Indicators should measure timeliness and quality, as well as whether processes are meeting the needs of those who experience discrimination, such as their level of satisfaction and safety. It is critical that QPS establish and monitor these indicators so it can identify issues and opportunities for continual improvement.

Recruiting the talent needed for a modern police service

“*In my last two years I haven't really had to use any of my accoutrements. It's because of my communication skills. It's not just luck it's to do with me being me and it's an advantage to be someone from a different culture.*⁹

Review participant

As the nature and demand of policing changes, QPS will need to ensure it has the right mix of people and skills to deal with the challenges and complexities of modern police work. QPS's recruitment strategy and standards need to reflect this changing context, accommodate a competitive labour market, and ensure that QPS has the right people in the job to strengthen the workplace and protect the community.

During our consultations, we heard that most police recognise the benefits of uplifting diversity in QPS through improvements in recruitment. They recognise the opportunities of expanding the talent pool, accessing more diverse skills, addressing workforce shortages, and effecting cultural change. However, we also heard about barriers within the recruitment standards that disproportionately impact people from diverse backgrounds.

We have identified steps QPS can take to ensure that, at a minimum, its recruitment standards are not discriminatory. We also identified options that QPS can use to assist it to be innovative and proactive in increasing diversity within its workforce. These approaches are required for strategic workforce planning and ensuring that QPS has the workforce it needs into the future.

Ensuring recruitment standards are lawful

To be accepted as a recruit into the QPS, candidates must meet requirements across several areas: physical, medical and psychological fitness, cognitive testing, swimming, integrity, and a panel interview. Later in their career, police officers may be required to meet additional physical standards to join some specialist areas.

To comply with the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld), QPS's recruitment standards must reflect the genuine occupational requirements of the role. Genuine occupational requirements are the essential, indispensable tasks that are required for the work of general duties policing – for example, strong communication skills to manage the complex challenges that police officers face in promoting public safety and upholding the law.

However, if recruitment standards are not often used and not retested at a later date, they need to be reconsidered. For example, swimming may not be a genuine occupational requirement if it is only required as part of the job every few years, if at all.

There is often a disconnect between the genuine occupational requirements of modern policing and the skills assessed during recruitment processes. During our Review, we identified that some of the current recruitment standards may not reflect the genuine occupational requirements of the role.

Barriers faced by police from diverse backgrounds

Standardised recruitment practices that may seem neutral can create greater barriers to recruitment of diverse officers and overlook valuable qualities that candidates from diverse backgrounds could bring to QPS.

In looking at the data, we saw that a person's ability to meet QPS recruitment standards can vary depending on their gender and cultural background.

For example, we found that:

- psychological testing may discriminate against police from diverse backgrounds – for example, women tend to be more likely to seek help for mental health conditions, meaning they may not pass the test
- some psychological tests may not be culturally valid for culturally diverse and First Nations people
- applicants who are born overseas may find a swimming test more challenging to pass
- physical fitness tests are harder to pass for women
- the panel interview is a barrier for culturally diverse applicants
- after joining the police service, women experience barriers to working in specialist units.

This is not about lowering standards; it is about removing bias. If barriers in the recruitment process are addressed, it will even the playing field for all applicants and ensure QPS is not unlawfully discriminating against people from diverse backgrounds.

A modern recruitment process

QPS can modernise its recruitment process by reviewing its recruitment standards to ensure they are genuine and objectively required.

In doing so, it will enhance its ability to align future work demands with the skills it needs to meet its current strategic objectives.

It is also important that QPS's recruitment system takes a more holistic approach to assessing potential recruits. The standards should not be seen as hurdles but, rather, a set of criteria against which to make a holistic assessment.

This would give QPS the flexibility to make decisions about an applicant's potential, particularly for skills that can be taught and developed, and applicants who would be suitable police officers will not be unnecessarily excluded from the recruitment process.

Developing and valuing a diverse, high-performing workforce

 *In this area, people get phone calls, not expressions of interest.¹⁰*

Review participant

Developing and valuing a diverse, high-performing workforce is an imperative part of realising workplace equality.

If QPS can ensure all police have equal access to career advancement, it will be more likely to fulfil its strategic vision of a highly skilled and capable workforce that understands and represents the community it serves.

Throughout our consultations, we heard that diverse officers face barriers in advancing through the organisation, which in turn reduces diversity at the top. This can limit the organisation's capacity to realise the benefits of diversity and affects retention.

It can also signal to diverse officers that diversity and inclusion are not valued in practice, even when the value of diversity is outwardly promoted.

Some work units have particularly low levels of diversity. This reflects what some participants told us about assumptions about gender and roles. For example, we heard that it was common for managers to assume women would work in roles such as child protection and corporate services, whereas other areas, such as detective units and 'high-risk' specialist operations teams, were considered to be the domain of men.

We were told that police were being overlooked for roles because they were not part of the 'boys' club' and that assumptions are made about women 'sleeping their way to the top'. We heard that police from diverse backgrounds are branded as 'diversity hires'. For example, one officer told us they would never have been promoted if they had been more vocal about their Aboriginality.

We also heard that assimilation was required to progress, that stereotypes hold people back, and that 'who you know' is strong currency for promotion.

Valuing performance, supporting career advancement and improving selections and appointments are critical to achieving workplace equality within QPS.

Valuing performance

QPS needs to create a culture that values performance, discourages negative behaviour, and provides rewards and incentives for positive behaviour.

QPS has made improvements to its development and performance system in recent years. However, we also observed that cultural factors continue to undermine and limit meaningful engagement with the system.

The performance system should capture how QPS officers contribute to the organisation's objectives to promote a diverse and inclusive workplace. It should also ensure that officers who have not met their performance requirements do not move up in the organisation.

It also needs to link performance feedback to selection processes to ensure candidates' suitability and potential are more accurately assessed.

If the reforms we recommend are implemented effectively, officers-in-charge will conduct regular and meaningful development and performance conversations with staff and reward them for positive workplace behaviour. At the same time, discrimination or sexual harassment will be recorded in the system and this information will be considered as part of promotional processes.

Career advancement opportunities

We know that a lack of access to informal networks and evaluation against the White male leadership standard are major barriers to diversity in leadership. Both of these factors were supported by information we obtained during the Review.

Acting opportunities play a key role in later promotional decisions. Therefore, they must be made available to everyone. We heard that relieving and higher duties decisions are often made based on proximity to the officer-in-charge, or 'who you know', rather than through an open and transparent selection process. For example, we heard that desired applicants are tapped on the shoulder by their officer-in-charge when an acting opportunity comes up.

We also identified that, currently, there is no consistent way of recording or reporting on acting and relieving opportunities. This means it is not possible to get a clear picture of whether acting opportunities are meeting QPS objectives around workplace equality or are entrenching the status quo.

To improve relieving and higher duties decisions, QPS will need to balance support for discretion with policies and procedures while not bogging the organisation down in red tape.

Selection processes could be less rigid and adjusted to better assess skills and potential.

A legislative amendment that allows pooled recruitment to be conducted across the whole organisation is also likely to improve the accessibility of the promotion system.

Selections and appointments

While the selections and appointments of sworn officers in QPS are made based on 'merit', we observed that myths and attitudes have developed about 'merit' and what it should entail.

These myths appear to influence selections and appointments in QPS. For example, we heard that sometimes officers are appointed to managerial positions even though they lack the skills to manage staff. This is based on an outdated perception that the 'ideal police officer' needs to have masculine characteristics, including being able to 'punch their way out' of situations.

'Merit' is formally defined in the Police Service Administration Act 1990 (Qld), which provides a list of what the merit of a police officer comprises. The Commission's view is that the Act should be amended to incorporate the 'best suited' approach to align with the modern updates to public sector laws. These changes should be made in conjunction with efforts to shift the culture and understandings around 'merit' in QPS.

Enabling flexible and inclusive workplaces

“ *It 100% depends on who your manager is ... It is a lottery depending on who you're working for at the time.*¹¹

Review participant

Offering flexibility and ensuring the workplace is inclusive are essential ingredients in creating workplace equality and are increasingly seen as expectations of a modern workplace. They signal that difference is not a barrier to successfully participating in the workplace and that it is seen and valued.

Providing opportunities for flexibility and ensuring the workplace is inclusive will strengthen the entire service. They will help everyone to feel they have a place in QPS. They are also important ways to promote the health and wellbeing of all officers, who provide such an invaluable service to our community.

Creating flexibility for frontline staff is not simple. Policing is a 24/7 job, 365 days a year. Regional and remote stations can present further challenges. However, QPS is not unique in having to implement different kinds of flexible work options for its officers, and it could learn from other organisations that have grappled with similar issues.

Throughout our consultations, the Commission heard that there are multiple systemic barriers to accessing flexible work within QPS – flexible work is stigmatised, the full range of flexible options are not utilised, policy and practice are not aligned, and a lack of transparency in decision-making leads to distrust by the workforce. We also heard that a ‘boys’ club’ persists and that diverse officers are often excluded in the workplace, undermining workforce inclusion – the key to leveraging the benefits of a diverse workforce.

Re-thinking flexible work

We often heard from managers and others that ‘flexible work’ was not feasible in an operational policing environment. However, managers typically associated flexible work with part-time hours, rather than other forms of flexibility. Even so, part-time hours are currently the exception rather than the rule in QPS and should be available to more people who want them.

While not all types of flexibility are ideal for every role, greater flexibility is nearly always achievable. There are a broad range of flexible work options. QPS can and must adapt workplace flexibility to suit the operational environment.

High operational demand is a reason to use flexibility rather than avoid it. Expanding the types of flexibility available could help relieve some of the pressure those high-demand environments place on frontline officers.

The Commission suggests that QPS adopt a trial-and-evaluate approach to broadening the flexibility options available to officers. Managers should be involved in planning how flexible work can be implemented in their stations, particularly because flexibility may look different in regional, remote or smaller stations.

Normalising flexible work

Importantly, flexible work must be normalised. We heard that stigma remains an issue and that many managers do not have the skills or experience to manage flexible teams well. Making flexible work part of business-as-usual requires a shift in thinking across all levels of the organisation.

QPS will need to shift the norms that have been shaped by the dominant culture. For example, people who work flexibly are currently not seen as team players when in fact they may well be very dedicated to their team. Many officers are likely to have competing priorities and needs outside of work at some point during their careers.

We have heard that flexible work is not consistently available across QPS, so arrangements can be perceived as unfair. We observed that this can translate into resentment and mistrust among colleagues. For example, we heard that, unless everyone gets exactly the same treatment, people feel hurt and may display resistance. Better transparency and consistency of decision-making across the organisation will ameliorate those risks and make the benefits of flexible work more apparent.

Governance structures are inadequate and should be adapted to take a more strategic approach and provide more transparency. Data collection also needs to be improved so that QPS has a better picture of flexibility across the organisation.

Making workforce planning more sophisticated

To be able to adapt to and make the most of these changes and not merely react to them, QPS needs to think strategically about its workforce and what it will look like in the future.

During our consultations we heard that the QPS approach to diversity and inclusion needs is often tokenistic. We also heard that there is a lack of planning around these workforce issues.

Workforce planning should take the modern workforce into account, and alternative models of filling positions, such as backfilling, must be part of the conversation.

Including everyone in the workplace

Finally, the workplace needs to become more inclusive. Many participants in our consultations described a 'boys' club' within QPS – this was a frequently reported issue.

We heard about widespread patterns of everyday/casual racism and sexism, and this was often in the form of jokes, banter or dark humour. Some see these as important for camaraderie and stress relief, without acknowledging the associated harms.

Culture plays an important role in being able to cope with the everyday stressors of being a police officer.

Social inclusion is important for all officers. There are enough pressures on police without adding to them by excluding some officers from the supportive network that their colleagues can provide.

We suggest QPS look to build team and workplace culture in an inclusive way.

Recommendations

Foundations for change

Recommendation 1

Respond to report and develop plan for implementation

- Within three months, QPS should publish a formal response to the report confirming whether it accepts or does not accept each recommendation.
- Within six months, QPS should publish a comprehensive action plan for implementing the recommendations, aligned with the Workplace Equality Strategy. The action plan should:
 - be led and owned by the Executive Leadership Team, with a Deputy Commissioner assigned responsibility to coordinate implementation
 - include measurable, time-bound goals
 - be regularly monitored and evaluated, with progress reported publicly and also internally through QPS governance frameworks.

Recommendation 2

Develop a vision for change through a new Workplace Equality Strategy

- Within six months, QPS should publish a strategy that outlines the long-term vision for becoming a diverse and inclusive organisation and achieving workplace equality. The strategy should:
 - make the case for diversity and inclusion as core to QPS's mission, improving policing outcomes, and achieving the organisation's strategic priorities
 - be led and owned by the Executive Leadership Team, with a Deputy Commissioner assigned responsibility to coordinate implementation
 - be linked to other organisational strategies and plans, including the QPS strategic plan
 - set out objectives and organisational priorities for progressing QPS along the inclusion continuum
 - allocate resources for implementation of the strategy
 - be designed and evaluated with the active participation of QPS members, particularly police from diverse backgrounds
 - incorporate an outcomes framework and establish performance indicators to monitor progress
 - be regularly monitored and evaluated, with progress reported publicly, and internally through QPS governance frameworks.
- QPS should establish minimum diversity targets for QPS members at each rank, including for sworn members in the Executive Leadership Team. In reporting on and communicating these targets, QPS should make clear that these targets are a minimum requirement and that QPS's approach to increasing diversity should be aspirational. These targets should be regularly reviewed and progressively increased to achieve QPS's objective of workplace equality.
- QPS should review and update all organisation-level strategies and plans to align with the Workplace Equality Strategy and require that annual operational plans at each level of the organisation incorporate actions to implement the strategy, with guidance on suggested processes and potential actions.

Recommendation 3

Communicate the vision for change

- The Communications, Culture and Engagement division should develop a whole-of-organisation plan for communicating the vision for change through the new Workplace Equality Strategy. The plan should include indicators to monitor the impact of communications activities on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.
- The plan should integrate all recommendations from this report as they relate to communicating with the QPS workforce, including:
 - redefining core values and harnessing resistance
 - utilising champions for change
 - providing clear and accessible guidance on discrimination.

Recommendation 4

Audit and refine policy and governance environment

- QPS should systematically audit all existing human resources and recruitment policies and procedures to identify barriers to workplace equality, systemic factors contributing to discrimination, and areas for improvement to progress diversity and inclusion and fulfil the organisation's obligations under Chapter 2 of the Public Sector Act 2022 (Qld).
- When organisational policies are developed, reviewed or updated, QPS should actively engage QPS members, including police from diverse backgrounds, in their design and evaluation and identify any implications for workplace equality.
- QPS should review and update terms of reference for the following governance bodies to outline their functions in relation to workplace equality (including preventing discrimination), ensure diversity in their membership, and provide that the Commissioner must promote diversity when appointing members:
 - Board of Management
 - Demand & Capability Committee
 - Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee.
- As part of the review, QPS should consider including the Executive Director of the First Nations Division as an ex officio member of the Board of Management.

Recommendation 5

Redefine core values and harness resistance

- After finalising the Workplace Equality Strategy, QPS should develop a comprehensive action plan, owned by the Executive Leadership Team, aimed at engaging with and harnessing resistance to diversity and inclusion initiatives. The action plan should focus on redefining and communicating core values that underpin resistance, including merit and fairness.
- The action plan should stipulate specific measures that QPS should take to harness resistance, including:
 - measures for leadership to secure workforce alignment and address and manage resistant views

- forming partnerships with police from diverse backgrounds to identify how resistance manifests and understand its impacts
- communicating the rationale for diversity and inclusion measures, including ensuring managers are equipped with talking points to address common points of resistance
- developing techniques to address unconscious bias and leverage proximity throughout the workforce, including storytelling and the use of narratives
- supporting and endorsing recompletion of the Commission's Workplace Fairness Survey during the Review evaluation phase to monitor and evaluate progress.

Recommendation 6

Work with internal champions for change

QPS should identify and engage a network of credible and influential leaders from within the organisation as champions of diversity and inclusion initiatives. QPS should provide champions with specific training, including on harnessing and managing resistance, calling out inappropriate behaviour and championing inclusion.

Recommendation 7

Embed workplace equality in industrial arrangements

- QPS should work with the Queensland Police Union of Employees and Queensland Police Commissioned Officers' Union to inform their members about the organisation's response to the report and its recommendations.
- QPS should review the Queensland Police Service Certified Agreement 2022 to identify systemic factors contributing to discrimination or barriers to workplace equality, including:
 - potential drivers of gender pay gaps
 - barriers to accessing flexible working arrangements
 - access to leave, including for reproductive health, cultural purposes, and other relevant areas.

Outcomes from the review should inform negotiations of the next certified agreement.

Recommendation 8

Provide external stakeholder support

- The Queensland Police Union of Employees and Queensland Police Commissioned Officers' Union should publicly affirm their commitment to improving workplace equality in QPS and encourage their members to support it.
- The Queensland Government should take opportunities to publicly express that improving workplace equality and addressing discrimination in QPS is a priority and core to improving policing outcomes, including in relation to family violence. This should be reflected in the ministerial charter letter issued to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Recommendation 9

Leverage data

- QPS should uplift its capacity to record, analyse and report on datasets related to diversity and inclusion, including:
 - workforce demographics
 - career progression of diverse QPS members, including in relation to recruitment, promotion, higher duties and retention
 - whole-of-workforce access to flexible work arrangements
 - workforce complaints.
- The Executive Leadership Team should receive regular briefings on key datasets, including facilitated sessions to discuss trends and collaboratively identify steps to improve short-term and long-term outcomes.

Recommendation 10

Monitor and evaluate progress and provide oversight

- QPS should regularly report on progress to facilitate monitoring and evaluation, including:
 - ensuring that progress on the Workplace Equality Strategy is a standing agenda item for all community advisory groups and other expert groups relevant to workplace equality
 - providing quarterly updates for the Board of Management on implementation of the report, including the action plan and Workplace Equality Strategy, and progress against the outcomes framework
 - establishing a dashboard that tracks progress on performance indicators for workplace equality and is accessible to the entire workforce
 - reporting progress on workplace equality, including status of performance indicators in the outcomes framework, in QPS's annual report.
- During the Implementation Phase of this Review, QPS should maintain the QPS Diversity Review Advisory Panel to provide expert guidance and oversight of implementation of the recommendations and at a minimum:
 - provide secretariat support to the panel
 - facilitate meetings at least twice a year
 - provide half-yearly updates on implementation. These updates should at least include minutes of meetings with community advisory and expert groups on discussions about the Workplace Equality Strategy and an annual report on progress against the outcomes framework.

Leading change

Recommendation 11

Make leadership support visible

- Within three months of this report, the Commissioner and the Executive Leadership Team should publish and deliver a joint statement, in both written and video format, to all QPS staff. The statement should outline:
 - their commitment to cultural change that will improve workplace equality, including by implementing recommendations from this Review
 - the case for change and how it benefits policing outcomes and QPS's core mission
 - that there is zero tolerance for all forms of discrimination in the workplace.
- Within 12 months of the report, the Commissioner should carry out a series of in-person engagement activities across QPS sites in Queensland to communicate the commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- The Commissioner and the Executive Leadership Team should show their continued commitment to cultural change related to the Workplace Equality Strategy through communications to QPS members on this topic at least four times per year.
- Within two years and before commencement of the Evaluation Phase, QPS should have made significant steps towards meeting diversity targets for sworn Executive Leadership Team members, which will be set in the Workplace Equality Strategy.

Recommendation 12

Lead by example

- To improve capability in driving cultural change through professional development of the Executive Leadership Team, QPS should use an external provider to implement feedback mechanisms for members of the Executive Leadership Team within six months, which include:
 - input from multiple sources, including peers and subordinates
 - an assessment of members' respectful and inclusive conduct, leadership for diversity and inclusion, and track record in fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace culture for all.
- QPS should require each Executive Leadership Team member to develop and implement a personal leadership action plan, which can be contained in members' performance development agreements, addressing their capability to:
 - model respectful and inclusive conduct
 - lead others in promoting respect and inclusion
 - foster a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace culture.

The plan should incorporate measurable indicators of progress and be in place within 12 months.

Recommendation 13

Hold leaders to account for change

- QPS should identify and implement performance indicators that prioritise diversity and inclusion for individual Executive Leadership Team members within nine months of this report. In identifying indicators, QPS should consult with diverse members. The indicators should measure members' contributions to achieving key objectives of the Workplace Equality Strategy.
- QPS should publish in the annual report (commencing in 2024–25) and communicate to all QPS members:
 - year-on-year Working for Queensland results about staff perception of QPS leaders and flexible work
 - what actions have been taken to improve those results each year.

Recommendation 14

Establish performance indicators for managers that prioritise diversity and inclusion

Within 12 months, QPS should implement performance indicators for managers that prioritise diversity and inclusion. QPS should consider indicators that:

- articulate a focus on respect and inclusion in the management framework
- ensure that modelling respectful and inclusive conduct and fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace culture are listed as criteria for performance evaluation and promotion for all manager roles
- measure ongoing professional development in managing diverse teams
- measure effective staff performance management and development, including through the performance management system, to ensure substantive and not just procedural adherence
- measure genuine consultation with QPS members under managers' supervision, as direct reports, to understand what strategies managers could use to build team and workplace culture in an inclusive way.

Preventing harm and addressing risk

Recommendation 15

Establish a plan to prevent discrimination

- Within six months, QPS should establish an organisation-wide prevention plan, owned by a designated unit, to prevent workplace discrimination. The prevention plan should:
 - build upon existing legislative frameworks to include all forms of discrimination and address intersectionality
 - be designed with the active participation of QPS members particularly police from diverse backgrounds
 - identify risks within QPS's working environment that could increase the likelihood of discrimination, including through using data and intelligence
 - outline the control measures being implemented to mitigate these risks and clearly allocate key responsibilities to specific units
 - indicate the resourcing that will be allocated to all work units tasked with preventing workplace discrimination
 - document the consequences for members who engage in discrimination
 - be regularly monitored and reviewed annually.
- QPS should ensure that prevention of workplace discrimination is a standing item on the Executive Leadership Team and Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee agendas.

Recommendation 16

Develop clear and accessible guidance on discrimination

- QPS should develop guidance materials tailored for:
 - the general workforce, with a focus on people who experience and witness discrimination, on how to identify discrimination, internal and external options to seek support, and options to report and address the behaviour
 - supervisors on how to identify discrimination, where they can seek guidance and advice, and options to address the behaviour, including when informal resolution may be safe and appropriate.
- The materials should be easy to understand and clearly communicate to the workforce:
 - definitions and examples of workplace discrimination and associated consequences
 - the implications of different reporting and response options, including timeframes, processes and how information would be handled, and their potential outcomes
 - details on specific support services available to QPS members.
- QPS should develop compulsory in-person training sessions to set the standard for QPS members in relation to workplace conduct and build knowledge of ways to prevent and respond to discrimination.

Recommendation 17

Improve trust in support services

QPS should review support services available to members who experience discrimination and develop and implement an action plan to increase access to and utilisation of services. The action plan should include:

- providing services tailored to culturally diverse and First Nations officers
- increasing trust in support services, including through strengthening confidentiality requirements for service providers.

Recommendation 18

Review mandatory reporting requirements

- QPS should review internal policies and frameworks concerning QPS members' mandatory reporting obligations under Part 6 of the Police Service Administration Act 1990 (Qld), including exemptions provided by the Commissioner, and put in place changes to ensure people who experience and witness discrimination are able to seek support and guidance while preserving control over whether a matter is formally reported. QPS should seek any legislative changes that it finds are necessary to give effect to that objective.
- QPS should update and provide clearer guidance for QPS members on their mandatory reporting obligations, including exemptions that can apply where a member seeks guidance or support. QPS should provide training for support personnel who hold exemptions.

Recommendation 19

Strengthen organisational systems to prevent harm

QPS should develop a new organisational system to detect and respond to risks and reports of discrimination within the workplace. The system should be independent from units responsible for investigating and responding to formal complaints and disciplinary matters. It should include:

- capability to use data and intelligence to identify risks of discrimination relating to work units or individuals
- mechanisms to proactively assess risks and work with work units and managers to address the systemic factors contributing to discrimination
- anonymous reporting pathways
- informal resolution pathways, including the use of professional, trained mediators to address discrimination and other negative workplace behaviours
- capacity to receive informal reports of discrimination and provide initial support and guidance on available support services and response pathways for people who experience and witness discrimination.

Recommendation 20

Embed victim-centred and trauma-informed practices

QPS should review and update all policies relating to workplace behaviour, complaints and disciplinary proceedings to embed victim-centred and trauma-informed practices, including through:

- empowering people who report discrimination to exercise choice and control in how a matter is handled by the organisation
- ensuring support for people who report or experience discrimination is integrated throughout complaints and disciplinary processes.

Recommendation 21

Monitor and improve response systems

QPS should develop indicators to monitor the performance of organisational systems for responding to discrimination. Indicators should include measures of timeliness, consistency, and satisfaction and safety of people who experience and witness discrimination. QPS should report on the status of indicators in its annual report.

Recommendation 22

Improve accountability of organisational response to discrimination

- In its annual report QPS should publish information on organisational responses to discrimination in the workplace, including matters resolved informally, complaints relating to discrimination, disciplinary outcomes, and systemic improvements made in response to issues.
- QPS should share de-identified case studies with all QPS members on the impacts of, and organisational responses to, workplace discrimination, to build awareness of the steps the organisation is taking and acceptable standards of behaviour.

Recruiting the talent needed for a modern police service

Recommendation 23

Review physical assessments in recruitment standards

- QPS should engage an external expert to undertake a review of QPS's recruitment standards to ensure they do not unlawfully discriminate against applicants. The expert should evaluate whether the standards reflect the genuine occupational requirements of:
 - the role of a general duties police officer
 - specialist roles in QPS which have less than 20% representation of women.

- The genuine occupational requirements review of recruitment standards should:
 - evaluate whether the physical assessments in QPS's recruitment standards reflect the genuine occupational requirements of these roles, including those required to be passed for entry into specialist units
 - recommend any changes to the standards to ensure they do not unlawfully discriminate against women, First Nations people or culturally diverse people
 - consider whether the requirement to be able to swim 100 metres is a genuine occupational requirement of a police officer and, accordingly, whether it should form part of the recruitment standards.

Recommendation 24

Ensure the psychological assessment process is culturally valid

- QPS should engage a First Nations and/or culturally diverse psychologist with expertise in the cultural validity of psychological testing to review QPS's psychological assessment processes and standards to ensure recruitment standards are not discriminating against women, First Nations or culturally diverse applicants. The review should apply to the psychological assessments and standards for the recruitment of general duties police officers and specialist units.
- The review should:
 - consider whether QPS should appoint First Nations or culturally diverse psychologists to undertake assessments of, and give advice in relation to, the psychological suitability of First Nations and culturally diverse applicants
 - review QPS's psychological assessment processes to ensure they are culturally valid for culturally diverse and First Nations applicants.

Recommendation 25

Enable a more holistic assessment of potential police recruits

QPS should consider the current recruitment standards and decision-making to incorporate a holistic consideration of an applicant's suitability and capacity to meet those standards. This may include ensuring an appropriate member of the Executive Leadership Team can make a final decision on their suitability having considered all relevant information.

Developing and valuing a diverse, high-performing workforce

Recommendation 26

Amend the Police Service Administration Act 1990

- Within 12 months, the Queensland Government should introduce legislation amending the Police Service Administration Act 1990 (Qld) to:
 - align with the principles underpinning recruitment and selection and the requirements for employment on merit and for equity and diversity set out in the Public Sector Act 2022 (Qld)
 - allow police officers of all ranks to be appointed to a police officer 'rank' and also to a police officer 'position'.
- Depending on the final wording adopted in the legislative amendment recommended above, the Queensland Government should also consider whether section 5.2(2)(b) of the Police Service Administration Act 1990 (Qld) is consistent with the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld), and the extent to which it requires amendment.

Recommendation 27

Consult with the Public Sector Commission following legislative changes

If the recommended amendments to the Police Service Administration Act 1990 (Qld) are made, QPS should update relevant directives, policies and any other internal governance documents in consultation with the Public Sector Commission.

Recommendation 28

Bring career advancement into alignment with the Public Sector Act 2022

- As part of the systematic audit of policies and procedures (see recommendation 4), QPS should undertake a review of its selection criteria, policies and guidance materials that relate to career advancement, including recruitment, promotions, higher duties and performance, in line with its obligations under Chapter 2 of the Public Sector Act 2022 (Qld).
- The review should consider:
 - ensuring QPS selection criteria recognise skill sets of police from diverse backgrounds
 - ensuring selection processes are equitable for police from diverse backgrounds
 - ensuring selection criteria and processes consider both positive and negative past performance
 - options to improve recruitment and selection processes to ensure accessibility, inclusion and cultural safety throughout the process – for example, by providing adjusted processes and procedures for police from diverse backgrounds
 - ensuring selection panel diversity has appropriate gender balance and cultural competency, and addresses panel members' unconscious biases
 - how processes can be improved to increase self-identification of protected attributes during a promotion process
 - how the number of police from diverse backgrounds being offered development opportunities through relieving and higher duties could be increased.

Recommendation 29

Improve the use of performance management processes

- QPS should implement strategies to increase the level of meaningful engagement with the performance management system.
- QPS should review and consider ways its performance management system can be improved to:
 - better equip managers and leaders to have difficult conversations
 - prioritise and recognise respectful and inclusive conduct
 - identify ways the skill sets of police from diverse backgrounds can be recorded and rewarded
 - align relieving and higher duties opportunities with reward and incentive programs.

Recommendation 30

Align performance and selection processes

QPS should review its performance and selection processes, including for relieving and higher duties, to consider ways performance metrics recorded in the performance management system can be provided to panels as part of selection processes.

Recommendation 31

Create transparent structures for acting and relieving opportunities

QPS should review its policies and procedures around appointment to acting and relieving opportunities, to ensure appointments are transparent, equitable and non-discriminatory. This review should consider ways the transparency of decisions can be increased by requiring work units to capture and appropriately report on information about who is relieving or appointed to higher duties, as well as who is eligible to be appointed to relieve or be appointed to higher duties.

Enabling flexible and inclusive workplaces

Recommendation 32

Normalise flexible work

- QPS should retain the current policy approach that does not require a reason for requesting flexible work.
- Within 12 months of this report, QPS should implement trial sites to test different forms of flexible work in different operational environments.
- QPS should educate and train all QPS members with supervisory responsibilities and provide dedicated human resources support in:
 - explaining the benefits of flexible work for individuals, teams and QPS
 - how to manage flexible teams
 - what are 'reasonable business grounds' as a basis for refusal.

- As part of the general communications about diversity and inclusion, QPS should profile success stories of officers accessing flexible work.
- When next considering the QPS rostering system, managing flexibility should be a key criterion in deciding which product to adopt.

Recommendation 33

Strengthen flexible work governance structures

- QPS should initiate a Community of Practice with at least two other agencies that are also implementing flexible work in 24/7 work environments and should meet at least twice a year.
- QPS should review the Flexible Work Committee's terms of reference to re-orientate the focus of this governance structure toward taking a more proactive, future focused and strategic approach to embedding flexibility across the workforce, particularly sworn police. The terms of reference should confirm that it:
 - can deal with all forms of flexible work, not just part-time hours
 - is responsible for monitoring progress on uptake of flexible work arrangements and evaluating whether flexible work arrangements are having positive effect on metrics such as staff turnover, absenteeism and staff wellbeing.
- Commencing within 12 months of this report, the Flexible Work Committee should report to the Commissioner every six months on whether stations, districts and regions are increasing the overall uptake of flexible work and, if they are not, what actions the Committee recommends for improvement.
- QPS should ensure collection of data and reporting to the Deputy Commissioner who is responsible for workplace equality on:
 - number of applications for flexible work arrangements and approvals/refusals
 - type of flexible work arrangements being applied for
 - demographic breakdown and station/work unit breakdown of applications/refusals
 - type of work being done prior to a flexible work arrangement and type of work done under the flexible work arrangement (to see if a flexible worker is being disadvantaged)
 - number of promotions and training opportunities given to officers on flexible work arrangements
 - whether Working for Queensland results in relation to flexible work have improved.

Recommendation 34

Improve flexible work policies

- QPS should update the Flexible Working Arrangements policy, including to clarify that applications can only be refused based on 'reasonable business grounds'. The policy should articulate in more specific detail considerations that should apply and include a checklist for managers to complete to assist with decision-making.
- QPS should draft and implement guidelines about flexible work arrangements other than part-time hours.
- QPS should update the Flexible Hours Agreements (Part Time) Guidelines with a view to:
 - highlighting that any extra hours above the part-time arrangements are only to be done by mutual agreement between the officer and their manager
 - clarifying that applications can only be refused based on 'reasonable business grounds'
 - allowing approval of applications to be done by the applicant's manager but that any refusal be signed off by the next level in the chain of command and then decided by the relevant committee if a dispute remains
 - including a mandatory review of flexible work arrangements every 12 months.

Recommendation 35

Improve workforce planning

- QPS should improve workforce planning by:
 - acting on the assumption that a significant proportion of the workforce will require flexibility and/or extended leave at some point in their career
 - forecasting what proportion of the workforce will require flexibility and/or extended leave at any point in time
 - embedding workplace flexibility and extended leave into future workforce planning mechanisms.
- QPS should trial a reliever pool or other mechanism that allows for backfilling of members on extended leave.

Recommendation 36

Make workplaces more inclusive

- QPS should ensure that annual operational plans for stations include strategies to build team and workplace culture in an inclusive way, developed in consultation with members.
- QPS should ensure that, in any future construction or renovation of physical spaces, the needs of a diverse workforce should be considered.

Endnotes

1. This definition is derived from '2023 APS Employee Census', *Australian Public Service Commission (Web Page)* www.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/2023%20APS%20Employee%20Census%20-%20questionnaire.pdf.
2. *A Call for Change: Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence* (Report, 2022) recommendation 12.
3. Confidential conversation, participant 38, November 2023.
4. The QPS Executive Leadership Team informs and operationalises strategy and monitors organisation wide risk and performance. Membership is approved by the Commissioner and currently includes the Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioners, the Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Commissioners, Heads of Divisions and Chief Superintendent, Crime and Corruption Commission (Police Group). As the scope of our Review only extends to sworn police, when we refer to the Executive Leadership Team, we generally focus on sworn members.
5. Confidential conversation, participant 88, March 2024.
6. Any member of QPS with managerial or supervisory responsibilities who is not a member of the Executive Leadership Team.
7. Confidential conversation, participant 33, November 2023.
8. Confidential conversation, participant 75, February 2024.
9. Confidential conversation, participant 64, February 2024.
10. Confidential conversation, participant 55, December 2023.
11. Confidential conversation, participant 51, December 2023.



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Our starting point

The Commission set out to identify the positive steps QPS should take to be a more equal workplace in which women, First Nations and culturally diverse police are valued and included.

Based on the findings in the Commission of Inquiry, our starting point was that discrimination is occurring and impacting the entire culture of QPS. Giving those findings, our review was not focused on identifying the nature and prevalence of discrimination in QPS. Rather, we sought to understand why discrimination is continuing and what is holding QPS back from workplace equality.

We focused on the system, seeking to identify how the structures, processes, culture and other elements of QPS work together to create a higher risk of discrimination and what steps can be taken that will enable change.

Benefits of workplace equality

Greater equality has benefits for every workplace. Addressing workplace equality is a business and operational imperative for QPS. We highlight four key benefits that will support QPS to keep its people safe and the community safe.

Address workforce shortages

In today's highly competitive labour market, making QPS a more attractive place to work is essential to addressing workforce shortages and ensuring QPS has enough police to do the job. Put simply, without change, QPS will not be a place that women, First Nations and culturally diverse people want to work.

By addressing barriers that prevent diverse individuals from becoming police officers, QPS can draw from a deeper pool of talent in recruiting new police across Queensland.

It will also help QPS to keep people in the job for longer, retain members and lower the rate of attrition. Most QPS members are highly motivated and driven to serve the community. However, negative experiences at work impact their job satisfaction, engagement and ultimately their decision to stay or leave.

Key factors that drive retention include a healthy work-life balance, a sense of camaraderie among peers, and feeling like everyone belongs in the organisation. At their core, each of these factors is influenced by workplace equality.

Police are more likely to stay with QPS if it creates an inclusive work environment where police feel valued and supported. Increased retention will assist QPS's organisational capacity and support its ability to keep the right people in the right place, at the right time.¹²

Build a safer, more productive workplace

Workplace equality helps to create fairer workplaces by fostering a culture of respect and inclusion. When police from different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives come together, it breaks down biases and encourages fair treatment for all.

Inclusive workplaces are safer workplaces. One of QPS's key strategic objectives is to build an engaged and capable workforce that prioritises the health, safety and wellbeing of its members.¹³ Improving diversity helps to reduce workplace harms, such as discrimination, that negatively impact individuals and the organisation. Ultimately, the initiatives proposed in this report aim to ensure police are engaged and productive and help reduce absenteeism, low commitment, turnover, and physical and mental health impacts of the difficult job police face every day.

It's about looking after those who look after Queenslanders.

“ I like looking after the younger police ... Female officers will tell me stuff that they won't tell the boys. The officers I work with know that I genuinely care about their welfare ... I think as a female and a mother, you've got a lot of skills in dealing with people and looking after people.¹⁴ ”

Create a capable and modern police service

Policing is becoming more complex. This is due to a range of factors, including technological changes and the police service's involvement in tackling complex social issues. This has required police to develop new sets of skills beyond those historically felt to be most important in policing.

“ By not having different people around, we inhibit the way we approach things.¹⁵ ”

Police from diverse backgrounds bring unique skills and experiences to the job.

“ Policing is all about communication and de-escalation ... I think that's why women are better. They have higher emotional intelligence overall ... It's just my lived experience I've observed over the years.¹⁶ ”

This fundamentally strengthens QPS's capability and operational effectiveness, driving better policing outcomes. The Commission of Inquiry found that sexist and misogynistic attitudes negatively impact on QPS responses to domestic and family violence.

When teams are inclusive, are cohesive and value the different strengths that each member brings, they can work smarter and more effectively.

“ [Leadership] see me as an asset because the Indigenous people around town consult and engage with me a bit better. ”

Narrative

Cristina's* story

*Not their real name

Cristina is a retired QPS officer with extensive experience in frontline policing.

Cristina told us about an instance when the policing skills she brought as a woman officer were overlooked by those who valued a more masculine approach to policing.

Cristina and another female officer had been first to arrive on scene at a serious domestic violence incident. She and the other officer had managed to successfully de-escalate the situation by communicating calmly with both parties.

Shortly after, their male colleagues arrived on the scene.

“Next minute, all the guys come in to back us up. But it was just absolute mayhem. Now they're wrestling on the floor and fighting and whatever ... I remember we both walked out that night and said: “If only they'd left it to us”.

During her time with QPS, Cristina viewed diversity as a strength and actively recognised the unique skills each officer brought to their role.

She told us,

“*I had the belief that every police officer I met was good at something ... We were all good at different things, and that's why you had to work together.*”

Enhance community trust

Being multilingual is a huge advantage for the QPS.¹⁷

A more diverse workforce creates a solid foundation for QPS to better reflect the community it serves.

By reflecting the diversity of the Queensland population, QPS can better address the needs of different groups within Queensland's communities.

When members from the community know there is an employee in Queensland Police Service from their country, they are a lot more inclined to engage with police.¹⁸

Review participant

Greater diversity and cross-cultural capability are essential for building trust within the community. People who trust the police are more likely to cooperate and to report crimes and their own victimisation.¹⁹

If I can make it just 5% better for the next generation of police and unsworn members that are coming up, especially for our members that we are sending out to our [First Nations] communities, if I can make it better for them it's better for the community and it helps reframe that relationship.²⁰

Workplace equality is achievable, but will not be easy

The Commission knows that achieving workplace equality will not be easy and that this work will require QPS to grapple with difficult issues.

We know there is unprecedented strain on recruitment in all Australian police forces and internationally. We know there is increasing demand and pressure on QPS and acknowledge the critical services that police deliver to keep our communities safe.

This Review cannot address all the internal and external challenges QPS is facing. However, we are confident that the changes proposed will create better outcomes for the thousands of dedicated police who go above and beyond to serve Queensland every day.

We know that this is a long-term journey and that addressing the issues raised in this report will take time. There are no quick fixes or blueprints to follow for QPS to get this right. It will require dedication over time and involve an element of trial and error.

Achieving a safe and inclusive workplace will require the collective effort of QPS leadership, police across all levels of the organisation and key stakeholders, including unions and the Queensland Government.

QPS is facing increased operational pressures

Workplace and operational pressures are keenly felt at all levels of QPS and exacerbate systemic factors that limit equality.

📌 To fill shifts 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, it is very challenging.²¹

Filling shifts is a real challenge for QPS, especially in general duties and smaller stations, many of which have unfilled vacancies. This places pressure on frontline officers, who work extended hours and are highly conscious of the impact of leave on their team.

📌 I was on call every single night ... When there is a big job on, you just work. I've worked 22 hours straight before.²²

It also contributes to scepticism about those who take leave or engage in flexible work, which increases pressure on officers-in-charge and impacts their approach to flexible work. These operational pressures strain cohesion in the workplace and contribute to sexism, racism and other harmful behaviour, which contribute to further absenteeism and loss of productivity.

📌 You basically are on call most of the time, and women with young families just can't sustain it.²³

These pressures are magnified by the political environment, in which crime and the police response have been high on the agenda.

However, alleviating operational pressures and meeting demand are significant reasons for QPS to support diversity and inclusion initiatives. Greater workplace equality can help address workplace shortages. Further, by increasing flexibility for police who are going through key life stages such as parenthood, QPS can ease the burden police face by retaining and getting the most out of its members.

The job is challenging, and it's changing

Changes to QPS's operating environment have seen police take on an increased volume of work in responding to domestic and family violence and other complex social issues. These changes have impacted the frontline workforce, contributing to a sense of overwhelm due to the heightened psychological and administrative demands of the job.

Police told us that the lack of variety in their day-to-day work contributes to fatigue and burnout, reduces their capacity to undertake proactive policing projects, and impacts their overall job satisfaction. We also heard that the changing workplace culture means that informal support systems and camaraderie are no longer the protective factor they once were.²⁴

📌 General duties is probably the most challenging area in policing at the moment ... Their work list is just domestic violence, domestic violence, domestic violence ... It's relentless.²⁵

There appears to be a disconnect between expectation and experience for police in Queensland. Those who joined QPS with the idea of providing traditional community service and law enforcement are unlikely to have anticipated the frequent exposure to domestic and family violence, and this misalignment is impacting the retention of new police.²⁶

📌 We are losing numbers because you're getting people come in and wanting to help the community and be police officers, [yet they are] doing domestic violence ... They're gone after three to four months.²⁷

Cultural, linguistic, socio-economic and other factors can increase the complexity of individual domestic and family violence matters. These more complex matters require an even more sophisticated policing response.

Diverse teams are well equipped to respond to complex social issues by providing the cultural insights and communication skills needed to balance the needs of different communities.²⁸

Change will require QPS to confront difficult issues

Many of the issues discussed in this report are longstanding. They stem from historical legacies, embedded and reinforced over many years. Some have been too difficult and complex for QPS to deal with and have been given low priority amidst the other demands and issues that QPS faces.

Compounding this, QPS has comparatively low rates of turnover among its sworn workforce, with many police staying in the job for a large portion, if not all, of their career. This limits the influence of ideas and values from other sectors and new generations of police. However, this is changing, as turnover has doubled from 2.7% to 5.5% in the last four years.²⁹ Some of the changes that QPS needs to make will challenge norms and expectations that certain police value. For example, changes to promotion and career development processes may be perceived as threatening career progression expectations, particularly those of long-serving police.

Confronting these difficult issues may not always be popular, but QPS will need to show the leadership and vision to bring the workforce along on the journey.

Four key challenges holding QPS back from achieving workplace equality

Through the Review we heard about a range of challenges relating to QPS's culture, structures, processes and people. Current and former police officers shared unique stories and views that reflect shared elements of broader organisational issues. These stories, while deeply personal, reveal patterns of entrenched systems that perpetuate discrimination, creating an environment in which inequality persists. Collectively, these experiences point to a need for structural reform and cultural shifts within the organisation to foster inclusion and fairness for all members.

Drawing on all forms of consultation we conducted across the Review, we identified four key challenges that connected and explained many of the things we heard and observed.

These four challenges help to explain why QPS has struggled to recruit and retain women, First Nations and culturally diverse police, and reflect the Queensland community. They also pinpoint the key systemic challenges that need to be resolved for QPS to succeed in becoming a more equal workplace. While they do not capture everything we heard and observed, they underpin many of the issues discussed in this report.

1. The 'ideal' police officer is not diverse

Policing in Queensland has historically been dominated by white men. Throughout its history, QPS has been mostly made up of white male police officers who have, in turn, also occupied almost all its leadership positions.

Inevitably, this has left a lasting imprint on the organisation, shaping its culture and ways of working. It has led to a particular identity being valued in the organisation – one that lines up with masculine norms, including competitiveness, assertiveness, confidence, self-reliance, and prioritisation of work over other commitments. This also shapes perceptions about what types of police work are important and who is best suited to perform them. These characteristics are not shared by many diverse officers and, in fact, do not represent many men in QPS.

QPS's culture and ways of working form a cycle that reinforces this by rewarding behaviour consistent with these norms and excluding behaviour that does not fit the mould. For example, career pathways favour officers (mostly men) who model these norms in their police work, social life and leadership style. Diverse officers need to assimilate and perform these values if they want to get ahead. It also makes it harder for diverse officers to speak up about discrimination, as it leaves them on the outer.³⁰

This is not unique to QPS or entirely of its making

In many ways, this image of the ideal police officer mirrors social norms and community expectations of the police – men who turn up to do a tough job and protect the community.³¹ There is a common perception that policing is a ‘naturally’ masculine occupation that certain men gravitate to.³²

This perception is also reinforced by operational pressures and work systems in QPS. Increasing operational demand sustains an increasing need and focus for ‘bodies on the ground’. Due to the way staffing and rostering is managed, providing flexible work arrangements decreases the resources available on the ground and makes rostering more complex. Officers who need part-time or flexible work arrangements to manage caring or other responsibilities are perceived as letting the team down.

During our Review we observed that, while these norms have been cemented over many years and remain deeply embedded in QPS, they are shifting. Diverse officers and new generations of police are influencing change but still need to conform to fit in. Our survey of attitudes towards diversity and inclusion in QPS found that recruits were more likely to value diversity and be open to equity initiatives than ranked police. This suggests that, as officers spend time in QPS, their attitudes shift and adapt to the organisational norms and expectations.

The norm of the ‘ideal’ police-man has several negative impacts for QPS

Diverse officers feel like they need to conform to fit in, which is a recognised barrier in policing, and they are not able to bring their full, authentic selves to work.³³ Meanwhile, officers from the majority group clearly see diverse officers as different or ‘other’, and new officers learn and tend to adopt the majority view. This is a barrier to diverse officers joining and staying in QPS, undermines workplace cohesion and means that QPS does not bring the best out in its workforce. Modern police work is changing and requires teams with a wider set of skills than those found in the traditional model of policing.

It also creates an environment that increases the risk of discrimination. Informal cultural power is concentrated in white male officers, creating power imbalances that can lead to discriminatory behaviour and prevent it from being challenged. When the stereotype of the ‘ideal’ police officer and ways of working come under perceived threat – by diverse officers and others that challenge the status quo – exclusion and discrimination can be ways to defend the identity and maintain established power structures.³⁴ Diverse officers may even discriminate against others to fit in and get ahead.

This picture highlights the complex nature of the challenges QPS faces, which are deeply embedded in its history, culture and ways of working. Throughout the Review, we observed increasing awareness of this and willingness to change among leaders and officers in QPS.

2. It’s not just a few bad apples – discrimination is systemic

Women, First Nations and culturally diverse police continue to face widespread and systemic discrimination in QPS. Too often diverse police who work to keep Queenslanders safe are not safe and are discriminated against in their own workplace.

Most diverse police we spoke to had experienced workplace discrimination. They shared a wide spectrum of experiences, ranging from repeated negative interactions that built up over time to serious, traumatic incidents. Some police had normalised experiences of discrimination and did not recognise or identify it as discriminatory. Some accounts were harrowing.

While we were often told the workplace had improved, we heard about many incidents that were recent and ongoing. Many officers also reflected on how their earlier negative experiences had a long legacy, undermining their trust in the organisation and their colleagues, especially when they did not see change occurring. We often heard that QPS was like a family. Discrimination from within had a more painful and lasting impact than discrimination they may have experienced from the public.

Systems produce what they are designed to produce, and right now, QPS's systems disadvantage and discriminate against diverse police

There is a common misconception that discrimination involves direct, intentional, individual-level actions and interactions. However, these are the tip of the iceberg. Workplace discrimination is often deeper and wider than that – it is the outcome of systems, processes and practices developed and reinforced over time, which shape rather than stem from individual behaviours.³⁵

When the 'ideal' officer is not diverse, a cultural expectation develops that members should express this identity, and other characteristics are rejected or suppressed. In these environments, discrimination is not just about isolated, intentional acts by people who may be thought of as 'racist' or 'sexist' – it is also a product of an environment and culture that has a long and complex history. In this way, discrimination can be generated and sustained by the system itself, rather than only being the outcome of people who are overtly discriminatory.

Operational demands of a police officer are significant. As Judge Deborah Richards observed in her report of the Commission of Inquiry's findings, police carry the weight of protecting the community, often in difficult circumstances and often without thanks.³⁶ The Commission shares this observation. In fact, we have learnt that these challenges and the nature of policing itself can make discrimination more likely. And it can also magnify the devastating impacts of discrimination on diverse police and QPS.

Identifying systemic discrimination does not mean that all or even most police discriminate

The systemic nature of discrimination in QPS means that discrimination is able to thrive and continue, including in subtle forms, reproduced by organisational structures and concealed by a culture of silence. It also means that policies and practices that may seem neutral in fact perpetuate and reinforce disadvantage for diverse police, because they originate in a cultural system that values a particular identity and may serve to protect it.

Addressing systemic discrimination therefore requires a fundamental shift from QPS. Leaders in QPS need to understand and acknowledge the systemic nature of the problem. They also need to reflect deeply on the nature of the problem, including how it has shaped their own experiences in the organisation, and evolve their understanding. From that place, they can then accept their role in this issue and take responsibility for leading systemic change. For some, this may be an uncomfortable process.

QPS does need to root out problem individuals and firmly respond to instances of discrimination, and doing so is vitally important. However, this alone will not be sufficient.

3. The organisation is stuck in the 'merit trap'

Queensland's police officers do not reflect the Queensland community. Despite small increases in diversity over time, women, First Nations and culturally diverse police are chronically under-represented, especially at senior levels. The implications for QPS extend beyond the demographics of its workforce. Lack of diversity limits diversity of thought and innovation, contributes to talent drain and impacts policing outcomes.

Across our Review, we identified that one of the key challenges holding QPS back is how 'merit' is understood, mythologised and implemented in the organisation. Throughout the Review, we heard that merit is a core value in QPS. The organisation prides itself on being a meritocracy in which all officers are treated the same. Indeed, laws governing QPS embed this notion of merit as the key principle guiding recruitment and promotion decisions, implementing recommendations from the Fitzgerald Inquiry to address seniority-based appointments.³⁷

By being so blind to diversity, 'merit' does not overtly discriminate but produces unequal outcomes

This notion of merit – that everyone is treated the same based on their ability and experience – sounds fair to many, on the surface. However, it conceals biases that disadvantage diverse police and preserve the status quo.

We are inherently drawn to those who think, look and act like us.³⁸ This produces a range of unconscious biases, including a preference for candidates who reflect our values and confirm our beliefs.³⁹ These biases influence the standards set for candidates as well as how they are assessed, which necessarily involves subjective judgement.⁴⁰ In QPS, this favours those who resemble the ideal police officer, and these people have also tended to receive most career development opportunities. In this way, equal treatment is never objectively equal. We often heard from male officers that measures to address inequalities for police from diverse backgrounds, such as targeted leadership courses, would be unfair.⁴¹

Minimising differences in the pursuit of equal treatment ignores these systemic biases.⁴² At the same time, this notion of merit represents a barrier to change: it fundamentally contradicts the rationale behind policies and practices that seek to explicitly address disparities and provide targeted resources to diverse employees.⁴³

Merit must be redefined

QPS will need to dismantle these structural disadvantages to access the best talent and get the most out of its workforce. Merit must be redefined so that QPS is able to identify the person who is best suited to the job in the context of the organisation's wider objectives, including reflecting the community it serves. This will need to involve addressing unconscious bias and reviewing how merit is assessed, as well as introducing positive measures to ensure diverse police have a fair opportunity, such as organisational targets and support. In short, QPS can no longer be blind to diversity if it seeks – as it must – to leverage diversity to enhance its strategic performance.

This journey will be challenging. Merit is carefully protected by QPS members and closely associated with firmly held beliefs around fairness, understood as equal treatment and no differential treatment. We heard that any change to policies or differential treatment would be perceived by many as 'lowering standards'.⁴⁴ In a meritocracy, this narrative provides a way to reject diverse officers and uphold the status quo.

Many diverse police we spoke to were understandably wary of any change that would see them being unfairly tarnished as lacking merit or not being up to standard. For example, we heard that women recruited during and after QPS's 50:50 gender equity recruitment strategy felt they had to 're-justify their rank' and their basic competence because others thought they were unfairly recruited based on their gender.⁴⁵ We also heard from senior women that were targeted, including through upward bullying, because they had got a 'free ride' due to their gender.⁴⁶

The unwanted negative effects stemming from the notion of merit are made more complex by the highly competitive promotion environment in QPS, in which large numbers of officers compete for relatively few positions, especially at Sergeant level. Some officers may feel that any change is unfair and harms their prospects for progression. Committed, sustained leadership at the highest levels of QPS will be essential to re-envision the concept of merit in a way that ultimately fosters inclusion.

4. Many police want change, but there is resistance to real change

Throughout the Review the Commission heard from many dedicated police officers – from all levels and backgrounds – who want real change. They are officers who joined the police motivated by the opportunity to serve the community, remain deeply committed to QPS and its mission, and have made significant personal sacrifices for this cause. However, their belief in QPS's capacity for change is being tested.

The issues described in this report are longstanding and deeply entrenched in QPS's systems and culture. Positive change requires reconstructing some of QPS's most deeply held values and ways of working, permanently altering power dynamics and how benefits are distributed. We found that there is significant organisational and individual resistance to this type of change.

Any effort to effect systemic and cultural change to address inequality in an organisation is likely to encounter resistance.⁴⁷ In police services, this often takes the form of values-based objections – that changes violate values such as quality, fairness and transparency.⁴⁸

We found high levels of resistance in QPS

Our survey identified high levels of resistance to measures to improve workplace equality. The survey identified a range of widely held views that represent barriers to change and can be understood as forms of resistance to advancing diversity and inclusion. Resistant views were most strongly held by QPS's most senior leaders in the Executive Leadership Team⁴⁹, non-commissioned officers and male officers.

Although QPS members generally value diversity, the survey observed the strongly held belief that everyone should be treated the same, based on merit. In turn, positive measures to uplift diverse police tend to be viewed as unfair. We also observed myths and misunderstandings about what constitutes fairness. Currently, QPS appears to view fairness as treating everyone the same, whereas in practice fairness can be implementing reasonable initiatives to correct for systemic disadvantage.

Overall, respondents opposed almost all positive initiatives that were presented. Opposition was greatest for stronger measures that more directly uplift diverse police, such as preferential recruitment and leadership development training. Over 74% of police opposed the idea of taking increasing diversity more seriously through targeted attraction and recruitment strategies. We heard that some of these views were reinforced and at times emboldened by the perceived failure of the 50:50 gender equity recruitment strategy.

The views expressed in the survey may therefore reflect officers' negative experiences with this major initiative, alongside the fundamental tension between the notion of merit and differential treatment. Indeed, even 'softer' measures, such as providing networking and mentoring opportunities for diverse police and education for managers on supporting culturally diverse police, were opposed.

Resistance is a challenge but also a platform for change

The survey findings underline the challenges QPS faces in making change in an organisational environment that is highly resistant to change. However, it also revealed some green shoots and opportunities. Recruits expressed greater support for measures to improve workplace equality than ranked officers, indicating an opportunity to harness their views to support culture change. There was also less opposition among Inspectors and Superintendents than officers at other ranks, which may present an opportunity to create and work with influential champions in middle management.

QPS should not avoid making real change just because it will encounter resistance, and it should not use resistance as an excuse to keep things the way they are. Resistance is a sign that real change is occurring. It should be planned for and expected. When harnessed effectively, resistance can in fact be an important driver of change. It presents an opportunity to hear from officers who are unsure about or resistant to change and unpack and reframe values that are often unquestioned and subconscious.

If resistance is not effectively harnessed, not only will implementation of the reforms recommended in this report be imperilled but also diverse police could be exposed to backlash and harm, and this could set workplace equality efforts back. QPS's recent experience managing the backlash from the 2016 strategy to promote 50:50 gender equity in recruitment is proof of this risk.

The lasting impacts of previous diversity initiatives

In November 2015, QPS introduced a 50:50 gender equity recruitment strategy into the Queensland Police Academy, providing a direction that 'strategies be put in place to select not less than 50% females' in police recruit intakes.⁵⁰

The 50:50 gender equity recruitment strategy was implemented to address a comparatively low number of women in QPS – at that time, women made up only 26% of sworn officers.⁵¹

In the years that followed, QPS increased the number of female recruits from just below 23% in 2015 to 46% in 2016, and it achieved parity by 2017.

After the strategy was abandoned, the number of female recruits rapidly returned to pre-2016 levels.⁵²

Two years later, a complaint from QPS staff to the Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) triggered the two-year 'Investigation Arista', which in May 2021 concluded:

- during the period December 2015 to October 2018, QPS engaged in "discriminatory recruitment practices" to achieve the 50% female recruitment target⁵³
- there is sufficient evidence to support disciplinary action against QPS Recruitment Section personnel

A participant in this review told the Commission that:

▮ The result of [Investigation] Arista being published, and the media and statements around that, caused a lot of negative perceptions ... about discriminating, particularly against men. There was a lot of [internal] commentary on Workplace and [another internal messaging system] about how women were getting promoted internally, not just recruitment, and men are hard done by.⁵⁴

The Investigation Arista report did not expressly address key provisions in Queensland's anti-discrimination laws which exempt affirmative measures such as those directed at increasing the number of female recruits.⁵⁵ It was therefore not apparent from the report the extent to which any of the alleged "discriminatory recruitment practices" may have fallen within the ambit of lawful affirmative action measures.⁵⁶



The costs of not addressing discrimination

It is a business imperative that QPS meet these challenges to reduce the costs of discrimination to its officers, its workplace and the community.

Discrimination costs QPS

Discrimination has a range of consequences for organisations. These include:

- workforce challenges such as turnover, low commitment, absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, and physical and mental health problems
- reputational issues that undermine public perceptions and limit the potential to attract talent and investment
- grievances, injuries and litigation
- impacts on performance – in particular, the difficulty a member can have in providing high-quality service when they are being mistreated within an organisation.⁵⁷

We know there are significant social, emotional and economic costs of discrimination. It can lead to absenteeism, job dissatisfaction and psychological harm, as well as decreased productivity, increased turnover and administrative burdens.

It is a serious threat to QPS's performance and ability to achieve its overall mission, affecting policing outcomes and community safety.

Operational impacts

A key theme highlighted during our consultation phase – particularly in our site visits, where we spoke with frontline and operational managers⁵⁸ – was the sometimes overwhelming strain of ensuring there are adequate staff to fill each shift.

Workplace discrimination can lead to increased absenteeism, including unplanned leave or withdrawal from employment, by both those who experience discrimination and alleged perpetrators. This was a common theme we identified during our Review.⁵⁹

“ I went on sick leave and didn't come back.⁶⁰ ”

The Commission heard from many committed and resilient police who had left QPS, or were considering leaving QPS, following their experiences.

“ To be honest, I'm ready to quit ... I feel like I'm constantly hitting my head against a brick wall in terms of change.⁶¹ ”

We heard these impacts disrupt staffing levels, place additional pressure on the remaining workforce and risk compromising service delivery. Responding to this diverts valuable resources away from critical operational priorities.⁶² This has the effect of decreasing overall productivity and increasing administrative burdens on managers and supervisors, who are responsible for resolving these issues on top of their regular duties.⁶³

Impacts to workplace culture

Solidarity between officers is recognised as a defining feature of police culture.⁶⁴ We were told that discrimination harms workplace culture and can erode team cohesion and morale. This is backed by the body of research linking police organisational stressors to officer wellbeing.⁶⁵ This can diminish collaboration, support and communication among officers, perpetuating a cycle of disengagement and further exacerbating challenges for managers and supervisors.

People are disgruntled, ready to leave. They have no one to go in and bat for them, no one fighting for their own personal wellbeing.⁶⁶

Witnessing the mistreatment of others has a range of negative effects, including diminished performance and acts of organisational citizenship, and increased withdrawal and intention to leave the organisation.⁶⁷

Reputational damage

With perceptions of policy integrity falling across Australian police services generally,⁶⁸ it is vital that QPS consider the impact that concerns of workforce discrimination may have in shaping the views of the public. This was reflected in concerns shared with us during the Review.

If members of the community actually knew some of the stuff that goes on, I think they would be absolutely mortified, because that's not the police service that they think is out there protecting them.⁶⁹

Reputational risks arising from discrimination in the workforce include poor workforce morale, not being seen as an employer of choice, and reduced community trust. Over time, reputational harm can have lasting effects, including making it challenging to attract and retain new police.

He said to me, if you had a daughter that wanted to join the police, would you let her? I was like, absolutely not. And he said, why? And I said, because it's the men in the police. That's where the danger is ... I would never recommend this job to anyone.⁷⁰

These issues were also reflective of a form of cognitive dissonance that participants sometimes shared with us – they grappled with the tension between the stated values and morals of QPS and their actual experience of the workplace. The QPS Integrity Framework emphasises that 'our most valuable asset in policing Queensland is our reputation and the confidence and trust that inspires in the community',⁷¹ yet for many participants this was not a reality.

Discrimination harms the wellbeing of officers

Workplace discrimination – both overt, direct discrimination and indirect discrimination that is more subtle in nature – can have profound and devastating personal impacts.⁷² These impacts can accumulate over time, can be interconnected in complex ways, and are shaped by both the work environment and the social contexts in which discrimination occurs.⁷³

Discrimination is experienced differently by everyone, and the Commission observed that there was no uniform response among police. While some participants expressed significant impacts, others did not perceive themselves to have been harmed by their experience.

The prevalence and impact of discrimination can also be compounded for those with multiple, intersecting attributes.⁷⁴ We heard limited perspectives on intersectionality during this Review. This is because workforce data shows that, of QPS's total sworn workforce, 1.57% (190 officers) identify as culturally diverse women or First Nations women.⁷⁵ For those participants we did consult who had multiple attributes, intersectionality was not a focus of the discussion.

In considering these impacts, the Commission understand that impacts of discrimination are not always possible to disentangle from other experiences, including occupational stress inherent in frontline policing.

The mental and physical toll

The critical impact of discrimination on mental and physical health is well documented. Research suggests, for example, that targets often experience multiple forms of harassment, which are each associated with a host of negative outcomes that have compounding effects on physical and mental health.⁷⁶ Discrimination can be a chronic stressor that persists and evolves over time, depleting the mental and emotional resources available to deal with the demands of policing.⁷⁷

We heard about the serious toll that discrimination and the organisation's response to it had on their mental health and overall wellbeing. We also heard about a spectrum of negative impacts like post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions requiring treatment. Some officers also told us that they had endured significant periods of exhaustion and isolation following negative workplace experiences.

“I've had to seek psychological help, needed medication, felt depression, anxiety, taken ... stress leave, even now I feel paranoid at work sometimes and about colleagues.”⁷⁸

We also heard from officers who had experienced a range of consequences for their physical health, including suicidal thoughts, substance use and reduced physical activity.

“No motivation for me going to gym, drinking too much alcohol. And it all was a snowball effect ... I don't even take Panadol, and I was eating Valium.”⁷⁹

Interpersonal impacts

The impacts of discrimination can extend beyond the workplace, spilling over into personal relationships.⁸⁰ Some officers reflected that their experiences had damaged relationships with their partners and family, and others told us that they had been left feeling unsupported by coworkers and managers.

“I don't trust anybody. I'll go to work and give them 100% while I'm at work, and then I go home ... It affected my relationship with my husband.”⁸¹

Values misalignment

“It's a very bittersweet kind of experience. I love it. I love my job. But also I can see there's a lot of underlying major cultural issues within the organisation.”⁸²

Review participant

In our confidential conversations, we asked people why they joined the police service – what motivated them to join. The most common reason participants identified was their motivation to serve the community and uphold core values such as fairness and integrity. Some officers reflected that they have found it difficult to reconcile their experiences in the workplace with their initial motivation to help others and that the reason they stay is often different from the reason they first joined.

“I want to stay to keep helping victims ... It's hard because I'm proud of the work that I do, but not proud of the organisation.”⁸³

QPS communicates its values in the workforce in a range of ways, including through its values-based project, Our People Matter, which aims to better support the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and family members. One of the key pillars of the Our People Matter project is 'fair and positive workplaces', meaning a workplace that is diverse, inclusive, sociable, professional, caring and connected.⁸⁴

Conflict in values can be a key factor in police burnout,⁸⁵ and the Commission heard that the values QPS promotes often fail to resonate with diverse officers. This gap between the stated values of QPS and how diverse officers experience the workplace can create further harm.

“Our people really do matter' ... really? because you've demonstrated nothing but the contrary to our people mattering to you.”⁸⁶

Career impacts

Other frequently reported personal impacts include negative effects on participants' employment and career progression, which is also recognised in the literature as a significant problem.⁸⁷ Some shared that they had decided not to pursue further advancement opportunities, resulting in career stagnation, financial detriments and diminished job satisfaction.

📖 Getting promoted to becoming an inspector. That was my goal. Now I'm not interested. I just want to get away.⁸⁸

Some reflected that they cope by disengaging at work, while others feel a need to overperform.

📖 Some of the people from my culture have learned just to shut up, shut it off and put their head down because they don't want to be ostracised.⁸⁹

📖 I'm normally a hard worker, but I would go the extra mile ... so that I would then be accepted by the boys as a worker, not as this female to look at ... I think that's probably how I tend to deal with it – just dig into the work.⁹⁰

Lack of support and protection exacerbates harms and feeds a culture of silence

QPS members should feel supported by their peers and the organisation. They should also be protected from facing further harm if they do experience discrimination. Appropriate support can help alleviate the harmful impacts to those who experience discrimination and the organisation as a whole and prevent it from occurring again.

The Commission heard that people who experience discrimination often do not feel supported by their colleagues or the organisation. For many, this starts from the time discrimination first occurs. We heard about instances where colleagues and managers stood by in silence. Officers also spoke of their colleagues, including senior police, joining in and making light of discriminatory comments or actions.

📖 The highest ranking person in the room sets the standard and tolerance for behaviour and hence inclusion. It is true for the highest ranking person in the room 'the standard you walk past is the standard you accept'. I have lost count of the times I have seen high ranking police laugh and join in with sexist, racist, homophobic other non inclusive behaviour.⁹¹

We heard from many officers who felt they could not raise concerns or seek support within the organisation.

📖 The relationship with the QPS is like a domestic violence relationship. You just get bashed and beaten, and you know that you're not safe. And you can't tell anyone about it, because it's going to be worse for you.⁹²

Far from being supported, several officers told us that they felt blamed for raising an issue. They were made to feel responsible for the disruption it caused and for any consequences for the perpetrator or their team.

📖 They make you feel like you're the problem, stop complaining, go away little girl, be quiet, you know.⁹³

Officers described being isolated and ostracised by their colleagues, and impacts on their health and wellbeing. It also feeds into what was described to the Commission as a 'culture of silence' within QPS, in which discrimination is tolerated or unchecked.

This leads to a pervasive situation in which discrimination persists beyond the full visibility of the organisation.

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Establishing this Review

Commission of Inquiry

This Review was established following a recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence.

In November 2022, the Commission of Inquiry published its report of findings and recommendations entitled *A Call for Change*. It found that sexism, misogyny and racism are a significant problem within the QPS, and these discriminatory behaviours impact the entire culture of the police service.

QPS members told the Commission of Inquiry that these cultural issues negatively affect policing responses to domestic and family violence and that a failure by QPS leadership to address this conduct has signalled to the workforce that harmful conduct is acceptable.⁹⁴ The report emphasised the structural changes needed to enable QPS to respond effectively to domestic and family violence.⁹⁵

The Commission of Inquiry observed that, to respond effectively to domestic and family violence, the QPS needs a workforce that reflects the diversity of Queensland.⁹⁶ It recommended that QPS engage the the Commission to undertake a program of work aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion of QPS members.⁹⁷

In actioning this recommendation, the QPS leadership signalled their commitment to grappling with these issues to achieve meaningful change.

Other similar reviews

This is not the first time a human rights agency has worked with police services in Australia to improve workplace equality and reduce discrimination.

Over the past 10 years, police services in Victoria⁹⁸ and South Australia⁹⁹ and at the Australian Federal Police¹⁰⁰ have undertaken similar work with their respective state-based human rights agencies.

During our review, we consulted senior leaders of police services and human rights agencies in those jurisdictions. We heard these reviews had helped progress police services along in their journey toward workplace equality.

Phases of this Review

The Review is being conducted in three phases:¹⁰¹

- **Phase 1: Review** – The initial review and guidance phase commenced in July 2023 and concluded in late 2024 with the publication of this report.
- **Phase 2: Implement** – The implementation phase will commence in early 2025 for an expected period of two years. During this phase, QPS will implement the recommendations made in phase 1. The Commission will provide support for implementation through its role on the external Advisory Panel.
- **Phase 3: Evaluate** – After implementation, the Commission will return to evaluate how much change has been achieved and identify areas for future improvement.

Figure: The three phases of our review.



Scope and jurisdiction

Jurisdiction

The Commission's statutory role and function includes consulting with organisations to prevent discrimination before it occurs. As this objective involves cultural change, these objectives are often best realised through working closely with duty holders, while maintaining our independence.

Between November 2022 and July 2023, the Commission and QPS worked through how the Review would be conducted and established the methodology.

To ensure the Commission held the jurisdiction to conduct each element of the methodology, the Attorney-General expressly conferred on the Commission the function to be engaged by QPS to undertake the activities and actions outlined in recommendation 12 of the Commission of Inquiry report.¹⁰²

In working with QPS in this Review, we aimed to gain a deeper understanding of structural drivers of discrimination and identify systemic factors that will enable change. We undertook careful consultation to understand the operational environment and consulted with QPS on areas for change.

Scope of issues

The scope of the Review was defined by what the Commission of Inquiry recommended, and developed by the Commission and QPS. The scope included:

- a) identifying barriers to people from diverse backgrounds applying to become a QPS member
- b) considering the extent to which QPS recruitment policies, programs, procedures and practices are consistent with legal requirements under state and federal anti-discrimination laws, including reviewing recruitment standards for entry to be a QPS member to:
 - ensure they are genuine occupational requirements of the role and not indirectly discriminatory
 - identify any equal opportunity measures that should apply

- c) assessing whether there is adequate transparency about recruitment, promotion and retention, and a capacity to monitor and evaluate changes
- d) what positive steps QPS should take to prevent discrimination, including sexism and racism, within QPS
- e) what should be done to increase the retention of QPS members from diverse backgrounds, including by having regard to reducing attrition due to workplace harms and conditions
- f) any other relevant matters.

Participation

The scope of our Review included QPS members, which was defined to include current, previous and prospective sworn police officers and Police Liaison Officers.

This meant that we did not consider the experiences of public servants employed by QPS.

As recommended by the Commission of Inquiry, the Review was focused on the experiences of police and Police Liaison Officers who identify as women, First Nations, and/or being from culturally diverse backgrounds. In our glossary we define police with these protected attributes as 'police from diverse backgrounds'.

When we commenced our work, we heard from some police members who felt the scope should be expanded to include other attributes protected by the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld). As these attributes fell outside our defined scope, we were unable to consider the specific issues facing those groups.

Issues outside scope

Because our Review was focused on systemic issues, we did not inquire into or investigate any individual complaints or allegations. Our focus has therefore been on identifying systemic issues that are holding QPS back from realising its aim of workplace equality.

After commencement, we identified areas within our scope that overlapped with the implementation of other recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.

For example, the Commission of Inquiry recommended that QPS review its recruitment strategy to ensure it was valuing, targeting and attracting applicants from diverse backgrounds,¹⁰³ and work had commenced on implementing this recommendation. This meant we did not inquire into issue (a) of the Review's Scope.



Governance

Advisory Panel

At the outset of this Review, we established an Advisory Panel to provide specialist advice and expertise to the Review.

The Advisory Panel is co-chaired by the Queensland Human Rights Commissioner and the Queensland Police Service Commissioner. The panel members are:

- **Scott McDougall**, Queensland Human Rights Commissioner
- **Steve Gollschewski**, Commissioner of Queensland Police Service¹⁰⁴
- **Peter Forday**, consultant and board member of Multicultural Australia
- **Kristen Hilton**, former Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner
- **Thelma Schwartz**, Principal Legal Officer of the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service
- **Linda Williams** APM LEM, Deputy Commissioner of South Australia Police.

The Advisory Panel met five times during the initial Review phase.¹⁰⁵ These meetings provided an invaluable opportunity to ensure our work was informed by relevant expertise.

A biography of each of our panel members is at [Attachment B](#).

Coordination committee

We established a coordination committee, comprising Commission and QPS representatives, which was responsible for monitoring the performance of the Review against the methodology and providing strategic direction and oversight.

The Coordination Committee convened 12 times during the Review.

External advisors

The Commission engaged external consultants to provide expert advice during the Review. Our consultants were:

- **Professor Michelle Tuckey**, Professor of Work and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Australia – subject matter expert on organisational system factors that provide effective points of intervention
- **Dr Yiqiong Li**, Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland – subject matter expert on research methods and quantitative data analysis.

Guiding principles

In undertaking the Review, QPS and the Commission committed to a series of guiding principles to support and inform decision-making.

Those principles are:

Strategic	We will seek to leverage the unique value that the Commission can provide through its independence and expertise. We will actively look to reduce duplication and, where possible, enhance consistency between our Review and work underway within QPS to implement other recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. ¹⁰⁶
Independent	The Commission's participation in the Review will reflect its independence in accordance with its statutory responsibilities as Queensland's human rights agency and independent statutory body established under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) and the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld).
Collaborative	In conducting the Review, we will focus on collaborating with QPS toward sustained change. This requires ongoing engagement and participation by both the Queensland Police Service Commissioner and the Queensland Human Rights Commissioner, as well as senior leadership of QPS.
Change focused	In conducting the Review, we will focus on opportunities to create meaningful and lasting systemic change to reduce barriers to the recruitment and retention of diverse police. We acknowledge the confluence of factors that need to come together, over a period of time, to create lasting cultural change, and that the time for change is now.

A collaborative approach

We recognised the tension between the guiding principles of independence and collaboration. The Commission sought to actively balance both these principles throughout the Review, with a commitment to the integrity of both.

Both the Commission and QPS contributed to this collaboration through concrete actions within our governance and methodology.

QPS's contribution to the collaboration has included:

- participating in the governance structures
- facilitating access to staff and offices for consultation and site visit purposes
- fulfilling information requests
- distributing and promoting a workplace wide survey
- proactively identifying opportunities for the Commission to engage with QPS members, including the Senior and Executive Leadership Teams.¹⁰⁷

The Commission's contribution to the collaboration has included:

- facilitating the governance structures
- presenting to and consulting with leadership groups
- sharing preliminary analysis of the issues heard during consultations
- providing draft survey questions for feedback
- providing stakeholder updates that highlighted issues being raised during consultations
- providing recommendations for feedback prior to finalisation.

Beyond those concrete contributions, throughout this Review both QPS and the Commission actively fostered an open environment of critical thinking and self-guided reflection. This engagement sought to move the QPS along the inclusion continuum. In turn, it expanded the Commission's insights into and understanding of systems factors that influence workplace equality.

The collaborative approach enabled a deep engagement. We saw enthusiastic participation from within QPS, highlighting the importance of this work at least to some segments of the workforce, who are heavily invested in its success.

The Review benefited from snowball engagement – that is, people who participated in our consultation process and then encouraged others to be involved. In our view, this reflects the trust and commitment the Review fostered through consultations. It also highlights the benefits of our independence.

The Commission's independence has been maintained, including through our processes and methodology. We maintained confidentiality for participants in our consultation phase, conducted independent analysis of the issues, and developed recommendations that we believe will support genuine, long-term change. We present detailed information about our methodology in the Attachments to this report, increasing the transparency of the process.

In developing our recommendations, the Commission was mindful of practical realities in creating recommendations, but we were not swayed by the anticipated challenges of implementation. This reinforces our independence and contributes to the value we could uniquely provide to QPS by providing arms-length advice about areas that will create real change.

Our approach

To inform the recommendations of this report, the Commission aimed to consult as widely as possible across the QPS workforce.

During the Review, we gathered information by:

- conducting 137 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with QPS members, which we referred to as 'confidential conversations'
- visiting 21 police sites across Queensland, including regional and urban police stations and regional offices
- conducting a survey of current QPS police, Police Liaison Officers and Recruits, which received 2,724 responses
- conducting five focus groups
- undertaking nine literature and desktop reviews
- requesting and reviewing 345 documents.

Methodology

The Review was undertaken between July 2023 and October 2024. The Commission adopted a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to inform our recommendations.

Confidential conversations

Between October 2023 and June 2024, we conducted 137 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with QPS members, which we referred to as 'confidential conversations'.

All current, previous or prospective police officers and Police Liaison Officers were invited to register to attend a confidential conversation.

Of the participants, we heard from 96 women, 20 First Nations participants, 27 culturally diverse participants, and 17 participants who did not identify as being a woman, First Nations or culturally diverse. Some participants identified as having one or more other attributes protected by the Anti-Discrimination Act.¹⁰⁸

Interviews were conducted with the participant and two Commission staff face-to-face, online or over the phone. A small number of participants provided their views and perspectives in writing.

The objectives of confidential conversations were to:

- gather information about the issues we are looking at and identify themes
- learn more about experiences of the QPS workplace
- hear participants' suggestions for change and what positive steps they think QPS should take to prevent sexism and racism from happening.

During our confidential conversations, we sought to follow a trauma-informed approach focusing on safety, trustworthiness, empowerment, collaboration and choice.

Confidentiality was a key concern for many participants. Policies and procedures were in place to protect and uphold the confidentiality of information provided by participants during confidential conversations.

Further information on the sample and procedure for confidential conversations and our analysis of material is available in [Attachment C](#).

Site visits

Between February and March 2024, the Review team visited 21 police sites across Queensland, including regional and urban police stations, regional offices and the Townsville Police Academy.

The objectives of our site visits were to:

- obtain information relevant to the scope of the Review
- provide information about the Review, including to increase uptake of our consultation processes by QPS members
- develop an understanding of organisational context and operational environments, including in regional areas, so that recommendations can be applicable and relevant to the range of QPS worksites.

During site visits the Review team provided presentations about the Review, observed the working environment and had conversations with police officers, Police Liaison Officers and officers-in-charge about their experiences in an operational context.

Further information on the sample and procedure for site visits and our analysis of material is available in [Attachment D](#).

Map of Queensland with pinpoints of site visit locations



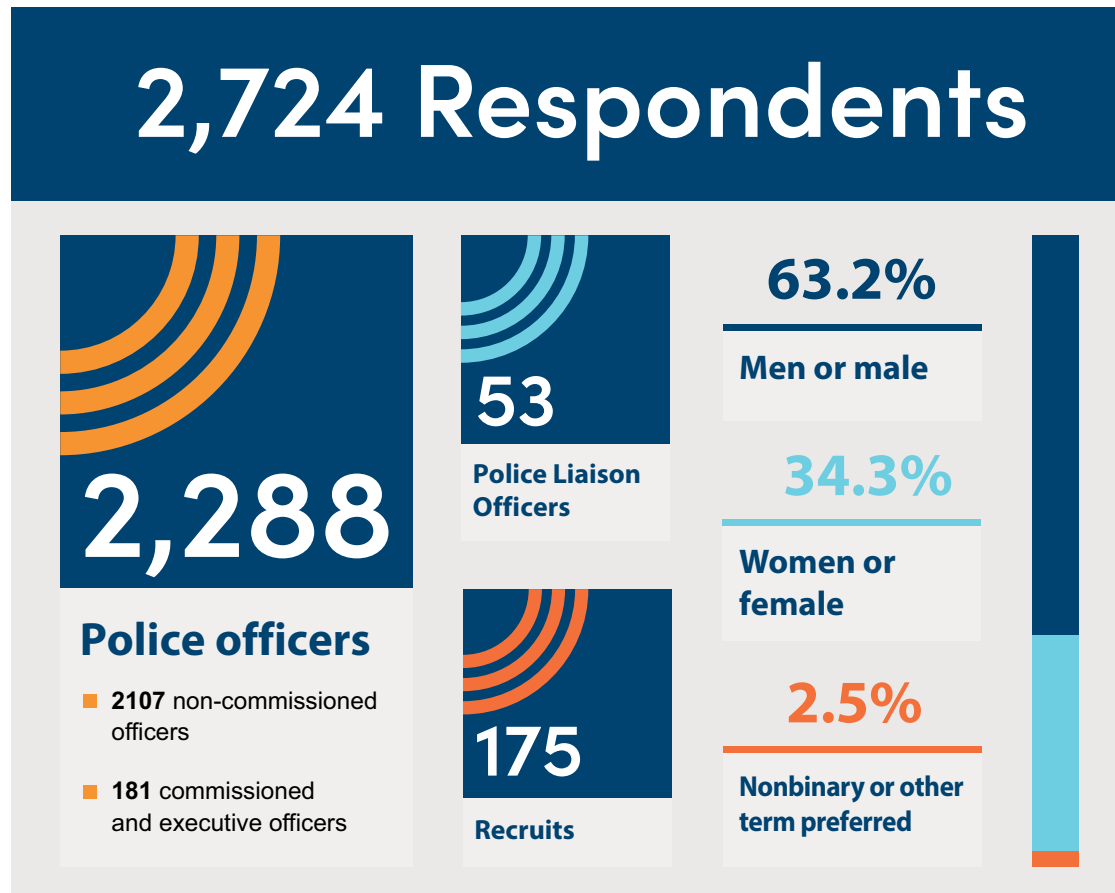
- 1 Cairns PCYC
- 2 Cherbourg
- 3 Dalby
- 4 Deeragun
- 5 Gympie
- 6 Kingaroy
- 7 Kirwan

- 8 Logan
- 9 Mackay
- 10 Mudgeeraba
- 11 Mundingburra
- 12 Murgon
- 13 Northern Regional Office
- 14 Rockhampton

- 15 Southport
- 16 Surfers Paradise
- 17 Toowoomba
- 18 Townsville Academy
- 19 Townsville District Office
- 20 Townsville station
- 21 Warwick

Survey

The Commission conducted a survey of current QPS police, Police Liaison Officers and recruits to gain a better understanding of current perspectives on issues of diversity, inclusion and fairness in QPS. The final sample consisted of 2,724 respondents.



The survey tested the climate for change in the organisation by gathering information about:

- the extent to which attitudes to diversity, equity or inclusion are a barrier to, or facilitator of, increased recruitment and retention of diverse police
- police officers' openness or amenability to active steps to address workplace inequality, including which steps are favoured/not favoured.

The Commission consulted QPS and both unions on the draft survey questions.

To encourage participation, the survey was anonymous. We collected optional demographic information to allow us to gather a clearer picture of the results. We also invited survey participants to identify their rank and location so that we could isolate attitudes at various levels and locations of the organisation.

We administered the survey over a six-week period between April and June 2024.

The survey was one of the key elements in our review methodology, so we wanted to ensure a high survey response rate. We worked closely with the QPS communications team to ensure the survey was distributed through the most effective channels used by QPS members.

Further information on the sample and procedure for analysis of material is available in [Attachment E](#).

Focus groups

The Commission wanted to provide current QPS police officers who identify as women, First Nations and culturally diverse with the opportunity to share their ideas and discuss potential solutions to make QPS a more diverse and inclusive workplace. A total of 28 police participated.

Focus groups allowed participants to share their thoughts on ways to improve areas such as promotions, flexible work and complaint reporting processes. The sessions were facilitated to focus on potential changes rather than identifying problems. Before attending, participants received a background paper that was used to inform the discussion.

A focus group was also conducted for officers-in-charge, focusing on the practical implications of potential changes.

Presentations

The Commission presented information about the Review at several QPS events. We were grateful for the opportunity to present at both Executive Leadership Team and Senior Leadership Team meetings.

A list of our presentations is at [Attachment F](#).

Research

The Commission prepared several literature reviews and other research outputs to gain a deeper understanding of the issues that fall within the scope of the Review. These outputs included:

- a literature review on diversity and inclusion in police forces
- a thematic analysis of previous reviews and inquiries by Australian and international jurisdictions on the composition and culture of police forces
- an audit of existing diversity and inclusion strategies of police forces in Australian and overseas jurisdictions
- a desktop scan of the ways that the concepts of 'diversity' and 'inclusion' are constructed and measured
- a summary of literature about resistance to and backlash against diversity and inclusion initiatives, particularly in policing environments
- a memorandum assessing the methodology for the collection of data for cultural diversity in Queensland and identifying associated implications for the Review
- research on the law on genuine occupational requirements
- analysis of the law as it relates to genuine occupational requirements and alignment with what QPS identifies as the genuine occupational requirements of policing
- research on the laws that govern the administration of QPS and influence systems and processes concerning diversity and inclusion.

Information requests

In undertaking the Review, the Commission made two formal requests for further information to QPS and received 345 documents as well as access to QPS workforce data, which was provided through Power BI datasets.

The purpose of the information requests was to obtain further detail on areas of relevance to the Review.

Developing our recommendations

The Commission adopted a robust methodology for the development of recommendations. The objective was to ensure that recommendations were targeted to achieve meaningful and systemic change in QPS and were capable of being effectively translated to implementation.

The methodology involved a three-stage process:

- **Ideation:** Generating ideas for change based on thematic analysis of issues identified by the review team and through focus group consultations with QPS members.
- **Prioritisation:** Prioritising and testing potential recommendations for inclusion based on a defined inclusion criteria which assessed feasibility, acceptability, evidence base and impact.
- **Drafting:** Refining and finalising recommendations for inclusion in the final report, including through consultations with stakeholders and experts.

As part of this process, the Commission made the conscious decision to consult on recommendations before providing the draft report. This gave the Commission sufficient time to refine and test recommendations, minimising the risk of unintended consequences and maximising the likelihood of implementation.

The Commission consulted with QPS in the development of recommendations, consistent with the collaborative approach underpinning the Review. This included providing the Commissioner of Police with draft recommendations for comment at the Advisory Panel meeting in September 2024.

The Commission considered the comments and provided an updated draft of the recommendations to QPS for further feedback.

Challenges and limitations

Scope of the task

As determined by the scope, this Review focused on officers and recruits who identify as women, First Nations and culturally diverse.

This was a broad scope. The Commission acknowledges that we experienced challenges in engaging with and documenting the unique yet related experiences of women, culturally diverse and First Nations officers.

Culturally diverse data limitations

The Queensland Government mandates that public sector agencies collect and report on certain forms of workforce data, and these requirements apply to QPS.¹⁰⁹

In September 2021, the Queensland Government made a change to how they require public sector agencies to collect data about culturally and linguistically diverse employees.

This change created several limitations that impact the availability, consistency and reliability of culturally diverse data across the Queensland public sector, including QPS.

Implications for the Review were:

- culturally diverse data could not be compared with previous years, which prevents us from understanding the story of culturally diverse police over time
- new questions mandated by the Queensland Government may not capture, or accurately represent, all officers who identify as culturally diverse
- we were unable to compare the demographics of police who responded to our survey with that of the QPS workforce.

Intersectionality

Discrimination such as racism and sexism may combine, overlap or intersect.¹¹⁰ People with multiple protected attributes who experience intersectional disadvantage can be at greater risk of discrimination and experience compounding harm.

We heard limited perspectives on intersectionality during this Review. Participants with multiple attributes infrequently discussed the combined experience of discrimination on the grounds of both attributes. There are several reasons why this may be the case:

- Workforce data shows that, of QPS's total sworn workforce, 1.57% (190 officers) identify as culturally diverse women or First Nations women.¹¹¹ As outlined in this report, there are currently no culturally diverse or First Nations women above the rank of Inspector.
- Some participants with intersecting attributes may not be aware of the ways that different aspects of their identity interact to create further disadvantage. This may lead them to view their experiences through a single lens.
- For some participants with intersecting attributes, focusing on one aspect of their identity may be a protective factor to help frame their experiences of discrimination.
- Some participants with intersecting attributes may feel pressured to assimilate to the norms and values of the dominant culture and therefore may focus on aspects of their identity that align most with that culture.

Engagement with First Nations police

During the consultation phase, we identified low levels of engagement with First Nations police and Police Liaison Officers as a potential limitation of the Review.

To increase participation, we met with senior QPS First Nations representatives to discuss opportunities to increase engagement with First Nations police and Police Liaison Officers. We also ensured First Nations Commission staff contacted participants before their confidential conversation to offer support.

While this led to some increase in engagement, the participation rate across the Review remained a limitation in adequately considering First Nations-specific issues.

Engagement with Police Liaison Officers

We heard from ten Police Liaison Officers through confidential conversations. In addition, we met with approximately 20 Police Liaison Officers in group settings or informally during site visits.

Given the limitations of our engagement with Police Liaison Officers, we have not made recommendations specific to those roles.

This report

In writing this report, we have taken a future-focused approach.

We have not set out to name, blame and shame, and we do not cover the spectrum of issues we heard. Rather, we have focused on identifying the systemic issues and areas of change necessary to support QPS to move forward along the inclusion continuum.

We recognise that change must be incremental and steady, but it also must be observable and measurable.

This report is also designed to contribute to the overall advancement of knowledge in improving diversity and inclusion, particularly within the context of police services.

There have been several other reviews of this kind in the last decade. We closely considered their approach and sought to direct our methodology to areas and issues particular to QPS that also contribute to the overall development of human rights agencies' work in preventing systemic discrimination.

We have made dedicated efforts to detail as much of our methodology and analysis as possible so that, if other reviews are done in the future, they might benefit from this report in establishing their methodology.

Endnotes

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95. *A Call for Change: Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence* (Report, 2022) 15.
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97. *Call for Change: Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence* (Report, 2022) recommendation 12.
98. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, *Independent Review into Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, Including Predatory Behaviour in Victoria Police* (Phase 1 Report, December 2015); Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, *Independent Review into Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, Including Predatory Behaviour in Victoria Police* (Phase 2 Audit, September 2017); Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, *Independent Review into Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, Including Predatory Behaviour in Victoria Police* (Phase 3 Audit and Review, August 2019).
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100. Elizabeth Broderick & Co., *Cultural Change: Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian Federal Police* (Report, August 2016).
101. These phases seek to incorporate the actions and timeframes established by the Commission of Inquiry recommendation.
102. Letter dated 14 April 2023 from Shannon Fentiman MP, then Attorney-General, to Scott McDougall.
103. *A Call for Change: Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence* (Report, 2022) recommendation 11.
104. Between commencement of the Review and 1 March 2024, Katarina Carroll APM served as Commissioner of QPS and was therefore the co-chair of the Advisory Panel.
105. Meetings were conducted in December 2023, February 2024, May 2024, August 2024 and September 2024.
106. Given the issues in the Review are connected to other recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, and to those made by other relevant reviews, reducing duplication and ensuring consistency, where appropriate, was considered a strategic aim that would provide QPS with the best possible chance of creating meaningful change.
107. The QPS Executive Leadership Team informs and operationalises strategy and monitors organisation wide risk and performance. Membership is approved by the Commissioner and currently includes the Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioners, the Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Commissioners, Heads of Divisions and Chief Superintendent, Crime and Corruption Commission (Police Group). As the scope of our Review only extends to sworn police, when we refer to the Executive Leadership Team, we generally focus on sworn members.
108. *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld).
109. Queensland Government, 'Minimum Obligatory Human Resource Information (MOHRI)', *Minimum obligatory human resource information* (MOHRI) (1 March 2023) <www.forgov.qld.gov.au/human-resources/workforce-planning/workforce-statistics-and-tools/minimum-obligatory-human-resource-information-mohri>.
110. SMB Thatcher, CB Hymer and RP Arwine, 'Pushing Back Against Power: Using a Multilevel Power Lens to Understand Intersectionality in the Workplace' (2023) 17(2) *The Academy of Management Annals* 710–50 <doi.org/10.5465/annals.2021.0210>.
111. QPS workforce data as at 31 January 2024.



3 Foundations for change

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Monitor outcomes, not outputs, to drive continual improvement	89
Invite oversight and expert input	90

Key recommendations

- 1 Respond to report and develop plan for implementation
- 2 Develop a vision for change through a new Workplace Equality Strategy
- 3 Communicate the vision for change
- 4 Audit and refine policy and governance environment
- 5 Redefine core values and harness resistance
- 6 Work with internal champions for change
- 7 Embed workplace equality in industrial arrangements
- 8 Provide external stakeholder support
- 9 Leverage data
- 10 Monitor and evaluate progress and provide oversight

Why it matters

To realise workplace equality, QPS will need to create systemic and cultural change. Measures that focus on individual attitudes and behaviours or technical fixes will not be enough – they may treat the symptoms but not the underlying causes.

For QPS to become a truly inclusive and diverse organisation, it will need continual improvement over many years. This objective needs to involve the whole of the organisation and its parts, especially its people.

It is not easy to create systemic change in an organisation as large and complex as QPS. There are several foundational elements that need to be in place to enable change.

In this chapter

We explore how strengthening these foundational elements will support QPS in its journey toward workplace equality. This will require establishing a vision for inclusion, ensuring change is planned and coordinated, harnessing the power of data and information, and monitoring progress to ensure that it is sustained.

Embrace inclusion as a journey, not a problem to be fixed

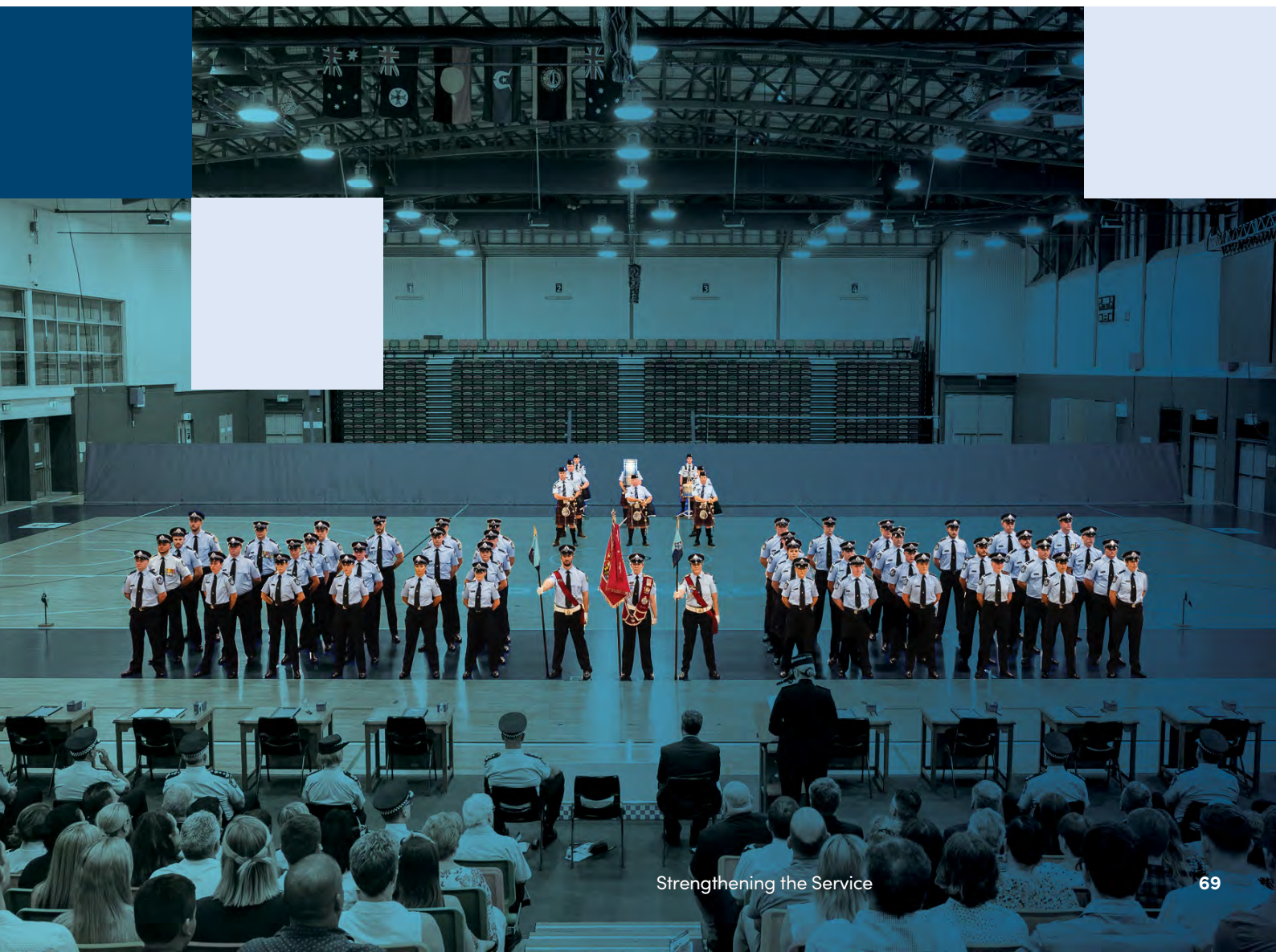
The inclusion continuum maps a path forward

The inclusion continuum, developed by former Chief Superintendent with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Dr Angela Workman-Stark, offers a visual framework for organisations to assess their current approach to inclusion.¹¹² By identifying their position on the continuum, organisations can establish a baseline from which to implement targeted interventions, guiding their journey toward a more inclusive culture.

Increasing diversity is often seen as a catalyst for inclusion, but it is the meaningful integration of diverse experiences and perspectives that reflects true success. While diversity is about counting people, inclusion is about making people count.¹¹³

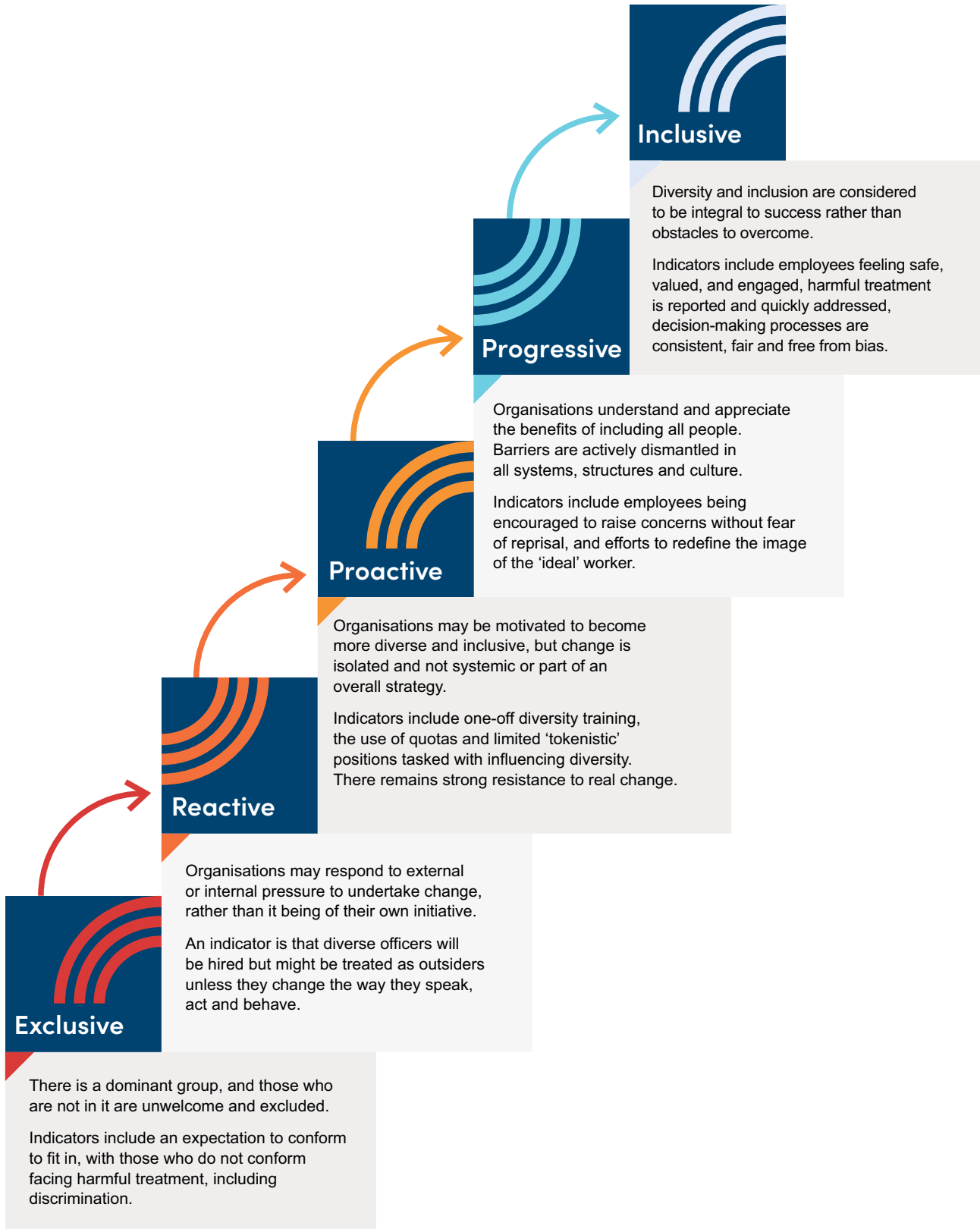
Under this model, the goal is not to fit 'outsiders' into the existing culture but to transform the organisation to produce an environment that embraces diversity, eliminates discrimination, values difference and redistributes power among stakeholders.¹¹⁴

Widely endorsed in policing contexts, including by the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency, the inclusion continuum has been integrated into workforce inclusion strategies across Australia, notably within South Australia Police and Victoria Police.¹¹⁵



The phases of the inclusion continuum

The inclusion continuum includes five phases that describe an organisation’s culture as it relates to diversity and inclusion. The phases outlined in a recent iteration presented by Victoria Police have informed the approach taken in this Review.¹¹⁶



QPS on the inclusion continuum

Based on our observations throughout the Review, QPS appears to currently sit between the 'reactive' and 'proactive' phases on the continuum. It is important to acknowledge that different areas within QPS may sit at varying stages of progression, and we identified pockets in QPS with different levels of inclusion maturity.

In considering where QPS currently sits on the inclusion continuum, the Commission sought the views of various groups in the workforce.

At a presentation to the Senior Leadership Team in February 2024, the Commission asked attendees to reflect on where they felt the organisation was positioned. Insights from QPS leaders varied, although more than 50% considered that the organisation was at the 'proactive' phase.¹¹⁷

The same question was asked in focus groups held during the Review's consultation phase. In focus groups, officers-in-charge identified QPS as 'proactive', while women, First Nations and culturally diverse police identified QPS as being 'reactive'.

This pattern reflects a phenomenon identified in organisational behaviour research known as a 'specious diversity climate', where many perceive the climate as inclusive, even though marginalised members face exclusion or unfair treatment. Communication patterns reinforce these views, leading members to remain unaware of exclusion or inequity within the organisation.¹¹⁸

The range of perspectives present in the organisation shows that there is no cohesive view of the current inclusion climate in QPS. Issues raised in confidential conversations with QPS members gave further insight into the current culture. Relevantly:

- diverse QPS members still experience discrimination, causing some to feel unwelcome and excluded at work
- diverse QPS members feel a need to assimilate to dominant norms to avoid being treated as outsiders
- barriers to diversity and inclusion remain in the organisation's systems, structures and cultures
- there is a culture of fear around speaking up about harmful behaviours, and some members have experienced repercussions for doing so.

To progress toward a more inclusive culture, QPS must focus on developing an internal motivation for change, actively addressing resistance and prioritising measures that dismantle barriers for QPS members from diverse backgrounds.

Reactive measures will not be sufficient

To progress toward becoming an inclusive organisation, QPS must look beyond short-term responses. When addressing diversity and inclusion there is a tendency for organisations to pay attention to events, rather than seeing those events as an expression of challenges in the underlying systems and culture. This results in isolated interventions that target individual behaviours or implement technical fixes.¹¹⁹ Although these responses may alleviate some of the symptoms in the organisation, they will not resolve the underlying causes.¹²⁰ They may also lead to unintended consequences and 'initiative fatigue', particularly among frontline staff.¹²¹

The Commission observed a similar tendency in QPS. In inviting the Commission to undertake this Review, the organisation has taken an important proactive step. At the start of our work, we observed that its approach to diversity and inclusion has appeared to focus on moving quickly to respond to specific issues or findings. Several QPS members told us this can seem like 'box ticking' that lacks insight into systemic drivers of discrimination and ultimately preserves the status quo.

“ It feels like everything they do is to tick a box. They are not actually listening ... it's not meaningful.”¹²²

Review participant

In the Commission's view, one reason may be that QPS leaders are highly motivated to protect the organisation's reputation and comply with legal requirements or public recommendations. While this is understandable in an organisation with high levels of responsibility and public scrutiny, it can mean the organisation's approach can be interpreted as tactical rather than strategic. It has also created a perception among some members that the organisation's outward commitment to diversity and inclusion is performative.

📖 To dig down internally, I don't believe that they think there's an issue. They'll say the right thing in a performative context.¹²³

While this may reflect the level of strategic priority given to diversity and inclusion in the past, it also highlights gaps in the organisation's capacity to plan for and implement long-term change. In a recent performance review, the Queensland Audit Office found that QPS had adopted a short-term focus to address service demand issues. The Audit Office observed that a lack of strategic planning and holistic analysis had limited QPS's ability to effectively prioritise and allocate resources.¹²⁴

📖 Addressing those recommendations – whether it be through the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, whether it be the Commission of Inquiry, or through other judicial processes – I think if you address the intent, you are on the right path. [But] are we just administratively getting through it? I don't think that's the [best] approach.¹²⁵

To make genuine progress, QPS will need to own the problems described in this report and commit to long-term change.

Make the system the focus of change

Systemic problems require systemic solutions

The issues we identify in this report point to the need for systemic change in QPS. Discrimination and inequities that produce a lack of diversity are rooted within the structures and culture of QPS, developed over a long history. To make genuine, lasting progress on diversity and inclusion, QPS will need to make comprehensive, coordinated changes that address the systemic factors that perpetuate discrimination and hold inclusion back.

📖 The unwillingness to accept systemic issues exist ensures the inability to address core issues. Placing blame on generational attitudinal change of people changing careers frequently, the financial lure of previous mining booms, the unwillingness of police officers to relocate to rural and remote areas, does not address the underlying issues that deter females, First Nations and culturally diverse people from applying to QPS.¹²⁶

Failure to make the system the target of change is a leading reason many diversity and inclusion initiatives do not succeed.¹²⁷ For example, targeted recruitment will not on its own result in a more diverse and inclusive workplace if diverse recruits are perceived as tokenistic hires, face discrimination after they enter the organisation and do not have the same career advancement opportunities.¹²⁸ Where isolated interventions are unsuccessful, they may also cause harm to individuals and set diversity and inclusion back in the organisation, particularly if they generate backlash or unintended consequences.¹²⁹

📖 I'm aware of a perception that I'm a token ... It gets lost that I have a great skillset.¹³⁰

To target the system, QPS will need to make a fundamental shift in the way it thinks about diversity and inclusion. It will require QPS to understand how its structures, processes, resources, culture, power relations and working environment collectively function to give rise to patterns of discrimination.¹³¹ It is also important to recognise that an organisational system – especially one as complex and longstanding as QPS – is not static. Various feedback loops can cause it to return to established patterns unless there is concerted and adaptive strategic leadership to drive sustained change.¹³²

In carrying out our Review, the Commission has intentionally adopted a systems approach. While we make a series of recommendations in this report designed to bring about systemic change, there is no single blueprint for reform. The discussions and recommendations in this chapter are intended to support QPS to put in place the foundations needed to own and embark on a process of systemic change over the long term, including identifying further areas for change and making continual improvements to its systems.

The authorising environment for systemic reform will be critical

QPS and other stakeholders will need to invest resources and political capital to progress the reforms needed. The authorising environment for reform – that is, QPS’s formal authority as well as buy-in from its leadership and stakeholders – will be critical to success. Leaders who have pursued similar reform agendas in other police services emphasised to the Commission that the authorising environment is often a determinative factor in whether reforms succeed.

QPS does not exist in a vacuum – it is embedded within a broader sociopolitical context that can limit or enable systemic change.¹³³ For systemic diversity and inclusion efforts to succeed, it is crucial that stakeholders support them. Without their support, QPS may face barriers that limit its effectiveness in ultimately driving effective cultural and behavioural change.¹³⁴ Support from unions and political leaders, including the Queensland Government, will be particularly important. Their backing and active commitment to diversity and inclusion in QPS will be essential to give QPS leaders the authority they need to tackle difficult systemic issues.

“ We need to acknowledge the role of the unions. They need to buy in to create real change.”¹³⁵

Review participant

The position of the Queensland Police Union of Employees, which represents non-commissioned officers, will be a critical factor. The Commission heard from several police and stakeholders that the Union has significant influence over QPS policies and its day-to-day working environment. While most non-commissioned officers are members of the Union, many diverse officers commented that they do not feel as though it adequately represents their interests. Members highlighted issues such as a lack of diversity among union representatives and a perceived lack of support for victims of discrimination.

“ The [Queensland Police Union of Employees] is full of middle-aged white male sergeants. What they probably see as being right for their members is only for a very small cohort.”¹³⁶

“ We’ve got 28.5% of women in the QPS. We are not seeing that reflection of representation in the QPUE. Why do we not have any female elected executives? [During a conference] one woman put her hand up and asked, ‘why should we trust the union when you have historically always represented the perpetrator?’ and they acknowledged it was a problem.”¹³⁷

The Queensland Police Union of Employees has a distinct opportunity to champion efforts to improve workplace equality in QPS to deliver greater benefits to all their members. QPS will need to work closely with unions to ensure all stakeholders understand the benefits of diversity and inclusion. The Queensland Police Service Certified Agreement 2022 is set to expire on 30 June 2025. The negotiation process presents an opportunity for QPS and unions to signal their shared commitment to diversity and inclusion and improve conditions for diverse officers.

Change the culture

Culture is holding the organisation back

Organisational culture is immensely powerful but difficult to pinpoint and shift. It is a social creation – shared values, beliefs and norms influence how those in the organisation make sense of reality and behave.¹³⁸ As such, it is deeply unconscious and tightly held.¹³⁹ We found that tightly held values, such as merit and fairness, were the prism through which many QPS members viewed diversity and inclusion and against which they measured their own position and accomplishments in the organisation. Cultural features such as these are remarkably stable and will outlast any individual event or change to the system.¹⁴⁰

The Commission of Inquiry found ‘clear evidence of a culture where attitudes of misogyny, sexism and racism are allowed to be expressed, and at times acted upon, largely unchecked’.¹⁴¹

“It’s gotten as bad as it has because no one has intervened.”¹⁴²

Review participant

That finding accords with what some participants told us during our Review. At times, the culture in QPS permits and sustains workplace inequality and can hold the organisation back from increasing diversity and becoming more inclusive.

“We dress the same, we think the same, we talk the same, so how is that getting disrupted? It’s not.”¹⁴³

QPS members who spoke to the Commission overwhelmingly pointed to culture as one of the most pervasive drivers of discrimination and a lack of diversity.

“I think our overwhelming culture is male dominated and suspicious of women... [QPS] is hypermasculine and anti-anything or anyone different.”¹⁴⁴

Culture in an organisation as large as QPS is not uniform given the unique patterns of shared events and interactions across the organisation.¹⁴⁵ The Commission heard about differences between commands, regions and other work units that were both influenced by, and had an impact on, their level of diversity and inclusion. Consistent with the fundamental role of leadership in shaping organisational culture and climate, we observed that officers-in-charge can have a significant bearing on the culture of their units.¹⁴⁶ However, cultural currency is not always drawn from formal authority, with experienced officers often ‘handing down’ the culture to junior officers in their teams. This highlights the need for tailored strategies targeting different work units and operational-level cultural influencers.

“It’s that middle management of Sergeants who they look up to as gods. Officers-in-charge a little bit less so as they are more removed.”¹⁴⁷

Lasting change requires cultural change

Without cultural change, systemic reform will be resisted and not sustainable. As the common saying goes, ‘culture eats strategy for breakfast’. Failure to target culture has been described as the ‘death knell’ of many organisational change initiatives, particularly those concerning diversity and inclusion.¹⁴⁸

“The machine of the QPS and the QPS culture is so strong. You could come up with the best strategy on the planet, but that culture down there, has reverted and overran and come back to practices that we saw before Fitzgerald.”¹⁴⁹

Effecting cultural change is challenging and takes time. On their own, communications and training are unlikely to succeed in shifting culture.¹⁵⁰ Cultural change must include a focus on leadership and is more likely to be achieved through changing policies, processes and leadership practices to reward behaviours that align with positive cultural values.¹⁵¹ It is critical to combine explicit values-based messages with practical systemic changes to send a clear message of intent.¹⁵²

Work is underway in QPS to implement transformational cultural change to achieve better outcomes for victims of domestic and family violence, recommended by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce.¹⁵³ This could be leveraged for broader cultural change. During the Review, QPS acknowledged that work on cultural change would require significant effort over multiple years.

It is important to note that attending to culture does not provide cover for systemic discrimination or disavow individuals of responsibility for their behaviour. Sociologist Samantha Crompvoets has written persuasively about how a narrow focus on culture can create a 'fog' in which culture means everything and nothing, obscuring the real problems.¹⁵⁴ However, paying attention to culture is vital for understanding how QPS systems function in practice and how they reinforce cultural values that contribute to discrimination, as well as where systemic changes may be resisted.

Establishing a vision for inclusion

Set the vision for an inclusive QPS

QPS has lacked a long-term vision for inclusion

The first step must be to articulate a renewed vision of the diverse and inclusive organisation QPS wants to be. Without a compelling vision of an inclusive QPS to guide reforms, diversity and inclusion work will be rudderless and reactive.¹⁵⁵ The rationale for change needs to be clear and backed by visible support from senior and middle managers.¹⁵⁶ QPS has signalled its intention to improve diversity and inclusion in several strategic documents but has lacked a clear and compelling long-term vision that can align and embed leadership for diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation.

QPS has committed to achieving diversity targets by 2027 for First Nations and culturally diverse¹⁵⁷ people in the workforce and women in senior leadership roles.¹⁵⁸ However, it is unclear how the targets were developed and chosen. During our Review, the Commission did not observe work being undertaken to identify and plan the changes needed to achieve those targets, such as workforce modelling considering forecasted demand and rates of recruitment, attrition and promotion. As the targets cover the total workforce, they also obscure the work needed to improve diversity in sworn roles and within particular ranks and parts of the organisation.

QPS's five-year strategic plan, which sits at the first level of the organisation's operational planning framework, was recently renewed for 2024–2028 and shows positive signs of commitment to workplace equality.¹⁵⁹ It identifies driving reform and building an inclusive and diverse culture as a key opportunity for the organisation and includes embracing diversity one of its core values of 'respect'. Yet it does not mount a compelling case for why diversity and inclusion would benefit the entire service or how it contributes to the organisation's overall vision and purpose.

“ *I would completely re-evaluate our strategy to understand what diversity means to us. We really need to rethink what inclusion means and how we go about it. It's kind of dropped from our vernacular ... we've gone to the next big shiny thing.*¹⁶⁰

Review participant

Under the Public Sector Act 2022 (Qld), the Commissioner of Police is required to promote equity and diversity, including through taking reasonable action to ensure those from diverse groups can pursue career advancement opportunities and to eliminate unlawful discrimination in QPS.¹⁶¹ The organisation has a five-year inclusion and diversity strategy 2020–2025, which aims to ‘embed an inclusive workplace where all our people are connected, engaged and positively contribute’.¹⁶² The strategy outlines several high-level strategies and performance indicators. However, most are vague, and the Commission did not observe their progress being measured or tracked.

In compliance with its obligations under the Public Sector Act, QPS has also put in place annual equity and diversity plans. The plans outline objectives and measures to improve equity and diversity, including through embedding an inclusive workplace culture. Objectives in the current plan do not appear to align with the inclusion and diversity strategy.¹⁶³ While the plan contains indicators, in the absence of a clear long-term vision they appear ad hoc and do not show what progress or success would look like.

During the Review, the Commission was consulted on the development of the new equity and diversity plan, being led by the Human Resources Division. Positively, the QPS project team was highly motivated to improve and set out a more sophisticated and detailed plan.

The vision must be linked to performance

To create the necessary level of urgency and importance, QPS’s vision for inclusion should make the case for diversity and inclusion as core to its wider mission and effective performance. A crucial factor shaping shared perceptions of organisational commitment to diversity and inclusion is the degree to which diversity is viewed as a competitive advantage.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, aligning the objectives of reform with the mission of the organisation helps to garner senior and middle manager support for and involvement in change efforts.¹⁶⁵

A positive vision would elevate the strategic priority given to diversity and inclusion and provide an end state for those within QPS to envision and work towards.¹⁶⁶ It is critical that the vision emphasise the strengths and benefits of diversity and inclusion to policing, rather than being merely a corporate aspiration or something necessary to comply with public expectations or legal and policy requirements.

🗨️ They do it because, you know, they’re required to do it. There might be people at the policy level that say ‘oh yes, we are doing these things’ and reporting on it, but at the real level, they don’t want to change.¹⁶⁷

When articulating the purpose and benefits of improving diversity and inclusion, QPS highlights the health and safety of the workplace and representing the community it serves.¹⁶⁸ Less focus is given to the ways in which diversity and inclusion contribute to the performance of the organisation, including enhancing policing outcomes and becoming an employer of choice. Police services in other Australian jurisdictions are increasingly focusing on performance when making the case for diversity and inclusion.¹⁶⁹

As discussed in [Chapter 1](#), the business case for diversity and inclusion is clear. Indeed, many in QPS recognise this, particularly diverse officers and those who work closely with them, who see the value diversity brings to a modern police service. Yet there are still many who view diversity and inclusion as something QPS is compelled to do and not part of core business. A positive and compelling vision would be an important step in reorienting QPS’s values and convincing the workforce to back change.

The vision needs to be translated into a workplace equality strategy

One of the Commission’s key recommendations is that QPS translate the renewed vision for diversity and inclusion into a long-term workplace equality strategy outlining the systemic changes needed to make progress. The strategy should be developed and in place before QPS commences any new initiatives related to diversity and inclusion. This should be taken as an opportunity to pause, take stock of the recommendations in this report and chart a course forward.

QPS's strategy should include actions to implement the recommendations in this report, but its scope and duration should extend beyond the life of this review. To have legitimacy and leverage their practical experience and insights, the strategy should be developed with the active engagement of women, First Nations, culturally diverse police, and other diverse members.

It is important that the strategy sets out a coherent and cohesive framework for advancing diversity and inclusion that clearly connects with other strategic and operational plans. We suggest that the strategy could link with and guide the development of QPS's annual equity and diversity plans under the Public Sector Act. Indicators in the strategy should be integrated within QPS's organisational performance measures. Once the strategy is in place, other whole-of-organisation strategies, including QPS's overall strategic plan and vision, should be reviewed and updated to align with it.


Involving diverse QPS members

Consulting with diverse groups

Consulting with diverse groups who have lived experience helps to understand the nature and prevalence of systemic issues, develop practical strategies and shape cultural change.¹⁷⁰

In dismantling barriers to inclusion, it is crucial to elevate the voices of those directly affected, or potentially affected, to identify where the barriers are and what might need to change. This means creating genuine opportunities for diverse groups to contribute to designing the path forward. This approach is reinforced by the literature on designing and implementing interventions for maximum impact.¹⁷¹


QPS members from diverse backgrounds need a seat at the table, and at that table they need to be supported to provide input on matters that impact them.

 **Nothing about us, without us.**¹⁷²

QPS has established a range of organisational frameworks to engage with its workforce, including consultative groups and diversity networks. Despite this, a key concern raised in our consultation phase was that many diverse QPS members do not feel meaningfully engaged in decision-making processes.


 **Women aren't at the table where the big decisions are made.**¹⁷³

Meaningful participation is a core mechanism underpinning effective organisational change interventions.¹⁷⁴ The greatest potential for positive effects is achieved through approaches that empower people most affected by the challenges to identify and enact changes in multiple domains.¹⁷⁵ Without the opportunity for this kind of involvement, management-driven changes are likely to fail or cause further harm.

 ***The policy hasn't changed as it is white men writing the policy. CALD groups have no influence into policy.***¹⁷⁶

Review participant

The involvement of diverse members should extend beyond mere consultation and include engagement in the design of the vision and the strategies contained within. This can be expected not only to provide more effective solutions that fit the organisational context but also to generate direct benefits from the participation process itself.¹⁷⁷

 **QPS don't consult or collaborate. They present it and say: 'This is being implemented, what are your thoughts?'**¹⁷⁸

Meaningful participation must be more than a cursory measure. Best practice requires participation to take place at regular intervals and for the feedback of that consultation to help design genuine, positive change.¹⁷⁹

👤 Culturally and linguistically diverse police need influence in policy. Otherwise it sounds good but leads to no real change.¹⁸⁰

The terms of reference for the consultative groups that have been established for First Nations and culturally diverse QPS members include 'contributing to overarching strategic documents', such as the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.¹⁸¹

While it is important to consult on high-level strategies, QPS members from diverse backgrounds have a unique lens through which to identify unconscious bias and systemic discrimination.

👤 People with diverse backgrounds see things at a different angle.¹⁸²

The scope of consultation with these groups should extend to key policies and procedures that have the potential to impact the experience of diverse groups in the workplace.

👤 QPS needs to consult with First Nations members so that everything designed has a cultural safety lens around it ... they actually need to be involved in the design process from the beginning.¹⁸³

Bridging the trust gap

The Commission heard from many diverse officers who do not trust that QPS leaders are taking genuine steps to take their views onboard. Redefining these relationships will require a concerted effort from leaders and decision-makers to prioritise the voices of diverse QPS members and ensure that their input is met with meaningful action.

👤 I do not believe the change is genuine.¹⁸⁴

The Commission spoke with many passionate QPS members who have championed diversity and inclusion and advocated for change in their spheres of influence. We heard that, despite experiencing the impacts of discrimination and providing practical, reasonable solutions, these members have at times felt ostracised and excluded from broader conversation.

👤 We're constantly being overlooked and not validated of how important including us in these conversations is.¹⁸⁵

Encouraging participation and communication between people who hold different social identities increases opportunities to create shared meaning between groups and helps to reduce prejudice.¹⁸⁶ Equally, failing to engage diverse officers in processes that impact them can have the effect of turning potential champions into potential resisters.

👤 I am an advocate for non-Caucasian people to never join the police.¹⁸⁷

After expending significant time and energy, often at personal cost, to change the culture of the organisation, diverse officers told us they have begun to feel discouraged, and this had diminished their motivation to contribute.

👤 I've never felt so discouraged ... I'm so disappointed we have regressed so significantly.¹⁸⁸

To create a truly inclusive environment and re-establish the trust of the diverse workforce, QPS needs to authentically engage with the perspectives of women, First Nations and culturally diverse groups to establish a two-way dialogue where employees feel assured that their contributions will be considered and integrated.

Own and signal priority and commitment

The Executive Leadership Team needs to own the vision and strategy

At present, diversity and inclusion initiatives lack high-level executive sponsorship and engagement. The QPS Executive Leadership Team¹⁸⁹, which consists of the highest ranking members of the service, both sworn and unsworn, needs to take ownership of the vision and hold itself responsible and accountable for implementation. This would send a clear signal of priority and commitment, elevate the agenda among whole-of-organisation priorities, ensure alignment of initiatives with organisational objectives and unlock sufficient resourcing.¹⁹⁰ Progress on the diversity and inclusion strategy should be a standing agenda item in Executive Leadership Team meetings.

“ *We don't ever talk about the why. That's got to be driven by someone who has credibility, it's got to be driven by the most senior people, as well as come from the bottom up.*¹⁹¹

Review participant

The vital role of the executive leadership in driving diversity and inclusion is discussed in more detail in [Chapter 4](#).

Safety signals would show diverse officers that QPS is serious about change

Through the strategy and its rollout, QPS and the Executive Leadership Team need to send clear and consistent 'safety signals' that show diverse officers that they are valued. 'Safety signals' are explicit signals that people's identities are valued and respected.¹⁹² The strategy should include messages that a person's identity is a legitimate consideration in personnel decisions, consistent with the overarching vision that diversity is valued because it is integral to the overall performance of the service.¹⁹³

Validating identity as an important consideration will aid in fostering the organisational conditions for transformational change to occur more quickly.¹⁹⁴ It is important that these safety signals cascade down through higher ranks to provide a uniform signal of commitment.



Planning and coordinating change

Coordinate implementation across the organisation

A list of actions will not lead to systemic change

It is challenging to effectively implement systemic change across an organisation as large and complex as QPS, and it requires careful coordination and sustained focus. It will require actions at multiple levels and areas of QPS and cooperation among areas with different priorities and lines of accountability. Many of the actions will be complementary or conditional on one another and need to be carefully staged.

Critically, QPS is currently implementing a large volume of recommendations from other reviews, inquests and inquiries, several of which suggest systemic improvements in areas connected with this review. QPS will need to carefully coordinate reforms to avoid duplication, inefficiency and unintended consequences. It is important that the systemic changes recommended in this report are not approached as a list of discrete initiatives but are coordinated, resourced and connected with QPS's wider reform agenda.

There is never any solid commitment to change, just knee jerk reactions that are not supported at all levels and don't last.¹⁹⁵

Coordination must be led by a senior police officer

Systemic cultural change of the nature proposed by our Review is more likely to be achieved when coordinated consistently and comprehensively from the top down.¹⁹⁶ Mandating a senior executive police officer with the authority and responsibility to coordinate systemic changes recommended by this report is critical to give reforms priority and credibility within the organisation. Throughout the Review, the Commission has heard that policing experience affords significant credibility and standing in the organisation. In that context, it is difficult for 'unsworn' parts of the organisation, even senior executive officials, to coordinate the systemic change. This fuels the perception that diversity and inclusion initiatives are a distraction and not part of 'real' police work.

In our organisation, I will say it, the power sits with the sworn because we're a police organisation not a civilian organisation ... in our organisation that is just culturally how it is.¹⁹⁷

I'll be quite frank. Staff members are treated differently to police officers and not in a positive way.¹⁹⁸

While the valuing of sworn over unsworn status is unhelpful and should be addressed as part of cultural change, this dynamic needs to be understood and leveraged to drive the changes needed. To implement and drive reforms arising from multiple reviews, we consider a senior police officer should be mandated with coordinating these reforms. A unit within the officer's command should be resourced to support coordination.

Integrate the strategy into organisational planning

Implementation is the most challenging part of reform

Strategies and plans that are not effectively implemented at best achieve little and at worst may do more harm than good. They may offer the appearance of compliance or activity but hide a lack of priority and resourcing and undermine confidence in the organisation's capacity for change. During the Review, the Commission heard that strategies and initiatives established by the Executive Leadership Team or at headquarters in Brisbane often fail to cut through on the ground, especially in the regions.

“ The messaging from the executive, the way it is at the moment, is too abstract for people who understand what’s actually happening on the ground ... Contextually, it doesn’t reach the people that are actually part of that conversation.¹⁹⁹ ”

“ The higher up the position you get, the more disconnect you have with what’s happening on the ground level.²⁰⁰ ”

Stakeholder participation should include integration of new initiatives as part of everyday work.²⁰¹

QPS has numerous strategies and plans that propose actions that would improve diversity and inclusion, including the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, Equity and Diversity Plan 2023–2024 and Multicultural Action Plan 2023–2024. However, none of the plans are referenced in QPS’s annual operational plan and they appear to be weakly implemented.²⁰²

“ We have an inclusion and diversity strategy. It’s very, very light touch. There’s no responsible people nominated. There’s no timeframes. There’s no performance indicators. There has been no progress.²⁰³ ”

Review participant

The Multicultural Action Plan, developed to meet QPS’s obligations under the Multicultural Recognition Act 2016 (Qld), outlines actions to increase diversity of recruitment, improve the collection of culturally diverse data and address racism and discrimination in the workplace.²⁰⁴ QPS’s 2023 progress report indicates that little progress has been made on actions relating to internal workplace culture and practices, with most actions having no outcomes to report, citing ‘resourcing implications and competing priorities’.²⁰⁵

Local initiatives should be encouraged

To be effectively implemented, QPS’s strategy needs to be integrated within operational planning at all levels of the organisation, including through regions, districts and local stations. While visiting stations throughout the state, the Commission learnt about many positive, locally led initiatives in areas such as providing flexible work, offering mentoring for diverse officers, building cultural awareness and setting behavioural standards. These levels of the organisation are best placed to develop practical initiatives that are tailored to their specific operating context and environment.²⁰⁶ Embedding diversity and inclusion within operational planning processes at all levels would encourage local initiatives aligned to organisational goals, as well as provide opportunities for sharing and learning between work units and scaling up of effective initiatives.

Redefining core values and harnessing resistance

Harness resistance to change

Expect resistance to diversity and inclusion measures

Any effort to effect widespread cultural change to address inequality in an organisation will be likely to encounter resistance.²⁰⁷ Resistance often arises as a response to ‘actual or perceived challenges to existing hierarchies of power’ where privileged groups seek to restore, maintain and increase their position.²⁰⁸

However, QPS should not aim for an absence of resistance. If there is no discomfort in making change toward equality, it may be because no substantive change is being made.²⁰⁹ Resistance should be viewed as a reflection of the complexities and realities associated with uplifting diversity and inclusion across the workforce.²¹⁰

Change as a perceived conflict to core values

As outlined in [Chapter 1](#), the Workplace Fairness in QPS Survey identified resistance to diversity and inclusion measures throughout QPS. This often manifested in objections based on tightly held values such as merit and fairness. Resistance can be at its greatest when proposed changes are perceived to compromise core values.

While gender and colour blindness are often considered to be virtues of fairness and neutrality in the assessment of merit, in reality they can operate to reproduce inequalities.²¹¹ The resistant group may cast doubt on the merit of officers appointed through measures designed to increase diversity, without acknowledging that the system itself may be structured in a way that benefits groups with the most influence.²¹²

Legacy impacts of previous efforts to increase diversity

Past initiatives in QPS have faced significant resistance, which has had the effect of both undermining the initiative and setting future efforts back.

Resistance to efforts to improve diversity in QPS was observed following a 2016 strategy designed to promote 50/50 gender equity recruitment practices, further described in [Chapter 1](#).

QPS’s 50/50 gender equity recruitment strategy, while well intentioned, was introduced without workforce consultation or a well-communicated rationale for change, and the failure of QPS to anticipate and plan for resistance ultimately harmed both the organisation and individuals impacted by the recruitment processes.

📌 [The 50/50 gender equity recruitment strategy was] an absolute debacle ... If you’ve gone out and stated to people that you’re going to be hiring 50% women ... how do they know that they’re being picked because they meet the requirements and not just because they’re a woman?²¹³

As a result, more officers found themselves in a situation where their identity was not valued, undermining their sense of belonging.

📌 I have to work really hard to prove that I’m more than just a female.²¹⁴

📌 I’ve always received multiple comments that the only reason I’ve got on certain courses is because of my sex. I know that I’m a hard worker, but [I] always feel like you’re justifying yourself or having to validate yourself.²¹⁵

An unfortunate legacy from the implementation of this initiative is that among members of the QPS workforce there is confusion about the distinction between discriminatory initiatives and those that are necessary and justified to shift toward substantive equality.

It removes any credibility of the rest of us that did earn it, and we're seen as just a 'stats promotion'.²¹⁶

The current climate for change in QPS must therefore be viewed through the lens of an organisation where previous diversity efforts have fuelled concerns among officers about the fairness of such initiatives.

QPS should anticipate resistance from the workforce in relation to efforts to implement diversity and inclusion measures, including the recommendations of this report. This resistance is likely to arise in various forms, including from the intended beneficiaries, who have expressed that they want to be seen to be appointed to positions based on their personal qualities, or 'merit', rather than their gender or race.²¹⁷

The negative attitudes were so vocal, females would identify themselves as having been promoted prior to the 50/50 gender strategy to separate themselves from females promoted after the strategy was implemented.²¹⁸

Plan for and harness resistant views

Reacting to resistance by halting or reverting actions designed to support progress will reinforce existing structural disadvantages and strengthen resistance. Conversely, accepting resistance as a part of organisational change and failing to effectively plan for and manage resistance risks undermining progress and harming diverse officers. Creating a safe environment for change is a critical first step.²¹⁹

An opportunity to redefine core values

In harnessing resistant views, it is necessary to acknowledge that resistance to change will be influenced by individual identities, beliefs and privileges.

Recent research by Gender Compass highlights six distinct segments within the Australian population, each varying in their attitudes toward gender equality. The most resistant group – the 'rejector' segment – was the group most likely to value respecting tradition, rules and norms.²²⁰ This aligns with the Commission's observations regarding the entrenched values within QPS such as merit and fairness. In preparing to manage resistance, it will be crucial for QPS to apply a values lens to strategies for change.

Values are abstract, often subconscious and challenging to unpack, making values-based resistance powerful in blocking the change agenda.²²¹ While values held by QPS members, such as fairness and solidarity, are not inherently negative – and indeed have positives in police work – the way they are understood can undermine positive efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.

This presents an opportunity for QPS to redefine and communicate its core values. By reframing and aligning its values with equality efforts, QPS can shift toward creating a more cohesive and supportive environment for change. Rather than expecting members to abandon values such as merit and fairness, a strategic approach could leverage existing values to promote opportunities for diverse members, demonstrating that adhering to values and embracing diversity are two sides of the same coin.

Leveraging proximity

Proximity and the use of storytelling are powerful tools that can foster empathy and bring people closer to the experiences of diverse QPS members, moderating and shifting resistant views. Understanding more about the experiences of diverse QPS members can also help to facilitate an awareness of benefits of diversity, contributing to inclusive workplaces.

During our consultations, we identified that proximity can be a defining factor in whether people are supportive of or resistant to diversity and inclusion initiatives.

“ [After interviewing a culturally diverse applicant] I wanted to just wrap myself around him and say, come on board. It brings tears to my eyes ... We had all sorts of judgements going around in our head, but he was such a shining light.²²²”

Some members reported that working alongside diverse officers had broadened their understanding of the challenges faced by these groups.

“ I just thought, oh my god, this is it, this is what generalisation does when people don't have exposure to people who are different.²²³”

Others recounted how witnessing the experiences of diverse officers raised disparities from their own experience, leading to a reflection on their position of respective privilege.

“ My wife is an incredible woman, incredible police officer ... That experience gave me so much more compassion for my wife and the issues that she's had to put up with ... It gave me some real insight and it's helped me out later on in life.²²⁴”

We also heard that when QPS members were able to work with diverse officers, those members could see how diverse officers' skills can complement those in the workforce and lead to better policing outcomes.

“ *My experience over years of managing [part-time mothers] is that I get more out of some of those part timers than I do with some of my full timers. It's because they turn up ... some of those are the best workers you could ever have.*²²⁵”

Review participant

Proximity engenders compassion by bringing awareness to challenges faced by diverse groups and making their experiences visible and real. Strengthening the voices of diverse groups through tools such as storytelling can help to bring proximity to areas of QPS where exposure to diversity may be limited. By highlighting the unique strengths that diverse QPS members bring to QPS, proximity alone makes the case for change.

Secure support from champions for change

Resistance occurs on a spectrum, with some taking an entrenched opposition to a proposed initiative, others being fully committed to a proposed initiative and a 'curious and unconvinced' moveable middle remaining undecided and susceptible to influence.²²⁶ Focusing on the moveable middle is a key starting point for change.²²⁷

One approach to engaging the moveable middle is to champion leaders who speak out in support of workplace equality, encouraging others to follow suit. The Commission observed that senior officers who engaged with the workforce about the benefits of diversity and inclusion assisted in raising awareness across the organisation.

Engaging a network of champions for change will help to expand the pockets of commitment for action across QPS.²²⁸ Encouraging those who have established credibility and influence will generate opportunities to challenge prevailing attitudes and can be an important driver for change.²²⁹ It will be necessary to provide these champions with support to carry out this role, including specific training on managing resistance and calling out inappropriate behaviour.

Narrative

Amy's* story

*Not their real name

Amy is a long-serving officer who joined QPS when few women were in leadership roles. She said the lack of women in the organisation had a negative impact on her experience as a junior officer.

She told us,

“ *Not having female role models, or females who had walked my path, or females that I could turn to for advice ... was quite significant.*

Throughout her career, Amy has strived to foster an inclusive work environment because she knows what it's like to feel excluded.

When initiatives to improve inclusion and diversity have been introduced, Amy has seen the resistance and backlash. She thinks this is because such initiatives fundamentally challenge the status quo for the majority of the workforce, which is male dominated.

Reflecting on the response to QPS's 50/50 gender recruitment strategy, Amy said:

“ What I find so interesting is that some men are very quick to identify how there's such an unfair system and how they've been so incredibly disadvantaged by this approach. They've never once walked a day in my shoes. They don't know what it's like to be a female in a male dominated area. To walk into a meeting where you are the only female in the whole room.

Amy emphasised that to achieve results in the face of resistance, QPS must get the right people to communicate the rationale for change and to challenge perceptions of people who do not value inclusion. As a starting point, these people must have established credibility in the organisation.

Enhance internal communications

Strategic communication facilitates engagement

As a large organisation with a segmented workforce, internal communications provide an important platform for driving systemic change in QPS.²³⁰ Effective communication requires messages to be clearly articulated, consistently reinforced and widely understood, providing clarity of expectations across the workforce.²³¹ This requires sufficient resources, including personnel, time and relevant infrastructure, to establish main communication channels.²³² A strategic and considered communications approach is therefore essential to uplift diversity and inclusion literacy across QPS.

Communicate the rationale for change

Clearly articulating and communicating the rationale for workplace equality will assist in moving resistant groups away from common misconceptions. Effective communication should aim to dismantle existing attitudes by enhancing overall literacy on concepts such as the distinction between formal and substantive equality. These are challenging messages to convey, but addressing them is essential for enabling meaningful cultural change.

Taking a proactive approach to communication will help to achieve a more informed workforce, ultimately facilitating smoother implementation of strategies. Anticipating common resistant reactions and preparing for the types of questions that may arise – through tools like FAQs, fact sheets, and discussion points – will help to ensure QPS members, including managers, are equipped with the information needed to drive change.

Lack of organisational prioritisation impedes progress

Currently, only a handful of permanent positions are dedicated to delivering internal communications to a growing workforce of almost 20,000 people.²³³ Our review of documents obtained by the Commission indicates that QPS received advice from external consultants Ernst & Young in a draft report dated February 2024 that highlighted an immediate need to increase strategic communications capacity.²³⁴

The under-resourcing of internal communications has resulted in fragmented and inconsistent approaches to distributing key messages across QPS, with various groups and individuals independently initiating efforts to build awareness about diversity and inclusion within their own networks.

📌 We've been all thrashing around on our own trying to make changes in our small areas of influence.²³⁵

We were also told that some diverse officers have experienced backlash when diversity and inclusion measures are announced without strategic workforce communication.

📌 There were problems with how the initial inclusion and diversity strategy came out, because it wasn't marketed very well. Then we had this massive period of 'inclusion via exclusion', so the men hated all the women.²³⁶

Targeted engagement is more effective than mass communication efforts, however, the lack of resources allocated to developing engagement activities in QPS has inhibited their reach and prevalence. Resourcing limitations also raise challenges regarding the capacity for QPS to monitor and refine key messages used to shape inclusion and diversity literacy.

Addressing this deficiency requires QPS to support cultural change by allocating greater organisational prioritisation and resourcing capability to its internal communication functions.

Harnessing data and information

Uplift data capabilities

Accurate data is essential for QPS to know where it is and what it needs to focus on – that is, to iteratively observe and make adaptations to steer progress throughout the implementation period.²³⁷ Robust data collection and analysis capability for workforce issues is necessary to ensure oversight of key issues and to inform strategies for change.

Developing an accurate picture of the workforce

The Commission observed limitations of the current workforce demographic data as outlined in further detail in [Chapter 2](#). Relevantly, this included issues relating to:

- the adequacy of data collection methods to identify the number of culturally diverse police in the workforce
- the number of First Nations and culturally diverse police who feel comfortable identifying as such in formal data collection mechanisms.

An inaccurate picture of workforce demographics runs the risk of excluding diverse officers. Data limitations also prevent QPS from establishing a baseline dataset from which to monitor changes over time.

We understand from QPS that its workforce data analytics capabilities were impacted by machinery of government changes, including QPS involvement in the Public Safety Business Agency, and that these capabilities are now being rebuilt.²³⁸

Work is underway to improve the accuracy and reliability of workforce data in QPS, including through communications campaigns encouraging employees to update their equity and diversity information in the QPS Employee Self Service Platform.²³⁹ The efforts QPS has made to remedy data deficiencies will be crucial to establishing a more accurate picture of the workforce.

You can't improve what you don't measure

During our information-gathering phase, the Commission obtained various datasets from QPS related to diversity and inclusion, including:

- workforce demographics filtered by rank and work unit
- career progression of diverse QPS members including in relation to recruitment, promotion, higher duties and retention
- whole-of-workforce access to flexible work arrangements.

While QPS provided many rich and valuable datasets in response to the Commission's requests, it appeared that often these were being generated for the purpose of the Review. In some instances it seemed that, prior to our request, QPS had not proactively compiled and analysed key datasets.

We also heard about a lack of confidence in QPS's data analysis of key issues.

“ I am unaware of data that is collected to provide an accurate representation of the depth of the problem. Presently, media reports highlight the increasing attrition rate with no explanation as to the causes for officers leaving. I am unaware if data exists regarding rank, length of service and the gender of officers who resign ... Until data is collected, or made available for analysis, as to the reasons for women/First Nations/CALD [culturally diverse police] leaving the service, the issues cannot truly be addressed. You cannot improve what you don't measure.²⁴⁰ ”

Aside from the Working for Queensland survey, we did not observe data being used to measure workforce attitudes to diversity and inclusion. QPS also did not appear to measure experiences of diverse officers in the workplace through collating information from exit processes or other internal information sources, which would be best practice.²⁴¹

Actively measuring and considering these factors is essential, as collectively they provide a more comprehensive understanding of the current state of QPS in terms of diversity and inclusion. Adopting a more systematic approach to data collection and analysis will enable QPS to identify specific areas of concern and to develop targeted strategies for improvement.²⁴²

Use workforce data to drive strategic decision-making

Ensuring data informs strategy requires decision-makers to be provided with regular updates about trends and systemic issues impacting the workforce.²⁴³ The QPS Strategic Workforce Plan 2023–2027 reflects the importance of such an approach, setting a vision for a workforce where 'data and metrics capability inform organisational decisions'.²⁴⁴

Optimised data streamlines decisions

Strategic management is most effective when data is presented to decision-makers in a format that is simple, transparent and dynamic. The Commission of Inquiry identified limitations in QPS's ability to present data in an accessible and streamlined way. Specifically, the Commission of Inquiry found that reporting on the effectiveness of the complaints system was hindered by the difficulty in obtaining a clear overview of a member's disciplinary history, as the files provided in response to such a request were often dense records consisting of hundreds of pages.²⁴⁵

An internal review pointed to deficiencies in data-sharing capabilities across Commands. The review found that these shortcomings limited the ability for leadership to have visibility over key issues and reduced the opportunity for preventative action.²⁴⁶

Addressing these challenges is essential for enhancing decision-making processes and enabling more proactive management of risks across QPS.

Strengthening reporting for improved oversight

The Commission identified limitations in QPS's approach to reporting on key issues, including as set out in the quarterly complaint database reports provided to the Executive Leadership Team.²⁴⁷ These reports display a series of static graphs on complaint numbers by gender, age, rank and location of the subject member. The reports do not clearly identify which types of complaints originate from within QPS and which come from the public. Though informative, the data falls short in providing a full picture of the underlying issues. To better support decision-making, data should be consolidated to reveal trends or hotspots – for example, spikes in internal complaints in specific districts against members of certain ranks.

A review of diversity and inclusion data reports also highlighted deficiencies in how data is used to identify and communicate critical issues. The Public Sector Act requires QPS to promote and advance equity and diversity, including through an annual audit report. Our review of the QPS audit report revealed a high-level, formulaic approach to data interpretation. There was little evidence that the root causes of the workforce inequities had been deeply explored.²⁴⁸

Addressing these gaps is crucial to equip decision-makers with the data necessary for informed action, facilitating greater oversight and enabling strategic decision-making.

Monitoring and sustaining progress

Monitor outcomes, not outputs, to drive continual improvement

Real change takes time

The systemic reforms called for in this report will take time to fully embed; cultural changes may take several years. While there is urgency for change and several priority actions that need to occur, most QPS members who spoke to the Commission understood that significant shifts would not occur overnight.

The pathway to QPS being an inclusive organisation will be long and contain challenges. There will be roadblocks in the form of resistance and initiatives that do not work as expected. Organisations like QPS are dynamic and constantly shifting, with a tendency to revert to entrenched patterns of behaviour.²⁴⁹ QPS will need to adapt and be willing to sustain urgency and focus, in line with its overarching vision and strategy.

To guide this journey and ensure the best use of QPS's resources, it is vital that QPS define and monitor the outcomes it is seeking to achieve and the indicators that would demonstrate success.²⁵⁰ Outcomes are not merely outputs, such as the implementation of a recommendation, but goals and objectives on the pathway to inclusion. Indicators should be set at the individual as well as organisational level to measure the effect that systemic reforms are having.²⁵¹

To promote accountability and transparency, these should be incorporated within QPS's performance frameworks, used to inform internal monitoring and evaluation, and included in public reporting. Monitoring is also important for identifying unintended consequences or side effects of initiatives to garner insights that can improve the change process.²⁵²

At present, QPS only reports on high-level measures and targets for workforce diversity, including percentages of women in leadership roles, First Nations people, people born overseas and people from non-English speaking backgrounds.²⁵³ The annual report does not separate this data by sworn and unsworn QPS members, resulting in higher levels of diversity being reported than if only sworn police were included. Reporting on a wider set of key indicators of diversity and inclusion is necessary to allow stakeholders and the public to identify progress and hold QPS to account. There is also an opportunity for QPS to use performance measures to strengthen reporting for other purposes, such as in meeting the organisation's equity and diversity obligations under the Public Sector Act.²⁵⁴

Invite oversight and expert input

Diversity and inclusion should be a priority for QPS's governance bodies

QPS's governance bodies should consider diversity and inclusion a high organisational priority and provide strategic oversight of progress. This includes the QPS Board of Management, whose role is to advise on and oversee performance against strategic and operational objectives. The Commission reviewed the Board's agendas between July 2023 and June 2024 and did not identify a strong focus on diversity and inclusion or internal workplace culture generally.²⁵⁵ The Commission suggests that progress on the organisation's inclusion and diversity strategy should be a standing item in all Board meetings.

The extent to which the Board of Management can perform this role and provide insights on diversity and inclusion is likely to be impacted by its lack of diversity.²⁵⁶ This Review has highlighted the importance of lived experience in understanding the problem and coming up with potential solutions, and the role that proximity to diversity plays in shifting attitudes and perspectives. The Commission recommends that QPS review its governance frameworks to promote diversity in the Board and its other governance structures. There is a strong rationale for QPS to consider including the Executive Director of the First Nations Division as a standing member of the Board to ensure the Board benefits from First Nations perspectives, particularly in considering matters affecting First Nations officers and people.

Ongoing guidance from our Advisory Panel will be invaluable

Expert support and involvement is a key mechanism to ensure that desired organisational intervention outcomes are achieved.²⁵⁷ During the Review, the Commission and QPS have had the benefit of expert advice from the Review's Advisory Panel. The panel brings specialist expertise and an independent perspective, elevating the review and sharpening its focus on priority issues. The value of the panel's strategic insight and guidance will only increase during the implementation and evaluation phases of the review. We therefore recommend that QPS sustain the Advisory Panel through the term of the review and leverage its expertise.



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4 Leading change

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Why it matters

Committed, values-based leadership is essential for QPS to make the systemic change required to realise workplace equality. Leaders must understand the current drivers of inequality so they are able to genuinely commit to the reform agenda. They must take individual and collective responsibility for the changes required by this Review, set cultural and behavioural expectations and meet those themselves.

Leaders ultimately set the cultural agenda and commit resourcing to realise it. It is vital that the leadership is seen by the rest of the workforce as being united in the commitment to improving workplace equality.

Throughout our consultations, we heard that there is a lack of faith in the senior leadership to act inclusively, that measures to improve workplace equality have not been prioritised in the past, that traditional, authoritarian leadership is the rewarded style of leadership, and that officers-in-charge have a great capacity to create positive or negative culture in a station or work unit.

In this chapter

We explore why leadership is so important and what the Executive Leadership Team²⁵⁸ needs to do to drive this work successfully – increase diversity in its membership, commit to exemplary behaviour, show visible support for the reform agenda and be more accountable for genuine workplace equality outcomes. We also explore traditional and modern leadership styles within QPS.

This chapter contributes to the overall picture of what positive steps QPS should take to prevent discrimination, and what should be done to increase retention of QPS members from diverse backgrounds.²⁵⁹

Leadership will make or break the reform agenda

“Leadership has a critical role to play in inclusion. Inclusion is about respect, and in a hierarchical organisation, respect is generated from the top down.²⁶⁰

Review participant

Organisational leadership impacts on diversity and inclusion beyond specific, concrete initiatives.²⁶¹ The commitment of other members in an organisation is influenced by what they see their leaders doing.²⁶² It is also crucial that leaders are seen to model the required behaviours and attitudes,²⁶³ particularly to foster the belief that diversity is beneficial for the organisation.²⁶⁴

In a hierarchical organisation such as QPS, leadership determines resourcing and structures and influences culture. This finding was reflected by the Commission of Inquiry, which noted that ‘codes of conduct, policies and procedures have less impact on the actions of an organisation’s members than the words and actions of its senior leaders’.²⁶⁵

Systemic reform to create workplace equality is complex and often occurs only incrementally. It requires a long-term commitment from leaders, who need to remain dedicated even when change seems to stall or if particular initiatives are not successful. This commitment is strengthened when it is embedded through the leaders’ strategic and operational decisions.

Leaders also have a key role in promoting the benefits of workplace equality, redefining core values and harnessing resistance to change.²⁶⁶ Senior leaders have responsibility for translating external drivers, such as the broader political authorising environment, into effective organisational action, and visible leadership commitment is vital.²⁶⁷

All the foundational change outlined in this report must be driven by the Senior Leadership Team, collectively and as individuals, if it is to achieve outcomes. Leaders will need to own the process from the outset.²⁶⁸

Leadership emerged as a common theme throughout our consultations. This was consistent with other similar reviews of police services by human rights agencies in South Australia and Victoria and at the Australian Federal Police.

Senior leadership lacks credibility with some of the workforce

Our starting point in this review was the evidence base obtained by the Commission of Inquiry. One of their findings was that QPS members feel abandoned by their leadership.²⁶⁹ Some submissions published by the Commission of Inquiry observed that the organisation lacked integrity and that it appeared that this lack of integrity related to leaders failing to uphold the stated values of QPS, create a positive and inclusive culture for its members, or meet community expectations.²⁷⁰

At the time of our consultations, we heard that some police continue to have a lack of faith in the senior leadership to act on discrimination.²⁷¹

For some participants, this was about a lack of diversity within the upper ranks.

“There’s been so many times I’ve walked into a room like this, that I’ll be the only woman sitting at the table ... And yet, you’ll have 12 white men making decisions about women ... when you look at the pipeline in leadership in the QPS I don’t see that changing for generations.”²⁷²

For other participants it was that they do not believe senior leaders have demonstrated exemplary behaviour in the past.

“I can’t think of people that I admire now, or that I could learn from, more that I can get help from and show me how to do something. It doesn’t exist.”²⁷³

Planning is vital and rushing to action should be avoided

In the report *Cultural Change: Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian Federal Police*, former Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick highlighted a strong 'bias to action' in command-and-control environments like policing.²⁷⁴ Broderick cautioned against the Australian Federal Police rushing in to try to fix any perceived problems without first understanding the causes of the systemic failure.

This resonates with what we heard from participants in our consultations. They want to see real change. This message is therefore important for the Senior Leadership Team in considering how to respond to this report. We have afforded QPS generous timeframes and enough discretion in how to best implement our recommendations, to help avoid an unplanned rush to action.

Findings from the international evidence base indicate that, to achieve positive outcomes, it is vital to design and implement diversity and inclusion initiatives carefully rather than focus simply on whether or not initiatives are adopted.²⁷⁵ It is easy to make symbolic changes. What is much more challenging is implementing initiatives with consistency and reliability and applying appropriate accountability mechanisms – yet each of these aspects is essential for long-term success.²⁷⁶

Align senior leadership and management, and have each play its role

Senior leadership commitment is crucial for executing the change agenda, but it is not sufficient. Champions are needed across the whole organisation.

Successful implementation of strategic change depends on aligning effective leadership and management across levels of the organisational hierarchy. Rather than working separately, aligned leadership across these layers is what drives changes in organisational performance.²⁷⁷ Signals sent by the actions of leaders and managers²⁷⁸ are particularly important for legitimising organisational values and activities.²⁷⁹

Senior leadership set values and managers operationalise them

Senior leaders communicate the values of the organisation through formal policies, structures, and processes, and managers communicate what those values mean for everyday activities through their words and actions.²⁸⁰

When an organisation values diversity and inclusion, its managers have a critical role in operationalising this into its practices – for example, through decision-making, information networks and informal work-related activities.²⁸¹ In line with this idea, we also heard that local messaging is important.

“*The Commissioner does a lot of different things to try and address that in this workplace in all different mediums. But ... still that's not as influential as somebody who's in your workspace talking to you and telling you about things.*²⁸²

Review participant

Managers shape the culture

Previous reviews have observed that middle management are the cultural ambassadors of the organisation. They have day-to-day interaction with members – and what these leaders say and do matters.²⁸³ This is consistent with the research evidence²⁸⁴ and was also reflective of what we heard throughout our consultations.

▮ They learn from the leadership group, and then they take on what they've said and then all of a sudden, it's what they're saying. Because it's very much a leadership issue.²⁸⁵

The behaviour of managers, including how they treat diverse employees, can either reinforce or undermine the intention of diversity initiatives.²⁸⁶ In particular, through their day-to-day implementation of initiatives, managers play a key role in determining whether initiatives succeed or fail. Their role can be enhanced by monitoring and accountability structures.²⁸⁷ This day-to-day implementation includes addressing behavioural and conduct issues and making decisions that affect inclusion – for example, deciding flexible work requests and who is given opportunities in the form of higher duties or training. These specific topics will be dealt with in more detail in later chapters of this report.

These everyday interactions can really count to both make diverse staff feel included and give all staff the message that diversity is to be embraced. We heard that managers who embrace difference can have great impact.

▮ I think the leaders who identify that they need different skill sets in an office are the changemakers.²⁸⁸

Beyond the implementation of specific initiatives, managers are crucial for cultivating practices that strengthen social connection amongst organisational members who hold different identities. This helps to cultivate the social and relational context for inclusion.²⁸⁹



The Executive Leadership Team needs to do some heavy lifting

For cultural reform to be successful, the Executive Leadership Team needs to take ownership of the reforms, both as individuals and collectively.

While it is important to have properly resourced staff to implement the necessary changes, improving workplace equality in QPS will require full senior leadership support and commitment now and into the future. Responsibility for this leadership cannot simply be delegated. As we heard during our focus groups,

🗨️ [The Commissioner of Police] down needs to drive this.²⁹⁰

QPS members told us in consultations they cannot see change coming from senior leadership.²⁹¹ This is a significant problem because, when senior leaders are not ‘walking the talk,’ diversity and inclusion initiatives are likely to be symbolic rather than substantive.²⁹²

The Executive Leadership Team consists of approximately 40 people and the Senior Leadership Team – all commissioned officers – more than 300. For the purposes of this report, we are focusing on the actions the Executive Leadership Team need to take to drive this work forward, but in fact the whole senior leadership needs to be onboard and their actions aligned. Inclusive leadership needs to exist across all of these levels to ensure that policies designed to promote diversity are effectively enacted in day-to-day practices.²⁹³

Increase diversity in the Executive Leadership Team

🗨️ *I think the organisation needs women and it needs culturally diverse officers in positions of influence ... have some of those diverse people in influential roles.*²⁹⁴

Review participant

Not having diverse voices around the senior leadership table when making decisions can hinder an organisation’s ability to genuinely move forward in the journey towards being inclusive. Visible diversity among senior leaders is a powerful signal that the organisation actually values diversity.²⁹⁵ Diversity in leadership assists an organisation by bringing different ways of thinking from the varied life experiences diverse officers have.²⁹⁶ It is also more difficult for diverse members to imagine being a leader if they do not see others like them at the table.

We heard about the lack of representation in senior roles during our consultations.

🗨️ We’re such a culturally diverse state, but ... all the senior police are white people.²⁹⁷

The composition of the Executive Leadership Team does not reflect the current diversity across ranks overall. In the sworn ranks, as at 31 January 2024,²⁹⁸ the overall proportion of women was 28.4%, First Nations officers was 2.3% and culturally diverse officers was 3.3%.²⁹⁹

In its Annual Report 2022–23, QPS reports that 31.7% of Senior Executive Service positions are women.³⁰⁰ However, that figure is not disaggregated between sworn and unsworn staff.

When broken down further,³⁰¹ it is true that 31.7% of the Executive Leadership Team are women, but the numbers of women in sworn and unsworn roles is:

- sworn members: 7/27 (25.9%)
- unsworn members: 4/8 (50%).

The sworn and unsworn roles in the Executive Leadership Team have different functions, and a more accurate picture is shown when they are reported separately.

Public reporting of leadership diversity is inadequate

In the QPS Annual Report 2022–23, no breakdown is given for First Nations or culturally diverse members in Senior Executive Service or Senior Officer positions. The overall First Nations staff figure is given as 2.3% and culturally diverse staff given as between 1.2% and 1.9%.³⁰² Without public reporting on First Nations and culturally diverse members in leadership positions, there is less accountability for QPS in those areas than there is for women.

The leadership pipeline will not become more diverse without intervention

There are disproportionately small numbers of women, First Nations and culturally diverse police in the commissioned officer ranks, which can be seen in the following table.³⁰³

Table: QPS workforce data showing pipeline of future leaders

	Women	First Nations	Culturally diverse ³⁰⁴
Chief Superintendent	9.1% (1/11)	0	0
Superintendent	17.5% (10/57)	1.8% (1/57)	0
Inspector	21.6% (51/236)	1.7% (4/236)	1.3% (3/236)

Given this, it is obvious that, without intervention, the proportion of women, First Nations and culturally diverse sworn members of the Executive Leadership Team will not significantly increase.

The Commission acknowledges that the historical pace of change within the sworn ranks of QPS has been slow because of the relatively low attrition rate compared with the non-sworn staff of QPS or other government agencies.

Current targets for women leaders will take a long time to be achieved without intervention

QPS has already set itself a target of 30% for women in senior leadership roles.³⁰⁵ The Equity and Diversity Audit Report 2023³⁰⁶ indicates that strategies to increase the number of women leaders are being progressed.³⁰⁷ Some of those are outlined in the Strategic Workforce Action Plan. However, it is unclear how the strategies outlined in the Strategic Workforce Plan 2023–2027 will increase the number of women in leadership roles.³⁰⁸

Targets for First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse leaders do not exist

We heard in consultations that having more First Nations officers in the higher ranks is important.

“an inspector as [the] highest ranking [sworn] First Nations person, which to me is not good enough ... we need to be sitting at the senior leadership table.”³⁰⁹

The Strategic Workforce Plan 2023–2027 indicates that First Nations staff were 2.3% of the workforce, with a target of 4%. It indicates that culturally and linguistically diverse staff were 1.2% of the workforce, with a target of 8%. No targets are given for those groups in leadership roles.

Mechanisms exist to diversify the talent pool

In conducting similar reviews, other human rights agencies have cautioned against an over-reliance on internal recruitment. While providing career pathways and development for internal staff is important – and we discuss this in a later chapter of this report – the greater use of external attraction strategies and even lateral recruitment can support the changes needed to ensure the QPS leadership achieves improved diversity.

Lateral entry has also been recommended in other jurisdictions to deal with similar issues of a lack of diversity at the leadership level.³¹⁰

Pre-requisites for the leadership to drive this work effectively

In this section we look at the three elements we see as critical to success: leading by example, visibility of commitment and accountability.

Leaders must lead by example

To rebuild trust with diverse members, leaders must act with absolute integrity.

If people see leaders behaving respectfully, they are more likely to behave that way themselves.

▮ There's certain people that I've worked with, like natural leaders, who will call people out on their behaviours or comments or whatever they're making, and people respect them ... they gain respect very quickly from people and people know where they stand with them.³¹¹

On the other hand, poor behaviour erodes trust and credibility and sends the wrong signal to officers about how seriously QPS is committed to change.

▮ *[It is] absolutely critical that we walk the walk – what I have seen in more recent years is a complete lack of role modelling from the top down – we have some excellent champions, but we should have 100% champions in SLT and ELT.*³¹²

Review participant

At the time of our consultations, we heard about a widespread perception that senior leaders lack credibility.

▮ So that piece that I spoke to about being credible, that's really key ... to challenge respectfully, the very, very senior leaders of our organisation, who absolutely without a shadow of a doubt do not value inclusivity.³¹³

Not all members feel that current leaders' behaviour is exemplary

The QPS Integrity Framework provides that senior leaders must lead by example and act with the utmost integrity and professionalism.³¹⁴

This requirement sits in contrast with what we heard during consultations.

“ I have lost count of the times I have seen high ranking police laugh and join in with sexist, racist, homophobic or other non-inclusive behaviour.”³¹⁵

The Working for Queensland results are informative on this topic as well.³¹⁶ Only 31% of QPS respondents agreed that the executive group modelled the values or principles of the organisation and 34% agreed that the executive group acts with a high level of integrity.

Change will require reflective, modern leaders

Given the results above, the Senior Leadership Team does not seem to be thought of as ‘leading by example’.

The next best thing, and a step in the journey towards being seen as leading by example, is to show the capacity for self-reflection and ownership of personal history. Leaders who are self-reflective will review and evaluate decisions they have made, both in real time and in hindsight, so that they can continue to improve their decision-making. This means necessarily taking a critical approach to one’s own decisions to understand biases, underlying assumptions and thought processes and to see if decisions can be more inclusive in the future.

We heard that leaders can feel overwhelmed with significant other priorities and do not readily see themselves as part of the problem.

“ Really, is this what we need to do when we’re trying to do all these other 10 million things over here? And that’s definitely a consideration ... well we know culture is a long thing. It’s not going to happen tomorrow... and also people don’t think this necessarily applies to them.”³¹⁷

We also heard that there may need to be some upskilling of leaders.

“ *How can you expect our senior leaders to be good leaders if they’re not getting the tools, and to get the tools they need to do the courses? ... You’re not born with leadership skills, you need to develop them.*”³¹⁸

Review participant

Make leadership support for diversity and inclusion measures visible

QPS members take note of what is valued by leaders and prioritise their actions and behaviour accordingly. Committing to workplace equality is a new way of ‘doing business’, and QPS members need to see the Executive Leadership Team put that commitment into action. Members cannot only be told about it by their managers. Put simply, what senior leaders say must be reflected in what they do.³¹⁹

As is typical of large organisations, the leadership and the frontline workforce, particularly those in general duties, are not easily visible to one another.³²⁰ This was a very strong theme in the Commission of Inquiry report, where ‘disillusionment and cynicism’³²¹ were felt in the ranks because of that lack of connection. During our own consultation, we heard that change is not coming from senior leaders³²² and that there is a disconnect between the Executive Leadership Team and lower ranks.³²³


Leadership support for diversity and inclusion should be demonstrated by communicating the benefits of diversity to the workforce, redefining core values and harnessing resistance,³²⁴ and embedding wellbeing of diverse members in ‘business as usual’.

The benefits of diversity are not well communicated to QPS members

The benefits of diversity and inclusion for organisational performance is a key message that the Executive Leadership Team needs to communicate to all QPS members. Not only will this message provide a strong signal about the organisational priority of diversity and inclusion but it will also help mitigate resistance by highlighting shared interest.³²⁵ The benefits of increasing diversity, discussed earlier in this report, are:

- helping address workforce shortages – drawing from a wider range of the community in recruiting and then keeping officers in the job
- building a fairer and safer workplace – reducing workplace harms and keeping officers at work
- creating a capable and modern police service – more diverse teams are better at solving the complex problems police face
- enhancing community trust of police – improving policing outcomes by better reflecting the communities police serve.

We heard that these benefits are not being communicated to the broader workforce.

 *We really need a rethink of what inclusion means and how we go about it ... it's kind of dropped from our vernacular.*³²⁶

Review participant

Managing resistant views will be an ongoing challenge

As we discuss in this report, resistance should be anticipated and planned for as part of the change journey. Leaders need to be able to sensitively and confidently address resistant views in real time, with the aim of eventually encouraging resistant players to adapt and reframe their thinking.

The needs of diverse staff are not being included in business-as-usual

Attention to inclusive work environments where staff wellbeing is prioritised is a basic tenet of modern leadership. This is not a radical idea, and QPS would not be ahead of the times in building these concepts into its 'business-as-usual' approach. Indeed, other policing organisations in Australia have been cognisant of these issues since at least 2016, when the Australian Federal Police asked Elizabeth Broderick to report on gender diversity and inclusion in that organisation.³²⁷

Instead of having diversity and inclusion as a siloed and 'add-on' piece of work, leaders need to use a diversity and inclusion lens when making all strategic and operational decisions.

Improve accountability

In addition to giving visible support and leading by example, the third element of leadership capability in this area is being accountable for change.

As we discuss in this report, monitoring and sustaining progress is one of the foundations of change. Without genuine accountability, diversity and inclusion will remain a low priority across QPS.

This section highlights the sorts of outcome measures that should be in place for the Executive Leadership Team.

Outcomes are more important than outputs

Outcomes are not merely outputs. An example of an output would be the implementation of a leadership capability assessment for Executive Leadership Team members. An outcome connected to that would be 'leaders demonstrate understanding of the effect of their leadership on diverse groups', which is an important step on the pathway to inclusion.

Indicators should be set at the individual level as well as collectively to measure the effect that systemic reforms are having.³²⁸

There are two main areas in which the sworn Executive Leadership Team can be measured:

- the composition of the sworn members of the team and its level of diversity
- workforce data on diversity and inclusion more broadly.

Measuring diversity of the Executive Leadership Team

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the current Executive Leadership Team is not diverse. It will be better able to drive the necessary systemic change required by this Review if its sworn members reflect greater diversity.

The Workplace Equality Strategy, which we have recommended QPS develop, will need to include targets for all ranks, including at this level.

This is an area where outputs can and should be measured. That is, have the numbers of women, First Nations and culturally diverse police increased in the sworn members of the Executive Leadership Team over time?

Measure broader diversity and inclusion outcomes

How the non-commissioned workforce assesses workplace climate needs to be given more weight for change to be successful.³²⁹ To do this, QPS should assess employee perceptions of issues such as fairness of performance assessment and promotion, access to information and knowledge, access to flexible work arrangements, and the ability influence decision-making and opportunities to develop new skills.³³⁰

The Working for Queensland survey provides a good opportunity to obtain employees' views on those topics. To obtain a clear picture, the interpretation of results should be disaggregated between sworn and unsworn staff.

The Working for Queensland survey currently includes relevant questions such as:

- perceptions of executive leadership
- accessibility of flexible work
- intention to leave, noting that one of the reasons respondents can select is that is 'senior leadership is of a poor quality'
- level of comfort sharing perspective as Aboriginal person, Torres Strait Islander person, or both
- commitment of executive group to gender equity.³³¹

Modernising leadership styles

Re-examine traditional, authoritarian leadership styles

Authoritarian leadership styles are prevalent in command-and-control environments, including policing.

In this leadership style, individual leaders can rely on their authority to direct action – that is, they have an ability to direct staff because their staff defer to their rank. However, this leader-centric, authority-dependent understanding of leadership can be counterproductive when dealing with more complex actions, such as creating cultural change.³³²

Authoritarian leadership stifles different opinions and loses the value of diversity

During consultations, we were told that QPS members find it difficult to speak up under authoritarian leadership and that people do not feel confident or comfortable to express different opinions.

“If you don’t like the way it is, you won’t be promoted and you might as well leave ... years ago ... if something [was] wrong, I would speak up. But I’ll do it respectfully. And I’d also have some evidence base of why I think that is wrong. And that would have once been considered leadership. Now it’s considered troublemaking ... So you know, you just can’t have a voice. You’re expected to just speak the dominant line and nothing else.”³³³

When one leadership style is valued above others, people in the minority feel that they must assimilate to get by rather than having the full advantage of their difference, and this is a loss for the organisation. We heard during consultations,

“And I’ve actually seen a number of women, what I would say, adopt or try to adopt, masculine traits in their leadership and invariably they come unstuck, because ... they try to be like one of the boys again, they’re clearly not, instead of just being themselves and leading as themselves, they tried to adopt this persona ... I certainly think people coming from different diverse backgrounds are going to find it more challenging.”³³⁴

Review participant

Research suggests that, for some leaders, this results in not feeling they can be their authentic selves.³³⁵

In this report, we discuss the changed nature of modern policing. When demand is changing, it makes sense that new ways of doing things should be tried and evaluated. However, the Commission of Inquiry heard that, ‘To get promoted within the QPS to commissioned ranks, you must comply with the ‘group think’ of the senior ranking officers. No officer that thinks differently to them or with alternative ideas, will get promoted. The senior ranking officers do not want to be challenged with their decisions’³³⁶

In our own consultations we also heard similar sentiments.

Yeah, I think you know, anyone who is outspoken, I wouldn't even call it outspoken – people just with a different perspective – that ... doesn't agree with you know, long held practices ... that have been implemented by new management or whatever it is. It's just like, there's no open communication about, you know, things that affect people it's ... like, get on the bus or get run over by it was what they were saying out of their own mouths. You know, and ... there's no point in asking for feedback ... if you're only going to punish the people that speak up.³³⁷

Embrace modern leadership styles

Leadership is a key driver of effective connection between organisational policies and practices³³⁸ or, conversely, observable gaps – known as decoupling. To cultivate inclusion, inclusive leadership is needed at multiple levels – senior leaders who establish inclusive workplace policies; and managers who implement inclusive practices in everyday working life.³³⁹

Inclusive leadership invites and appreciates the contribution of others

Traditional command-and-control leadership models are outdated and unlikely to be the best approach to achieving the systemic change this report recommends. Inclusive leadership is a more modern approach that is likely to yield better results.³⁴⁰

The elements of inclusive leadership can be described as awareness of biases, collaborative approach, treating people fairly, valuing uniqueness while providing connectedness, creating conditions for high performance by providing a safe space to speak freely, and encouraging individuals to do their best.³⁴¹ Inclusive leadership therefore has both psychological and functional aspects.³⁴²

Promisingly, we heard that some leaders and managers in QPS are demonstrating more modern leadership styles, as opposed to the historically valued style. Unfortunately, in the current environment, these are sometimes seen as not being effective, despite achieving expected outcomes.³⁴³



Endnotes

258. The QPS Executive Leadership Team informs and operationalises strategy and monitors organisation wide risk and performance. Membership is approved by the Commissioner and currently includes the Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioners, the Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Commissioners, Heads of Divisions and Chief Superintendent, Crime and Corruption Commission (Police Group). As the scope of our Review only extends to sworn police, when we refer to the Executive Leadership Team, we generally focus on sworn members.
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265. *A Call for Change: Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence* (Report, 2022) 64.
266. Harnessing resistance to change is a concept we discussed earlier in this report. Resistance is to be expected. Rather than failing to plan for it, QPS should use resistance as a platform to make transformative steps towards workplace equality.
267. LH Nishii, J Khattab, M Shemla and RM Paluch, 'A Multi-level Process Model for Understanding Diversity Practice Effectiveness' (2018) 12(1) *The Academy of Management Annals* 37–82 <doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0044>.
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291. Confidential conversations, participants 7, 8, 15, 18, 20, 39, 41, 53, 59, 88, 103, 106, 122, 129, 130, 132, 142; and site visit.
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297. Confidential conversation, participant 53, December 2023.
298. Queensland Police Service workforce data, 31 January 2024.
299. Data limitations about culturally diverse police mean that data on this group is unreliable. This is because of recent Queensland Government-wide changes about how that data is collected. This means that data is unable to be reliably compared with previous years and may not capture, or accurately represent, all officers who identify as culturally diverse.
300. Queensland Police Service, *Annual Report 2022–23* (Report, 2023) 27. Note from the annual report: the QPS workforce generally changes at a slower rate compared to other agencies as it has a lower attrition rate, and regarding police officers, generally positions are filled internally only. Consequently, it is challenging to achieve changes to the workforce except over an extended period.
301. The list of Executive Leadership Team members as at 30 June 2023 is contained in the Queensland Police Service, *Annual Report 2022–23* (Report, 2023) 51.
302. Queensland Police Service, *Annual Report 2022–23* (Report, 2023) 27 – these figures are for staff overall and are not disaggregated between sworn and unsworn.
303. Queensland Police Service workforce data, 31 January 2024.
304. Data limitations about culturally diverse police mean that data on this group is unreliable. This is because of recent Queensland Government-wide changes about how that data is collected. This means that data is unable to be reliably compared with previous years and may not capture, or accurately represent, all officers who identify as culturally diverse.
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315. Confidential conversation, participant 88, March 2024.
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323. Confidential conversations, participants 99, 109, 113, 117, 120, 122; and site visits.
324. Harnessing resistance to change is a concept we discuss earlier in this report. Resistance is to be expected. Rather than failing to plan for it, QPS should use resistance as a platform to make transformative steps towards workplace equality.
325. LH Nishii, J Khattab, M Shemla and RM Paluch, 'A Multi-level Process Model for Understanding Diversity Practice Effectiveness' (2018) 12(1) *The Academy of Management Annals* 37–82 <doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0044>.
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343. Confidential conversation, participant 70, February 2024.

5 Preventing harm and addressing risks of discrimination

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Key recommendations

15	Establish a plan to prevent discrimination
16	Develop clear and accessible guidance on discrimination
17	Improve trust in support services
18	Review mandatory reporting requirements
19	Strengthen organisational systems to prevent harm
20	Embed victim-centred and trauma-informed practices
21	Monitor and improve response systems
22	Improve accountability of organisational response to discrimination

Why it matters

Preventing all forms of discrimination is essential for QPS to become a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Police work is stressful and demanding. In consultations, we heard that police who experience and witness discrimination carry an even heavier burden. This can be profound and devastating for both the police involved and the organisation.

There are social, emotional and economic costs of discrimination. It can lead to absenteeism, job dissatisfaction and psychological harm, as well as decreased productivity, increased turnover and administrative burdens.³⁴⁴ As we know from the Commission of Inquiry, discrimination can also influence policing outcomes – for example, how police respond to domestic and family violence.

QPS needs to understand and take proactive steps to manage the risks of discrimination in the workplace. Where discrimination occurs, there must be appropriate avenues for officers to safely report issues and concerns and for the organisation to respond appropriately. Processes must change to ensure they are person-centred and trauma-informed, ensuring police who experience discrimination feel heard, have their wishes respected and are not exposed to further harm.

This chapter contributes to the overall picture of what positive steps QPS should take to prevent and respond to workplace discrimination.³⁴⁵

Narrative

Lucy's* story

*Not their real name

Lucy, a former Senior Sergeant with QPS, was drawn to becoming a police officer as she had a strong sense of social responsibility and wanted to help members of her community.

During her time with QPS, Lucy repeatedly experienced sexual harassment, misogyny and bullying in the workplace. When she reached out for support, she did not feel that her concerns were appropriately handled. After making a complaint, she felt excluded in the workplace and that opportunities for career progression were no longer available to her.

Lucy found herself unable able to reconcile her motivation for joining QPS with the reality of the environment she was working in.

“ I continued to feel a sense of shame when I noticed and experienced the depth of sexism and misogynistic attitudes towards women – not only towards policewomen – but towards victims of gender-based violence.

Despite a long career as a highly qualified and dedicated police officer, Lucy decided to leave QPS. She shared with us the devastating and lasting impacts of her experiences on her health, interpersonal relationships, and career.

“ I developed PTSD and adjustment disorder with anxiety and depression. The impact on my marriage and children is unable to be quantified. I lost a career that I expected to remain in until retirement, my identity, and purpose.

Beyond the extensive personal and professional impacts on her, Lucy reflected on the wide-ranging consequences that cultural issues in QPS have for the broader community.

“ These issues fail to provide a policing organisation able to meet the needs of the community which it serves. They fail to treat the diverse Queensland community with respect and fairness and continue to increase the rate of incarceration of First Nations people.

Intervene early to reduce discrimination and its impacts

Preventing discrimination from occurring in the first place, and intervening early where it does occur, will create a safer working environment than just responding after it happens.³⁴⁶

Police are highly skilled responders, and discrimination should be responded to. However, a disproportionate focus on response does not serve the best interests of the organisation or QPS members. By the time discrimination reaches the stage where there is an organisational response, it has often already caused significant and sometimes irreparable harm.

Processes for responding to workplace discrimination are often lengthy and adversarial, exposing workers to further harm such as re-traumatisation and stress.³⁴⁷ These processes can be costly and damaging to an organisation's reputation, and they often fail to restore safe and productive working relations. They can also exacerbate the organisational harms of discrimination, including increased legal risk and absenteeism.

The Commission observed that QPS's focus has historically been on response rather than prevention. However, many senior leaders in QPS recognise the challenges this presents and have expressed a desire to shift to a more preventive focus.



Narrative

John's* story

*Not their real name

John is a senior officer with a long career at QPS who offered his personal insights on QPS's approach to preventing discrimination in the workplace.

The current approach to inclusion and diversity across the organisation, as John sees it, is 'disjointed and fragmented'. He could not say with confidence that QPS is committed to the organisational change needed to address discrimination in the workplace.

In identifying areas for improvement, John instanced the current practice of responding to cultural issues after they reach crisis point, rather than taking steps to prevent them arising in the first place. While robust mechanisms exist for Ethical Standards Command to intervene in large-scale concerns, such as systemic discrimination in a particular work unit, John told us that the path to addressing 'one off' incidents is less clear.

▣ We sort of have that divide between the isolated incidents to the catastrophic workplace misogyny and bullying.

John thinks QPS could centralise its approach to diversity and inclusion and could be more proactive. He sees real benefit in working to prevent discrimination as part of QPS's broader approach to organisational risk management.

He told us,

▣ *I suppose I've got an issue avoidance kind of strategy. You know, let's get in front of the game and let's talk about what positive steps police could take to prevent discrimination, sexism and racism.*

Meet legal obligations to prevent discrimination

Taking steps to prevent discrimination is not only crucial to mitigate its devastating impacts, but also a legal requirement that QPS must meet to fulfil its obligations to officers and the community.

A duty to prevent discrimination

QPS has a positive duty under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) to take proactive actions to prevent discrimination on the grounds of sex, including sexual harassment, in a work context.³⁴⁸ The positive duty requires organisations to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate these forms of conduct as far as possible.³⁴⁹ Guidance by the Australian Human Rights Commission emphasises that, in satisfying the positive duty, organisations are expected to consider intersecting factors that may influence a person's experience of discrimination, including whether they identify as First Nations or culturally diverse.³⁵⁰

Queensland's new positive duty to prevent discrimination

Queensland has also recently amended the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) to introduce a positive duty to take reasonable steps to prevent discrimination. This change illustrates a significant step forward in strengthening and modernising Queensland's discrimination laws, with the Queensland positive duty extending further than the Commonwealth equivalent, applying to all protected characteristics, including both sex and race. The positive duty applies to QPS and will come into effect on 1 July 2025.

Under the Public Sector Act 2022 (Qld), the Commissioner of Police also has an obligation to promote equity and diversity, including through taking reasonable action to eliminate unlawful discrimination in QPS.³⁵¹

Work health and safety laws

Queensland's work health and safety frameworks also require QPS to protect workers from psychosocial hazards, including sexual harassment.³⁵²

Recent changes to work health and safety regulations further expand on the existing psychosocial risk provisions, providing new requirements to prevent sexual harassment at work.³⁵³ Organisations are required to proactively identify and manage risks of sexual harassment and sex or gender-based discrimination.³⁵⁴ From March 2025, organisations will require a written prevention plan to manage each identified risk.³⁵⁵

It is important that QPS identify any actions necessary to ensure compliance with these requirements and other associated legal obligations. Meeting these obligations will be essential to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace and minimising legal risks.

Proactively managing the risk of discrimination

Recognise the risk of workplace discrimination

Workplace discrimination is a significant organisational risk carrying individual, operational and legal consequences. In ensuring QPS takes strategic steps toward workplace equality, it will need to consider ways that it can proactively identify and address the risk of discrimination occurring. This includes identifying and managing risks specific to the QPS workplace, such as the high stress environment, low levels of diversity, power imbalances in the hierarchical structure, and a culture that tolerates sexism, racism and other forms of discriminatory behaviour.³⁵⁶

Discrimination prevents the achievement of strategic objectives

The QPS Management Support Manual defines organisational risk as the probability of something happening which may impact QPS's objectives, such as those set out in its strategic plans.³⁵⁷

We were interested to identify whether workforce discrimination fell within the ambit of an organisational risk as conceptualised by QPS. To understand this better, we reviewed publicly available organisational plans and strategies. Our review identified that key QPS objectives that appear to relate to discrimination include the following.

Publication	Objective
Strategic Plan 2024–2028 ³⁵⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Keep our people safe and feeling supported ■ Strengthen our culture to better reflect our values
Operational Plan 2024–2025 ³⁵⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to support and engage our people to create healthy, inclusive, safe and productive workplaces
Equity and Diversity Plan 2023–2024 ³⁶⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Drive cultural change to deliver a more respectful and diverse workplace where everyone feels included ■ Embed a diverse and inclusive culture where women can participate and thrive to reach their potential, including in leadership roles
Strategic Workforce Plan 2023–2027 ³⁶¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Build a capable and sustainable workforce that is diverse, inclusive, and reflective of the community we serve ■ Foster and embed a culture that aligns with our values ■ Establish an organisational framework to support gender equity in the workplace

To achieve each of the above strategic and operational objectives, QPS needs to protect its members from workplace discrimination.

Management of the risk of discrimination is currently falling short

Psychosocial hazards

Queensland's work health and safety laws include a requirement to prevent psychosocial hazards.³⁶² These are guided by a code of practice, established in 2022, on managing the risk of psychosocial hazards at work. The code outlines that harassment, including based on sex and race, is a common example of a psychosocial hazard arising from work.³⁶³

The code highlights workplace factors that may increase the risk or likelihood of harassment occurring including:³⁶⁴

- low worker diversity where a workforce is dominated by one gender, race or culture
- power imbalances where one gender holds most of the management and decision-making positions
- workers who are isolated due to work locations, shift work and restrictive places such as cars
- poor understanding among workplace leaders of the nature, drivers and impacts of sexual harassment.

Many of these factors are present in QPS workplaces. The code also notes that policing organisations are at heightened risk due to their hierarchical structure.³⁶⁵ Therefore, it is important that QPS conceptualise and address risk management, including to ensure it is compliant with legislative requirements.

The Commission reviewed internal documents outlining QPS's approach to psychosocial risk management.³⁶⁶ An internal report for the Executive Leadership Team³⁶⁷ identified matters such as traumatic events, role overload and poor leadership support as key psychosocial hazards.³⁶⁸ However, the report did not identify discrimination as a key psychosocial risk for the QPS workforce.

This view was reflected by what we heard during consultations.

📌 [QPS should] attend to the psychosocial hazards in the workplace and reward those officers who have the courage to speak out.³⁶⁹

Noting the factors listed above that place QPS members at increased risk of experiencing harassment in the workplace, it is the Commission's view that this is a significant gap in QPS's current approach to psychosocial risk management.

Risk Management Framework

The QPS Risk Management Framework notes that the organisation's approach is not to be risk averse but to identify, understand and manage risks in a balanced manner.³⁷⁰ QPS has established strategic, enterprise and operational risk registers to document its approach to managing organisational risks.³⁷¹

QPS's risk registers contain various risks relating to discrimination, harassment and inappropriate behaviour. The enterprise risk register displays a high-risk rating associated with what it describes as 'sub-standard inclusion and diversity practice across QPS service areas, impacting staff wellbeing and community confidence'.³⁷² Other registers pointed to risks of psychosocial hazards critically impacting service capability and potentially resulting in long-term health and wellbeing outcomes.³⁷³ While this indicates a level of organisational awareness of risks, information provided to the Review did not highlight the specific control measures being taken to mitigate these risks.

Organisational oversight

It is important that senior leaders in QPS are regularly informed about key risks to enable them to endorse the implementation of controls and measures.³⁷⁴ There are a range of internal governance structures in QPS tasked with risk management, including:

- the Board of Management, which endorses QPS's risk appetite³⁷⁵
- the Executive Leadership Team, which informs and operationalises strategy and monitors organisation-wide risk and performance³⁷⁶
- the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee, which scrutinises, challenges and oversees the Commissioner's legislated management responsibilities.³⁷⁷

The Commission reviewed copies of meeting agendas from the past 12 months from the above internal governance structures (at July 2024). This review indicated limited discussion of discrimination in the workplace as an organisational risk, and no agendas included discrimination or harmful workplace conduct as a standing agenda item.

Prioritise a preventative approach

An organisation-wide prevention plan is critical

The Commission reviewed copies of plans, policies and procedures to prevent harmful workplace behaviour, including assessments of specific risks within the organisation, such as those in particular areas of work or physical spaces. No documents were provided that specifically outlined QPS's approach to risk management for discrimination in the workplace.

In taking steps to improve workplace equality, it is vital for QPS to adopt a stronger approach to identifying and preventing risks associated with workplace discrimination.

Establishing an organisation-wide prevention plan is a necessary step to improving diversity and inclusion. A well-structured prevention plan that identifies risks within the working environment will assist QPS to reduce the devastating impacts of discrimination, meet its legal obligations and mitigate operational consequences. By focusing on control measures that can be taken to prevent discrimination and progressing toward the implementation of those measures, risks can be identified at an earlier stage, reducing harm and promoting positive work environments.

Greater investment in preventive capacities is needed

During the Review, the Commission identified an over-reliance on reactive action to address discrimination after it has occurred, rather than prioritising a proactive, preventative approach aimed at mitigating harm.

The Commission understands that QPS is considering establishing a new organisational group to enhance its capacity to adopt a more proactive, preventive approach to workplace behaviour, building upon existing capabilities in the Workplace Assessment and Support Team. The proposed group would provide specialist support for workplaces, early intervention to address potential issues and prevent escalation, and provide conflict management and alternative resolution services.

The Commission considers the proposal to be a promising shift toward building stronger organisational capacity to address risks associated with discrimination and other harmful conduct.

Building knowledge about discrimination and how to prevent it

Address deficiencies in formal channels for information

It is important that QPS members are provided with opportunities to build knowledge and awareness about workplace discrimination. Knowledge plays a vital role in preventing discrimination by assisting the workforce to gain an understanding of their rights and responsibilities, expected standards of behaviour and the consequences for engaging in harmful conduct.³⁷⁸ The Commission reviewed workplace information from a range of channels, including policies and procedures from the QPS intranet and training materials.

Workplace behaviour policies lack clarity and assurance

In reviewing key workplace policies, including the QPS Policy on Workplace Bullying, Unlawful Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (Unacceptable Workplace Behaviour policy),³⁷⁹ the Commission identified a lack of clear, practical information for officers regarding expectations in preventing, identifying and responding to discrimination. Policies are lengthy and difficult to navigate.

To be effective, workplace discrimination policies need to be accessible, and they should avoid legal jargon that may confuse users or deter those who have experienced discrimination from taking next steps.

There are people in various groups within the QPS workforce who may need to refer to the Unacceptable Workplace Behaviour policy, including those who have directly experienced or witnessed discrimination, and managers³⁸⁰ or supervisors when coordinating the response to reports of discrimination. It is important that QPS policies are designed to meet the needs of each of these audiences.³⁸¹

QPS policies are often complex documents, containing extensive reference to legislative frameworks and provisions. While it is important that this information be available, it is unlikely to be the most accessible means of communicating information to the general workforce, particularly to those who have experienced discrimination.³⁸²

The Commission did not receive any materials indicating alternative approaches to presenting policy information to the workforce, such as through fact sheets, videos or frequently asked questions documents. An internal review identified that, in the absence of these types of materials, there is a strong dependency on middle managers to communicate expectations to the workforce and that limited support is provided to assist managers in doing so.³⁸³

▮ If someone walked in my door and said: 'I want to make a very formal complaint about someone else's behaviour', I'd have to look up what to do next ... it's something we don't live and breathe enough to understand the options for people.³⁸⁴

The Unacceptable Workplace Behaviour policy does not help officers identify discrimination in their working environments. Beyond the legislated definitions for concepts such as sexual harassment and unlawful discrimination, limited guidance is provided to assist officers to recognise how this conduct may present in a policing environment.

▮ There is a huge void of knowledge and understanding of our system. Even though we're police and operate in a very legalistic environment, when people would [discuss their experiences], they wouldn't even know what the definition of sexual harassment was ... there is a low level of literacy around some of those critical elements.³⁸⁵

As outlined in the Australian Human Rights Commission's guidelines for complying with the positive duty under the Sex Discrimination Act, supporting the workforce to understand different forms of discrimination, including how they may be experienced in the workplace, is a 'complex but critical' part of preventing discriminatory conduct.³⁸⁶

Policies are not trauma-informed

The QPS Unacceptable Workplace Behaviour policy does not support an employee who has been subject to discrimination to understand the options available to them.

There are no statements in the Unacceptable Workplace Behaviour policy that underscore a victim-centred approach to responding to reports of discrimination.³⁸⁷ While the policy lists options that may be taken by those who have experienced discrimination, such as internal reporting, self-managing, seeking assistance from a supervisor or participating in conflict coaching, it does not set out the potential outcomes for each pathway or any guidance on expected timeframes, next steps or information handling.³⁸⁸

We heard from members who felt uncertain about how to make a report following experiences of discrimination and did not feel that they would be supported to retain control over the process.

👤 *At no time have I ever felt like there's a way that I can [report my experiences], where I'll be in control, and if it's too much for me, I can stop it. I don't think that's possible.*³⁸⁹

The Unacceptable Workplace Behaviour policy does not incorporate any provisions emphasising the safety and wellbeing of affected members to encourage them to feel secure and confident in reporting experiences of discrimination.

Improve workplace behaviours training

The Australian Human Rights Commission's guidelines for complying with the positive duty under the Sex Discrimination Act highlight that traditional approaches to workplace training, such as one-off training on induction, have proven to be ineffective at eliminating discrimination where not reinforced with ongoing opportunities to build and apply knowledge.³⁹⁰

Training on workplace discrimination is not mandatory

There is limited training provided to the QPS workforce on the prevention of workplace discrimination, and this training is not typically mandatory or regularly delivered. When joining QPS, all employees undertake onboarding training, including a two-hour online module, 'building an ethical culture', and Recruits receive additional training on workplace behaviours.³⁹¹ These trainings are only required to be completed once, on commencement at QPS.³⁹² Other opportunities to build knowledge about discrimination include the Leadership Capability Program, which is only mandatory for promotion at certain ranks, and the Domestic Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons Specialist Course, which does not have a workplace focus.³⁹³

A review of the QPS Compulsory Training Calendar 2024–2025 confirms that there is no mandatory training scheduled to be provided to officers across the organisation with a primary focus on the prevention of workplace discrimination.³⁹⁴

Training materials are insufficient

The QPS Multicultural Action Plan 2023–2024 includes a commitment for QPS to provide anti-racism training for all staff, including what it is and how to prevent and respond to it.³⁹⁵ The 2022–2023 reporting for this commitment notes that there have been no outcomes achieved and that ‘resourcing implications and competing priorities have affected the delivery of outcomes for this activity’.³⁹⁶ This demonstrates a lack of urgency and priority in delivering on commitments to prevent race discrimination in the workplace.

“For me, the big thing is how do we get people on board with this? It can’t be done through some online learning product ... it’s got to be some type of face-to-face component. That’s where you connect the hearts and the minds.”³⁹⁷

In reporting on the development and implementation of procedures designed to raise awareness of sexual harassment, including how to identify it and how to report it, an internal review highlighted a series of additional deficiencies related to the adequacy of existing training in QPS.³⁹⁸ Relevantly, the internal review found that:

- The existing workplace behaviours training could be strengthened to better align with best practice and foster greater understanding of the prevalence and impacts of sexual harassment.
- The team responsible for delivering workplace behavioural training is small and lacks resources.
- Training for new recruits primarily focuses on behavioural expectations related to external parties.
- Training for team members to investigate and resolve complaints focuses on misconduct related to external parties.

More guidance and support is needed for bystanders to become upstanders

It is important that QPS cultivate a culture that supports speaking up by developing the tools and resources necessary to assist QPS members to intervene safely when they witness discrimination.

A bystander is someone who witnesses an act of discrimination or harassment but who is not the alleged perpetrator or the person who is the subject of the discrimination. Bystander intervention can assist in mitigating harmful behaviours and bringing a perpetrator to account for their actions.³⁹⁹

“[Discriminatory behaviour] needs to be stamped out as soon as it’s noticed, whether that be by the shift supervisor, or an individual on the team or whatever. If something’s not right, or people are witnessing things, it needs to be addressed straight away.”⁴⁰⁰

The QPS Integrity Framework requires all members to be an ethical role model for their peers and to demonstrate courage by intervening in and reporting behaviours inconsistent with the values of the service and community expectations.⁴⁰¹

“I’ve never been a bystander, and it has taken its toll ... everyone has a role to play.”⁴⁰²

Speaking up is difficult, but it can be a catalyst for change by letting the person know that others do not agree with their behaviour. The Commission requested copies of any training provided for bystanders in QPS. We were advised that there is bystander training currently in development by the Ethical Standards Command; however, there was no existing draft that could be provided.

Supporting those who experience discrimination

Improve the support available to police who experience discrimination

It is important that QPS members who experience discrimination have access to support options that meet their needs and that they feel safe and confident accessing these supports.

Even though several support options are available to QPS members who experience discrimination, there appear to be significant barriers to accessing them, including a widespread lack of trust in internal services.

Support can include informal support from peers and colleagues, as well as formal support mechanisms – for example, accessing an external employee assistance provider.⁴⁰³ It should be available to members irrespective of whether they wish to make a formal complaint, and it should be person-centred and trauma-informed to minimise the risk of exposing members to further harm.⁴⁰⁴

The Commission heard that many people who experience discrimination do not feel like they are able to raise their concerns or seek support. This is consistent with QPS's results in the 2023 Working for Queensland survey, which found that 48% of QPS staff who had experienced gender-based discrimination and 43% of those who had experienced racism did not tell anyone about it.⁴⁰⁵



Narrative

Ty's* story

*Not their real name

Ty is a Constable who joined QPS after immigrating to Australia. He is grateful for the opportunity to live and work in Australia and sees his role as a police officer not just as a job but as a way to give back to the country that has helped him.

From the outset, Ty has experienced different treatment from other officers. On his first day, another culturally diverse officer said to him,

“Ty, if they make a mistake, it's a mistake. If you make a mistake, it will be doubled ... Just be very careful.”

Ty hears other officers using discriminatory language when they speak to the public. This makes him uncomfortable as he believes it is part of his job to treat members of the community with respect. He prefers to resolve conflict in a calm and patient manner, which seems to irritate some officers. He knows they talk about him behind his back and often leave him out of social circles and group messages.

Ty wants to realise his potential and puts his name forward to attend courses to develop his skills. At his station, these courses are typically offered on a 'first come, first served' basis. Despite nominating early, Ty is often sidelined by certain managers who favour other officers.

Ty has never complained about the way he is treated. He worries that if he speaks up, he will be seen as 'playing the race card'.

These experiences underscore broader feelings of exclusion and marginalisation that Ty faces every day. Despite the challenges, he focuses on his work and navigates each day with dedication to the community he serves.

“I just refuse to give anyone power over my emotions, so I just sort of keep it on the back burner and I just keep doing my job.”

Support options are not being fully utilised

QPS's strategic plan emphasises that the health, safety and wellbeing of its people are a priority.⁴⁰⁶ Consistent with this, QPS provides several support options for staff, including:

- qualified psychologists and social workers
- internal witness support for those who report discrimination and other forms of misconduct or are at risk of reprisal
- chaplains who provide pastoral and spiritual care
- First Nations welfare and professional development support
- external counselling, therapeutic and psychological support providers.⁴⁰⁷

QPS also maintains a network of Peer Support Officers, which includes QPS members that voluntarily offer to assist and support colleagues experiencing personal or work-related challenges.⁴⁰⁸ However, the Commission understands that participation in the Peer Support Officer network has been inconsistent, likely due to the investment of time, exposure to trauma and lack of formal recognition or reward.⁴⁰⁹

While there are several support options available, many officers told us that they do not feel those options are safe or appropriate. The 2023 Working for Queensland survey found that fewer than two percent of QPS staff who had experienced racism, sexual harassment or discrimination based on their gender or cultural background had sought support from employee assistance or peer support programs.⁴¹⁰

Officers need to trust and feel safe to access support options

The Commission heard that many officers do not trust internal support services.⁴¹¹ A common concern was that sensitive information would not be kept confidential.

▮ There really is actually quite a good network of support. The biggest challenge for police is they are too sceptical to use it because they think that everything's getting recorded. Police are quite paranoid.⁴¹²

Many officers said they worry that if they speak to a support person their information will be shared against their wishes.

▮ *I felt like I couldn't even trust the Human Support Officer. Nothing I say is confidential.*⁴¹³

Review participant

There is particular concern that support persons will be subject to mandatory reporting obligations if the issue amounts to misconduct, potentially triggering a formal investigation outside their control.

▮ I spoke to a Human Support Officer and the first thing they did was go back and speak to the bosses. I've never trusted one since then.⁴¹⁴

Support persons also need to be appropriate and trained to provide trauma-informed support. Some culturally diverse police said they would be more likely to seek support if there were more culturally appropriate support services available.⁴¹⁵

Support should be integrated within formal complaint and investigation processes

Formal complaint and investigation processes can expose those who have experienced discrimination to significant harm, including reprisal from the alleged perpetrator and others, re-traumatisation, and impacts on mental and physical wellbeing. It is therefore imperative that those who experience discrimination are provided ongoing support when a matter is formally reported or investigated and that this support continues after the process concludes.

“When you stir shit up, then it causes more problems for you. Simple as that.”⁴¹⁶

Review participant

“The person who reports it ends up being the one who is targeted. I don’t have the strength for that right now.”⁴¹⁷

Review participant

When a member raises a complaint, QPS offers support through Internal Witness Support or the State Case Management Unit, depending on the type of matter.⁴¹⁸ In early 2023, QPS established the State Case Management Unit in response to Commission of Inquiry recommendations to provide a consistent response to ‘thematic complaints’, including those concerning sexism, misogyny and racism.⁴¹⁹ The unit’s functions include providing support to victims and connecting them with other support services.⁴²⁰ An internal review in mid-2023 found it was unclear how effective the unit had been.⁴²¹ However, it remains very early in the unit’s inception and it should be expected that it would take time to fully establish and embed.

The internal review also recommended that the level of support provided to those who experience discrimination be enhanced, noting that it is possible for those in need to ‘fall through the cracks’ and that proactive support typically ceases at the conclusion of an investigation.⁴²² At present, support does not appear to be well integrated within formal complaint and investigation processes.⁴²³ Internal policies governing complaints and investigations do not make any reference to support options provided to victims and witnesses.⁴²⁴

Consider whether mandatory reporting requirements are having a ‘chilling effect’

Under the Police Service Administration Act 1990 (Qld), QPS police and staff members are required to report misconduct that they know, or reasonably suspect, has occurred to the Commissioner of Police and Crime and Corruption Commission.⁴²⁵ Police are also required to take disciplinary action within their authority to address misconduct or conduct that is grounds for disciplinary action.⁴²⁶ These are in addition to police officers’ obligations to appropriately deal with public interest disclosures and the Commission of Police’s responsibility to report corrupt conduct to the Crime and Corruption Commission.⁴²⁷

Under the Police Service Administration Act, ‘misconduct’ is defined as conduct that is disgraceful, improper or unbecoming of an officer, shows a person’s unfitness to be an officer or does not meet the standard of conduct the community reasonably expects of an officer.⁴²⁸ An internal review identified that there is uncertainty among QPS members as to the scope of ‘misconduct’ and which forms of discrimination would meet the threshold.⁴²⁹ The Commission of Inquiry noted instances of misogynistic behaviour being assessed as grounds for disciplining, although not amounting to misconduct, indicating that the definition of ‘misconduct’ may be being read down by some in QPS.

While these provisions are designed to ensure there is oversight over police conduct, the Commission heard this can mean that, in practice, people who experience discrimination do not have choice and control over how their complaint is managed. We heard that this can deter a person from reporting their experiences. Some officers told the Commission they have been wary of seeking support or telling anyone about their experiences due to concerns that the disclosure would trigger reporting requirements and their experiences would be disclosed against their wishes.

“ I don't think I would [make a complaint]. I just think sometimes it brings more trouble than it's worth. I have a friend who claimed she accidentally told someone at a higher rank about something, and it went through the complaint process, and she said everyone hated her in the workplace.⁴³⁰ ”

Confiding in fellow officers can also put officers in the difficult position of having to either betray confidence or breach statutory obligations.

“ I disclosed to my friend that this was happening. They told another officer who went and told the boss who then brought me in. My intention wasn't to say anything.⁴³¹ ”

Exemptions from mandatory reporting are available, but not sufficient

The Commissioner of Police can provide exemptions to the mandatory reporting obligations to mitigate these issues. Currently, the Commissioner of Police has provided an exemption to some organisational support options to allow them to maintain confidentiality when providing support, including in relation to sexual harassment and other forms of workplace discrimination.⁴³² Exemptions have been provided to internal psychologists, chaplains and the Workplace Assessment and Support Team members, among others. However, these exemptions do not apply to all support persons, such as Peer Support Officers, and limitations apply.

While the Commission understands the exemptions are intended to facilitate support-seeking, we were told that there is uncertainty over their scope and application and they are difficult for people to navigate.⁴³³ Those who directly experience discrimination have a partial exemption, but they are still required to notify the Workplace Assessment and Support Team of their experience. Concerningly, officers appear to be required to formally report their own sexual assault, exposing them to sanctions if they choose not to report.⁴³⁴ Given the many reasons victims of sexual assault may not disclose or report it, this appears to be a perverse – possibly unintended – requirement that shifts the blame to the victim.

There is a need for clearer guidance on mandatory reporting obligations and exemptions for police and support persons. The Commission recommends that QPS carefully consider legal requirements and internal policies concerning mandatory reporting and the balance between oversight of police conduct and the rights and interests of those who experience discrimination to choose how they deal with it.

Responding to discrimination to reduce harm

There are multiple mechanisms for responding to workplace discrimination by police in QPS. These include formal complaint and disciplinary processes that relate to police misconduct and other grounds for disciplinary action.

Response processes are governed by a complex legal and policy environment, including the Police Service Administration Act, which sets out a detailed disciplinary framework established after the Fitzgerald Report.⁴³⁵ The Crime and Corruption Commission provides a level of oversight and is responsible for monitoring how the Commissioner of Police investigates and deals with police misconduct.⁴³⁶

The Commission of Inquiry considered formal complaint and disciplinary processes for addressing police misconduct in detail and made several recommendations for substantial reform. This included the establishment of an independent Police Integrity Unit within the Crime and Corruption Commission.⁴³⁷ Implementation of these recommendations remained underway during our Review.⁴³⁸ In light of this, we did not focus on these aspects of QPS's response systems. Rather, we considered opportunities to improve systems for earlier intervention and provide alternative pathways for those who experience discrimination to report and resolve issues.

Enable police to safely report discrimination

Effective mechanisms to report workplace discrimination ensure that police who experience discrimination have safe and appropriate avenues to raise issues. While organisations have historically tended to provide formal reporting mechanisms that are linked to investigation processes, these have not proven effective in encouraging reporting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of those who experience discrimination.⁴³⁹

Discrimination is being under-reported

The Commission of Inquiry found that the culture of fear and silence in QPS leads to under-reporting of sexist, racist and misogynistic conduct in QPS.⁴⁴⁰ An internal review similarly found that under-reporting and lack of safety to speak up is a 'clear challenge' for QPS.⁴⁴¹

“After making a complaint, I went to a send-off, and it was like I was kryptonite.⁴⁴²

Review participant

These findings echo what the Commission heard during our Review. We heard from many police who had never reported their experience of discrimination, including sexual assaults and other very serious incidents. The reasons for this were varied and depicted a culture in which reporting is not a safe or effective option for many diverse police.

“You're just told to be quiet and if you do make a complaint, you are 100% the person at fault because you're a dog and because you only made a complaint to get ahead.⁴⁴³

We also heard about a culture of silence within the organisation, in which police feel discouraged from reporting and those that do report face reprisals and backlash from their colleagues and the organisation. Several police told the Commission about instances where people who reported discrimination were labelled 'dogs' or faced other abuse from colleagues.

👤 An officer who was transferred to our station came with the tag that he was a dog, because he had made a complaint.⁴⁴⁴

Officers also expressed concerns that making a complaint would 'put a target on their back' and impact their career.

👤 *In the QPS they tell you, don't rock the boat. If there was a QPS motto, it would be that. As soon as you complain there is a target on your back.*⁴⁴⁵

Review participant

The rank structure and command-and-control operational environment also appears to deter officers from reporting conduct by senior officers.

👤 Because [the organisation] is paramilitary, if I have a problem with my direct boss, I can't just go to someone that I respect or who can help me, I have to go to him first to try and work it out. If that doesn't work I need to go to the next level, where you've got a similar person in that spot.⁴⁴⁶

We also heard that officers have a lack of confidence in the organisation's response systems. Many do not have faith that anything will be done about their concerns. For them, reporting discrimination is not worth the risk to their career or safety in the workplace.

👤 [Complaining] won't necessarily result in a change, it will just isolate me.⁴⁴⁷

👤 I have to put my head in the sand – I offer women support but really I should be reporting it. I just have no have faith in the system.⁴⁴⁸

👤 These are things that I would never ever complain about officially to the QPS because there's absolutely no benefit to me.⁴⁴⁹

These barriers mean that not only those who experience discrimination but also those who witness it are deterred from reporting. The Commission heard that witnesses are often afraid to stand up for their colleagues due to fears of reprisal and similar backlash.

👤 People just don't want to be involved with retribution and other things that can happen to them.⁴⁵⁰

👤 I have been labelled as being 'overly sensitive' because I have spoken up when I have heard racist comments.⁴⁵¹

Widespread under-reporting means that much discrimination goes unchecked and continues to erode the culture of QPS. As is typical of these issues, discrimination is therefore likely to be more pervasive than QPS understands.

Safer and more trustworthy reporting pathways are needed

QPS needs to put strategies in place to increase trust in reporting pathways. This should include expanding the range of reporting options available so that officers can choose the pathway most appropriate for them.

Best practice approaches to reporting include options to report anonymously.⁴⁵² Anonymous reporting would enable the organisation to understand more about the true nature and extent of discrimination, gather data and respond at an organisational-level – while also protecting the person making the report.

▮ If I see discrimination or racism and don't want to report to Ethical Standards Command, there's no anonymous reporting. Somewhere down the line they will know I raised the issue, it will come back that I am the reporter, which could result in negative feedback, or further discrimination.⁴⁵³

Options for anonymous reporting should be considered in QPS, especially given the high levels of mistrust in reporting pathways and fear of reprisals and victimisation in the organisation.

While there are several reporting options available to officers, they are complex and not person-centric or trauma-informed.⁴⁵⁴ Internal policies do not clearly set out what reporting options are available or the implications of using those options, including confidentiality or the processes that may be initiated.⁴⁵⁵ It is critical that QPS provide clear and practical information for those considering making a report.

Most reporting options are formal and initiate complaint and disciplinary processes. This presents a significant barrier for many. Officers who experience discrimination may wish to report the incident but not make a formal complaint or initiate complaint and disciplinary processes that are often lengthy and adversarial. The Commission heard from several officers who made an internal report that was disclosed against their wishes.



Narrative

Sara's* story

*Not their real name

Sara is a Senior Sergeant who spent a number of years working across Queensland in general duties. She joined QPS because she wanted to make a difference and to help people.

In her first posting, which was to regional Queensland, Sara experienced sexual harassment from a male colleague on a number of occasions. However, she did not feel safe or supported to make a complaint at the time. She also felt isolated, being one of the only women in her regional area. This was exacerbated by being far away from her support network.

“ Early on in my career, the first few years, I didn't really have a support network [and] I didn't really know who to go to, to report things to. So for the first few years when things happened, I didn't really say anything, I just dealt with it myself or like, accepted it.

Sara transferred to a more populous location, where she again experienced sexual harassment, this time from a group of male colleagues. She decided to raise the incident internally with QPS, making it clear she did not want to make a formal complaint but just wanted the behaviour to stop. She found out that her complaint had been escalated against her wishes when Ethical Standards Command contacted her asking for further information about the alleged incident.

“ Even though I didn't want to make a formal complaint, it was taken out of my hands and then went to ESC [Ethical Standards Command] then the whole station knew about it. It was very much sort of everyone knew that I've said something because I was the only female person there.

As a result, Sara told us, she has been excluded by her colleagues and labelled a 'problem child' for calling out inappropriate behaviour. She says that despite being ostracised she will not stop standing up for what is right.

“ *I don't necessarily have an issue with complaining about things because I'm very much someone who wants to stand up – and stand up for myself, but also stand up for others.*

The Workplace Assessment and Support Team is intended to provide an alternative pathway for officers to report 'inappropriate workplace behaviour', including sexual harassment and unlawful discrimination.⁴⁵⁶ Internal policies provide that it offers a 'human-centric approach' that empowers those who have experienced discrimination to have a choice in how the behaviour is addressed.⁴⁵⁷ However, an internal review found that team is not sufficiently resourced to perform this role and does not have official processes for receiving and managing reports.⁴⁵⁸ As we have observed, the scope of the team's exemption from mandatory reporting requirements is also unclear.⁴⁵⁹

The Commission understands that QPS is considering uplifting the Workplace Assessment and Support Team's resources and enabling it to function as an alternative reporting pathway for discrimination. We consider this a positive step in building QPS's systems to prevent harm from discrimination.

Prevent further harm and improve workplace equality

Response systems do not prioritise safety and wellbeing

Systems in QPS to respond to workplace discrimination are legalistic and complex and do not prioritise the safety and wellbeing of those who experience discrimination or lead to systemic improvements. They are focused on investigating individual behaviours, protecting organisational reputation and affording procedural fairness to alleged perpetrators.

“ There are a lot of people suffering as they know the processes will protect the organisation.”⁴⁶⁰

Review participant

QPS internal policies governing complaints and discipline emphasise the rights of the alleged perpetrator and the interests of the organisation and contain few references, if any, to victims and witnesses of discrimination and other forms of misconduct.⁴⁶¹ For example, the Complaint Resolution Guidelines contain detailed processes to afford procedural fairness to members subject to complaints. However, the guidelines do not address the impact on the complainant, their safety or their interests in the process, other than providing information and being notified of progress.⁴⁶²

Formal complaint and disciplinary systems

Formal complaint and disciplinary processes focus on determining whether a matter is 'substantiated' or not. These processes typically involve intensive, lengthy investigations that can feel adversarial for complainants and expose them to further harm.

Officers described feeling under scrutiny for raising an issue.

“ I went in there and, first of all, they said to me – ‘you’ve made a very serious complaint, if it’s found out to be false, you’re going to be stopped, you’re going to be in trouble, and you’re going to go to jail.’ And I was like – I’m not lying, I’m telling the truth.”⁴⁶³

Some officers told the Commission they felt victim-blamed and made to feel at fault.

“ I reported it to [a senior police officer] and he said ‘well, what do you expect?’. He has protected this officer the whole way. Then, he was telling me that [the officer] wasn’t travelling very well. It was all about how sorry he feels for this officer. No one ever anytime asked about me.”⁴⁶⁴

The Commission of Inquiry found that the systems were biased towards officers being investigated, with complaints that were 'word on word' typically being dismissed as unsubstantiated. We were told that some investigators felt that complainants 'deserved it' or 'were asking for it'.⁴⁶⁵

The Commission spoke to many officers who were dissatisfied with how the organisation had responded to their complaint. Several officers told us that they felt that the organisation's response was inadequate and there was no accountability.⁴⁶⁶ We heard about alleged perpetrators being moved, including through promotion, suffering no career disadvantage, or resigning before any findings were made.⁴⁶⁷ While some of these incidents occurred some time ago, others were more recent. For many officers, making a formal complaint did not result in them feeling any safer or more included in the workplace – often it was quite the opposite.

“My initial expectation was to have the subject member's behaviour rectified and procedures followed ... My final expectation was for the bare minimum of an appropriate investigation to be conducted.”⁴⁶⁸

The Commission of Inquiry found that there was an over-use of 'Local Management Resolution', including in relation to sexism, misogyny and racism, as a less formal mechanism to address poor behaviour.⁴⁶⁹ Local Management Resolution typically involves a conversation between an officer and their supervisor and may not result in remedial action.⁴⁷⁰ While outcomes are recorded on the internal Police Integrity and Professional Standards database, complainants have no involvement in the process and limited visibility over the outcome.

Conflating internal and external complaints

Some of these issues appear to arise because of QPS having complaints processes that cover all internal and external complaints. This means that complaints about workplace discrimination are subject to the same process as very different forms of misconduct, including those relating to deaths in custody.⁴⁷¹ Senior QPS members told the Commission that funnelling all complaints through the same process was problematic and administratively burdensome.

There is a clear need for QPS to establish tailored systems to respond to workplace discrimination. These systems should have a stronger focus on preventing harm and making systemic improvements to provide a safer workplace for all QPS members. Outcomes from formal complaint and disciplinary processes should feed into systemic analyses to identify lessons learned and systemic changes that can be made to prevent similar behaviour recurring.

Person-centred and trauma-informed approaches should underpin response systems

Processes for responding to discrimination should place the person who experienced the conduct at the centre and prioritise their safety and wellbeing. As QPS strengthens its systems for responding to discrimination in response to this Review and other inquiries, it should be guided by person-centred and trauma-informed approaches, including those set out below. To build trust among diverse officers, words need to be backed up with practical changes.

“It's like it's a buzz word. I think they've got to use the term 'victim centric' because that's what they've been told. That's what's come out of the Commission of Inquiry. They're not walking the talk.”⁴⁷²

Review participant

Promote respect and inclusion in responses

Organisational responses should consider a person's gender, cultural background and other protected attributes. This may include specific supports or processes that recognise how a person's identity may increase the impacts of discrimination and their response to it.⁴⁷³ Diverse police should be involved in the design of response systems.

Respect agency and choice

QPS systems should give those who experience discrimination choice on how to report the behaviour, including to make a report, and have it resolved.⁴⁷⁴ This should include seeking their input on decisions to address discriminatory behaviour. This does not mean that QPS needs to follow what the person requests, but it should enable their input and respect it as far as possible.

Provide a range of options to address discrimination

Providing choice means having alternative options to address discrimination that are not limited to formal complaint and disciplinary processes. This should include early intervention actions to address an ongoing situation and informal mechanisms such as facilitated conversations and mediation focused on resolution.⁴⁷⁵

While QPS internal policies mention alternative processes such as mediation, the Commission did not observe these being widely utilised and understands that they are not integrated within QPS processes. The Commission understands that the new organisational group to improve prevention capacities is intended to fill part of this gap by providing support to those who experience discrimination and intervening early to address harmful behaviours before they escalate.

Respond in a timely manner and keep people informed

QPS should provide clear information about the expected timeframes of different response pathways and ensure there are options available for early and swift resolution.⁴⁷⁶ Those who experience discrimination should be kept informed throughout the process, including any outcomes for individuals and organisational changes made. Currently, this is not formalised in complaint processes.⁴⁷⁷

Prevent victimisation

Based on what the Commission heard, victimisation of those who report or seek support after experiencing discrimination appears pervasive within QPS. QPS needs to put in place strategies to break the culture of silence and protect people from victimisation. This should include training for supervisors and managers on promoting a speak-up culture and addressing victimisation, and clear communication that victimisation is grounds for disciplinary action.



Accountability and performance

Use data to drive improvements to culture

To effectively prevent and respond to discrimination, QPS needs to understand where discrimination is occurring, who is engaging in it, who is being impacted by it and why it might be occurring.⁴⁷⁸ Data from response systems and other sources should be used to monitor discrimination and target organisational interventions.

Discrimination data is limited and fragmented

QPS data relating to discrimination and organisational responses in QPS is not comprehensive and, where it is collected, it is fragmented and spread across multiple teams.⁴⁷⁹

The Commission of Inquiry observed that poor data integrity is a longstanding issue in QPS.⁴⁸⁰ It noted that information about formal complaints and disciplinary outcomes is not easily accessible and often needs to be extracted manually from documentary records.⁴⁸¹ The Commission understands that the current system, introduced in 2021, has potential to improve the management of data relating to complaints.⁴⁸²

However, as discussed earlier in this report, most instances of discrimination do not result in a formal complaint or disciplinary process. QPS does not appear to routinely collect and analyse data from other sources that would provide a more comprehensive picture of discrimination in the organisation.⁴⁸³ This includes the use of support services, Working for Queensland survey results and reports made through alternative pathways.⁴⁸⁴

QPS will need to identify data limitations and what additional data is needed to enable it to effectively detect and respond to risks of discrimination across the organisation.

Data should inform preventive and systemic interventions

There is a significant opportunity for QPS to invest in its capabilities to use data and intelligence to identify risks and patterns of discrimination, and inform preventive actions and systemic interventions. It is critical that data on discrimination is not only collected but also analysed and produced in a way that informs risk-based decision-making.

The Commission reviewed quarterly reports provided by the Ethical Standards Command to the Executive Leadership Team on complaints and allegations against police.⁴⁸⁵ Recent reports include a summary of complaints on 'thematic issues', including sexism, misogyny and harassment, broken down by district or command.

While this is a positive step, the summary does not provide sufficient information for senior leaders to identify risks and trends in the workplace. For example, it does not differentiate between complaints made internally or by members of the public, outline trends or hotspots, describe root causes, or summarise the outcomes. It also does not draw in data and intelligence from other sources, underscoring the need for collaboration across units in collating and analysing data to inform decision-making.

Enhance accountability of responses to discrimination

Share outcomes with members to drive behavioural and cultural change

QPS should be transparent with its workforce about the nature and extent of discrimination and the actions taken to address it.⁴⁸⁶ Information about discrimination should be regularly shared with the workforce to highlight issues of concern and what is being done about them. This should include sharing de-identified case studies that inform police about what discrimination looks like, the impacts on individuals and the organisation, and the consequences for perpetrators. Transparency can be an effective, low-cost strategy to drive behavioural and cultural change.⁴⁸⁷

Combined with meaningful, practical action, transparency will also help QPS to build trust and demonstrate to members that speaking up on discrimination is worth it. In the 2023 Working for Queensland survey, the most common reason QPS members who experienced sexual harassment, racism or gender-based discrimination said they did not report sexual harassment, racism or gender-based discrimination they experienced was that they did not think any action would be taken.⁴⁸⁸

Report on outcomes and performance indicators to enable oversight

Greater public transparency on the status of discrimination in QPS and how it is being addressed would enable effective oversight and build public confidence.

QPS's annual report includes a high-level overview of formal complaints and discipline outcomes.⁴⁸⁹ However, it provides limited insight into the prevalence of workplace discrimination.

For example, the report specifies that there were 95 allegations of discrimination / sexual harassment in 2022–23 but does not disaggregate internal from external complaints, provide any high-level explanation for why 48 of those led to 'no further action' or specify the outcomes of disciplinary processes, including any sanctions applied. It also does not outline where an allegation falling into an alternative category, such as 'misuse of information', may involve workplace discrimination.

To provide greater transparency, QPS should disclose clearer and more meaningful information focused on workplace discrimination, including number of reports (formal and informal), disaggregated by type, and outcomes, including any systemic interventions.

Currently, QPS does not appear to have any performance indicators to monitor the performance of its response systems. This is a significant gap given the critical findings made by the Commission of Inquiry and the levels of mistrust and dissatisfaction among QPS members. QPS should develop a set of measurable indicators to assess whether response systems are performing. Indicators should measure timeliness and quality, as well as whether processes are meeting the needs of those who experience discrimination, such as their level of satisfaction and safety. Establishing and monitoring these indicators will be critical for QPS to identify issues and opportunities for continual improvement.

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6 Recruiting the talent needed for a modern police service

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Key recommendations

- 23 Review physical assessments in recruitment standards
- 24 Ensure the psychological assessment process is culturally valid
- 25 Enable a more holistic assessment of potential police recruits

Why it matters

As the nature and demand of policing changes, QPS will need to ensure it has the right mix of people and skills to deal with the challenges and complexities of modern police work. QPS's recruitment strategy and standards need to reflect this changing context, accommodate a competitive labour market, and ensure that QPS has the right people in the job to strengthen the workplace and protect the community.

During our consultations, we heard that most police recognise the imperative of uplifting diversity in QPS through improvements in recruitment. They recognise the opportunities of expanding the talent pool, accessing more diverse skills, addressing workforce shortages, and effecting cultural change. However, we also heard about barriers within the recruitment standards that disproportionately impact people from diverse backgrounds.

We have identified steps QPS can take to ensure that, at a minimum, its recruitment standards are not discriminatory. We also identified options to support QPS to be innovative and proactive in increasing diversity within its workforce. These approaches are required for strategic workforce planning and ensuring that QPS has the workforce it needs into the future.

In this chapter

We will explore the legal requirements for assessing recruitment standards, the areas that may be discriminating against police from diverse backgrounds, and why moving to a more modern recruitment process is critical to achieving workplace equality within QPS.

This chapter considers the extent to which QPS recruitment policies, programs, procedures and practices are consistent with legal requirements under state and federal anti-discrimination law, particularly the genuine occupational requirements of QPS's recruitment standards and the extent to which they are indirectly discriminatory.⁴⁹⁰

The number of recruits from diverse backgrounds has not improved

As set out in QPS's strategic workforce planning for diverse groups, QPS has made commitments to improving the recruitment of police from diverse backgrounds in recent years.⁴⁹¹ However, many of the desired outcomes have not been achieved due to resourcing implications and competing priorities.⁴⁹² QPS's recruitment of police from diverse backgrounds is unlikely to improve until this area is appropriately resourced and prioritised.

The overall percentage of recruits from diverse backgrounds in QPS has not improved over the past few years. We know this because:⁴⁹³

- Data from 2020 to 2024 shows that, in 2024, the percentage of female new recruits declined to 24.7%, marking a downward trend after peaking at 30.0% in 2021.⁴⁹⁴
- Accounting for data limitations that cloud the true picture of cultural diversity in QPS, 3.8% is well below the 8.24% of public servants who identify as culturally diverse.⁴⁹⁵
- The percentage of First Nations recruits has remained relatively flat and low, fluctuating between 0.6% and 1.0% over the past five years, with no improvement from 2019 (0.7%) to 2023 (0.6%).⁴⁹⁶

The low numbers of police from diverse backgrounds is concerning. Diversity will not improve in QPS until it improves its recruitment strategy. The data also may suggest that recruitment standards are discriminating against applicants from diverse backgrounds, as we explore below.

The nature of policing is changing

The skill sets required in policing are changing. Emerging technologies and increased demand for police services in areas such as domestic and family violence require rethinking the nature of work and the skills police officers will need in the future.⁴⁹⁷

The Commission of Inquiry heard that the pressures of responding to domestic and family violence are increasing⁴⁹⁸ and that QPS needs to strengthen its recruitment strategy to attract applicants best placed to respond to domestic and family violence.⁴⁹⁹

It heard that, traditionally, policing has attracted applicants wanting to fight crime, 'lock up baddies' and serve the community.⁵⁰⁰ During this review, the Commission heard that there is a perception that 'real police work' is done by men and that the skills of police from diverse backgrounds are not as valuable.⁵⁰¹

Perceptions that women are lacking physicality and 'masculine' capabilities for aggression, violence and danger have long been held out as rational and legitimate reasons for excluding them.⁵⁰² As a result, women often feel pressure to conform to a masculine identity that downplays social service aspects of the job, which can be perceived as feminine work.⁵⁰³

Gendered stereotypes that women cannot perform police work as well as men are based on a misconception that there is only one way to be a police officer. We heard from many participants who observed that communication skills are of greater service to them than physicality, strength or aggression.

“*In my last two years I haven't really had to use any of my accoutrements. It's because of my communication skills. It's not just luck it's to do with me being me and it's an advantage to be someone from a different culture – I can relate to them better.*⁵⁰⁴

Review participant

A crucial part of responding to the changing nature of policing is also improving cultural capability within the organisation. The Commission of Inquiry found that First Nations people must be employed at QPS, including at a senior level, to enhance cultural capability.⁵⁰⁵ We heard that there is a skills gap in QPS when it comes to engaging respectfully and appropriately with culturally diverse and First Nations communities.

There is zero cultural capability in the organisation. I don't think we have done this at all well. I don't think we have cultural capability in any way shape or form. We have vanilla, generic policies that apply to the whole workforce... [and] senior members who are all white [and] over the age of 50.⁵⁰⁶

There is often a disconnect between the genuine occupational requirements of modern policing and the skills assessed during recruitment processes. The continued emphasis on pass standards held by the dominant group is likely to limit the number of police from diverse backgrounds in policing.⁵⁰⁷

It is important that QPS's recruitment strategy and standards continually evolve to meet future policing trends, such as:

- automation and artificial intelligence, which are likely to significantly disrupt future employment in policing⁵⁰⁸
- a further shift towards digital literacy, analytical, qualitative and creative thinking, ethics and resilience.⁵⁰⁹

It is crucial that QPS reassesses and continues to update its recruitment standards so that it meets the community's needs and expectations and that it selects applicants with the skills required to deal with the complex challenges ahead.

Ensuring recruitment standards are lawful

To comply with the law, QPS's recruitment standards must reflect the genuine occupational requirements of the role.

Comply with discrimination law

A number of provisions under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) deal with establishing and enforcing recruitment standards. The Act protects people with certain characteristics – for example, sex, gender and race – from unlawful discrimination in the workplace.

Indirect discrimination

Standardised recruitment practices that may seem neutral can create greater barriers to recruitment of police from diverse backgrounds and overlook valuable qualities they could bring to QPS.

Indirect discrimination happens when there is an unreasonable requirement that people with a certain attribute (or characteristic) would have difficulty complying with, compared to others without that attribute.⁵¹⁰ Discrimination in this context can be lawful if the employer demonstrates that the requirements imposed are reasonable.⁵¹¹

Genuine occupational requirements

Not all treatment that amounts to discrimination is unlawful. There are several exemptions to discrimination applying to the area of work, including a genuine occupational requirements exemption.⁵¹²

In Queensland, employers can lawfully discriminate against a candidate or employee on the basis of their protected attribute/s (for example, sex or race) if there is an overriding requirement that is genuine, necessary for and related to the job to be undertaken.⁵¹³ The legislation does not define the phrase ‘genuine occupational requirements’.

Rather than using the term ‘genuine occupational requirements’, some jurisdictions refer to ‘inherent requirements’. This includes the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth), which QPS must also comply with. An ‘inherent requirement’ is a requirement that is ‘essential to the position’ and not ‘peripheral’.⁵¹⁴ The idea of an inherent requirement is very similar to that of a genuine occupational requirement, and the most recent case law in Queensland uses the terms synonymously.⁵¹⁵

In the context of QPS’s recruitment standards, genuine occupational requirements are the essential, indispensable tasks that are required for the work of a police officer – for example, strong communication skills to manage the complex challenges that police officers face in promoting public safety and upholding the law.

However, if recruitment standards are not often used and not retested at a later date, they need to be reconsidered. For example, swimming may not be a genuine occupational requirement if it is only required as part of the job every few years, if at all.⁵¹⁶

The focus should be on the essential, indispensable activities in carrying out the particular job. One way to think about it is: would the position be essentially the same if the requirement was dispensed with?⁵¹⁷

Take positive steps to prevent discrimination

As set out in the report, QPS now has a positive legal obligation to take steps to prevent discrimination under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) and, from 1 July 2025, it will have a positive duty under the recently amended Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld).⁵¹⁸

A positive duty is a legal obligation on a person or organisation to take active steps to prevent discrimination and sexual harassment before it happens, rather than addressing conduct that has already occurred.

The Australian Human Rights Commission and Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission have published guidance on how organisations such as QPS can comply with a positive duty.⁵¹⁹ The guidance makes clear that organisations should take steps to increase the representation and inclusion of under-represented groups.

Given that Queensland discrimination law has only recently been amended, the Commission has not yet published guidance on complying with the positive duty. However, the federal and Victorian guidance is instructive.

The positive duty may extend to include a requirement to consider whether the genuine occupational requirements of a role are objectively required and do not operate in a discriminatory way.⁵²⁰

Barriers faced by police from diverse backgrounds

To be accepted as a recruit into the QPS, candidates must meet requirements across several areas: physical, medical and psychological fitness, cognitive testing, swimming, integrity, and a panel interview.

Apart from these entry-level recruitment standards, to be accepted into some specialist areas in QPS, police officers are required to meet certain additional physical and psychological standards. These units have very low representation of women.

This section will focus on the occupational requirements that QPS sets for its recruit and specialist roles and the differences in success rate based on sex and cultural background.

Align with commonly accepted recruitment standards

The Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency is a joint initiative of the Australian and New Zealand Police Ministers and Commissioners. It provides strategic policy advice to the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency Board on cross-jurisdictional policing initiatives.

In 2015, the Agency reviewed the genuine occupational requirements of policing and set out an agreed summary of the foundational skills, attributes and capabilities required of a police officer. This had the agreement and assistance of all police jurisdictions.⁵²¹

During the review, we identified that QPS over-emphasises physical competency and operational skills compared to skills perceived as non-physical. It is important for QPS to consider the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency's list of inherent requirements and be able to justify deviations from them.

Address drop-offs in the recruitment process

Data provided by QPS indicates that success in meeting its recruitment standards varies depending on the applicant's sex and cultural background.⁵²²

Psychological testing can discriminate against police from diverse backgrounds

QPS data shows that the psychological testing process is currently more challenging for women, applicants from non-English speaking backgrounds⁵²³ and First Nations applicants.⁵²⁴ While it is outside of the Commission's expertise to comment on the validity of the testing measures being used, there are some possible reasons why applicants from diverse backgrounds are having greater difficulty passing these standards, as explored below.

The psychological testing phase of the recruitment process assesses applicants' ability to cope and respond to the psychological demands of operational policing.⁵²⁵ Applicants are required to undertake a psychological testing phase and, where required, a psychological interview⁵²⁶ to demonstrate that they are free of any mental illness, psychological symptoms or cognitive disability that would prevent them from performing general police duties.⁵²⁷ QPS generally recommends that applicants are free of mental health conditions and symptoms for a two-year period before applying.⁵²⁸

Women tend to be more comfortable seeking help

There is evidence to suggest that, while prevalence rates do not differ according to gender, women are more likely than men to disclose mental health conditions and are more likely to seek help in the first place.⁵²⁹ This is shaped in part by socially influenced attitudes associated with longstanding gender role differences.⁵³⁰ Therefore, women are more likely to be flagged for a psychological interview or demonstrate that they do not have mental health conditions.

Men passed through the psychological testing phase 7% more often than women.⁵³¹ However, we know this should not be taken as evidence that fewer men have experienced mental health conditions or symptoms.⁵³² It is more likely that they are not disclosing or have not sought treatment for those symptoms or conditions. These factors can contribute to the increased risk of depression that men employed in male-dominated industries and occupations experience, relative to national benchmarks.⁵³³

We acknowledge it is challenging to achieve a balance in this area. There is a sound basis for having high standards of psychological health for law enforcement work. At the same time, rather than appearing punitive for those who disclose mental health conditions, the psychological process could instead reward the self-reflection and help-seeking behaviours that are more likely to protect police officers from psychosocial injury once on the job.

Psychological testing needs to be culturally valid for First Nations and culturally diverse applicants

Uniform psychological testing processes have been shown to fail clinically and culturally valid assessments in First Nations populations.⁵³⁴ A recent review into QPS's psychological evaluation process indicates that testing conducted at this stage may screen out culturally diverse applicants at a higher rate than the general group.⁵³⁵

Psychological testing processes are typically designed and validated with English-speaking and mainstream culture in mind.⁵³⁶ If these testing processes are not validated for cultural differences, they may produce inaccurate results.

A current and ongoing review into QPS's psychological evaluation process recommends that QPS:

- develop a proactive, trusted advisory relationship with one or more First Nations psychologists for relevant cultural advice when appropriate
- offer First Nations applicants the option to request a First Nations psychologist for their interview
- continue to maintain the cultural competence of psychologists through planned training and supervision.

QPS should review its psychological testing to ensure that the tests applied are culturally valid for First Nations and culturally diverse people.

Swimming can be more challenging for people born overseas

A standard for entry into QPS as a recruit is the ability to swim 100 metres unaided, in any stroke, without stopping or allowing your hands or feet to touch the side or bottom of the pool.⁵³⁷

People who were born in, or grew up in, land-locked countries have less ability to swim than those who grew up in Australia.⁵³⁸ As a result, the swimming requirement is likely to be more challenging for people who are from those countries.

The Commission identified that swimming may not be a genuine requirement of the role. Swimming does not feature as a requirement in Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency's 'inherent requirements of policing'.⁵³⁹

If QPS is unable to demonstrate that swimming is objectively required in the role, this stage of the process may be indirectly discriminatory against culturally diverse applicants.

Physical fitness standards can be more challenging for women

Physical entry requirements can be a significant barrier faced by women police applicants. These tests are designed to replicate the physical tasks required of police work,⁵⁴⁰ but some are based on rare critical incidents rather than the majority of police work, which involves skills including report writing, conflict resolution and communicating verbally with members of the public.⁵⁴¹

As part of its fitness requirements, QPS requires applicants to complete a prone bridge test, push-ups and a beep test before being accepted as a police recruit.⁵⁴² To graduate from the academy there are also additional physical requirements.⁵⁴³

QPS data indicate that it did not fail applicants between 2021 and 2023. However, before that, women passed at a lower rate than men.⁵⁴⁴

“ *There are problems with physical testing: they want women to do male push ups. Doing 10 push ups on your toes, 90 seconds planks on your toes. There are physiological differences between men/women’s natural ability.*⁵⁴⁵

Review participant

Although policing does require a level of physical fitness, two issues must be considered:⁵⁴⁶

- Women are disproportionately rejected on the basis of physical competency tests, so QPS must ensure those tests are based on genuine occupational requirements.
- Physical tests should be designed so that QPS is selecting recruits who are capable of attaining fitness standards by the end of academy training.

In the Commission’s view, QPS should re-evaluate its physical testing standards in the context of the changing nature of policing. It should consider whether these standards are excluding female applicants who would be well suited to the challenges of modern-day policing. It is crucial that the standards are aligned to objective measurement of the current and future demands of police work.

The panel interview is a barrier for culturally diverse applicants

All recruit candidates are required to undergo a panel interview to assess suitability against QPS’s values and the requirements of the role.⁵⁴⁷ An applicant must send their resume to police recruiting when booking the interview.⁵⁴⁸

It is concerning that applicants from a non-English speaking background are 11% less successful in the panel interview than applicants from an English-speaking background.⁵⁴⁹ We heard the panel process can be challenging for applicants from diverse backgrounds.

“ *The panel could be quite cold, and people may feel put on the spot which is not culturally appropriate.*⁵⁵⁰

Interviews can be challenging for culturally diverse applicants, particularly where they feel they are being judged on attributes that are valued in Australian culture, such as confidence and self-assurance.⁵⁵¹ It is also essential QPS ensures its panel members are making fair assessments and are not being influenced by unconscious bias.⁵⁵²

There is also evidence to show that job applicants who have non-Anglo-Saxon names have less success during interview and shortlisting processes than those who do.⁵⁵³ Shortlisting and panel interviews are areas that QPS could consider further to ensure that discrimination is not occurring at this stage of the process.

Remove barriers for women in specialist units

We heard during consultations that some specialist units in QPS present particular barriers for women. Some of these units have additional physical or psychological testing beyond the recruitment standards,⁵⁵⁴ which may be indirectly discriminatory.

QPS data indicates that specialist units tend to have low representation of women. Some of these units are:⁵⁵⁵

- Water Police – 3.1% women (three women out of 96 officers)
- Public Safety Response Taskforce, Special Emergency Response Team and Explosive Ordnance Response Team – 3.5% women (five women out of 143 officers)
- Dog Squad – 16.9% women (21 women out of 124 officers).

The Commission heard that the high physical standards required to be accepted into some specialist units are a barrier to accessing these units. This means there is even lower diversity in these units, which in turn contributes to a hyper male-dominated culture.

Some work units in the QPS are known to be particularly difficult for women to be accepted into. I am aware that it is nearly impossible for women to win a position as a General Purpose dog handler, PSRT officer and SERT officer. The reason that it is nearly impossible is 1. The fitness test standard and 2. The lack of women in these units already resulting in a male dominant workforce where the idea of women integrating is simply not accepted.⁵⁵⁶

In the Commission's view, while specialist units may have sound basis for having physical standards that are different from the general recruitment standards, QPS must ensure that they are objectively required and are not based on cultural norms and informal definitions of merit held by the dominant group.

A modern recruitment process

QPS can modernise its recruitment process by reviewing its recruitment standards to ensure they are genuine and objectively required. In doing so, it will enhance its ability to align future work demands with the skills it needs to meet its current strategic objectives.

It is also important that QPS's recruitment system has the flexibility to make decisions about an applicant's potential, rather than unnecessarily excluding from the process applicants who would be suitable police officers.

Determine which standards are objectively required

QPS must comply with the legislative requirement that its recruitment standards are based on genuine occupational requirements of the role.

Defining 'genuine occupational requirements' of policing is challenging given the vast range of tasks a general duties officer can be called on to do. However, the law is clear that QPS must ensure each standard is 'objectively required', or 'genuine, necessary for, and relate to the job'.⁵⁵⁷

Some steps QPS could take to determine whether its recruitment standards are objectively required are:

- undertaking an assessment of the skills that QPS officers are in fact using, specifically considering how the nature of policing has changed over time
- comparing the skills tested for in recruitment processes to those most frequently used by officers in carrying out their duties, including those that are rarely used
- identifying the essential skills of policing in QPS based on evidence, including the needs of the community.

The Commission identified that definitions of merit may appear objective but in fact be subjective based on the traits and characteristics of the dominant group. QPS should also ensure any skills that are tested for at recruitment stage but not again at a later stage are scrutinised, as this may indicate the skill is not a genuine occupational requirement of the role.⁵⁵⁸

Data can play a key role in identifying skills that are tested for but rarely used in day-to-day policing. For example, it may be that some skills, like swimming, are identified as not only being a major barrier for culturally diverse police but also required infrequently in practice.

If QPS fails to use objective tools to inform its recruitment standards and strategy it may:

- recruit a workforce whose skills do not meet current and future challenges
- miss opportunities to recruit a workforce who have the necessary skills to meet current and future challenges
- indirectly discriminate against applicants with particular attributes.

Enable a more holistic assessment of potential police recruits

While the QPS Recruiting Manual provides for the Manager of Recruiting to consider an applicant's suitability following completion of the quality assurance process,⁵⁵⁹ there are multiple units responsible for different stages of QPS's recruitment process.⁵⁶⁰ This means that recruit applicants can be excluded from the recruitment process after being deemed unsuitable during one assessment stage.

The recruiting process could be improved by allowing for a holistic assessment of potential police recruits by one delegated decision-maker. This would allow the decision-maker discretion to consider growth and development areas and to assess an applicant's potential as a whole. In the Commission's view, this delegated decision-maker should be at Executive Leadership Team⁵⁶¹ level to ensure that decisions align with QPS's strategic objectives, including workplace equality.

The Commission also heard during the Review that the recruiting process could better support candidates who are deemed unsuitable in one of the assessment stages.

🗨️ Once CALD people get their 'Dear John' letter,⁵⁶² it isn't encouraging at all in its wording and people don't come back. Yet the only thing maybe standing in their way is a swimming class, or maybe another 1 year developing their English. Rather than just saying a hard no, [we] should be supporting these people to come back. It doesn't tell them why they have failed.⁵⁶³

🗨️ There's a problem with the swimming test, from a cultural perspective. There are organisations that are doing training classes for recruits, but the recruitment unit doesn't do referrals so [there is] no way for people rejected from the QPS to find out.⁵⁶⁴

QPS should consider ways it can improve the process for unsuccessful applicants, so that they are referred to appropriate areas where their skills can improve.

Endnotes

490. As required by the Review Scope, paragraphs (b) and (d).
491. Queensland Police Service, *Multicultural Action Plan 2023–2024 (2022)*; Queensland Police Service, *Reframing the Relationship Plan 2024–2027*.
492. Annual reporting on diversity targets of culturally and linguistically diverse officers in the Annual Reporting for 2022–23 sets out that many of outcomes have not been achieved due to ‘resourcing implications and competing priorities’ – see Queensland Police Service, *Queensland Multicultural Action Plan 2022–24: Annual Reporting for 2022–23 (Report, 2023)* 2.
493. Queensland Police Service workforce data, 31 January 2024.
494. Overall, the representation increased significantly early on from 2020 to 2021 but gradually decreased over the subsequent years, fluctuating without returning to the 2021 high. Queensland Police Service workforce data, 31 January 2024.
495. Queensland Public Sector Commission, *State of the Sector Report 2024: Queensland Public Sector (Report, 2024)* 37; Data limitations about culturally diverse police mean that data on this group is unreliable. This is because of recent Queensland Government-wide changes about how that data is collected. This means that data is unable to be reliably compared with previous years and may not capture, or accurately represent, all officers who identify as culturally diverse.
496. The Commission heard during the Review of various factors that may influence whether a First Nations officer or recruit identifies as First Nations in QPS paperwork. This figure may not reflect all First Nations officers and recruits in QPS.
497. Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency, *Police Workforce Compendium (Report, 2019)* 48.
498. *A Call for Change: Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence (Report, 2022)* 65.
499. *A Call for Change: Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence (Report, 2022)* 16.
500. *A Call for Change: Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence (Report, 2022)* 196.
501. Confidential conversations, participants 6, 41, 9, 39, 55, 56, 64, 73.
502. M Silvestri, ‘Disrupting the “Heroic” Male Within Policing: A Case of Direct Entry’ (2018) 13(3) *Feminist Criminology* 309, 8.
503. Angela L Workman-Stark, *Inclusive Policing from the Inside Out* (Springer International Publishing, 2017) 22–3.
504. Confidential conversation, participant 64, February 2024.
505. *A Call for Change: Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence (Report, 2022)* 231.
506. Confidential conversation, participant 41, November 2023.
507. Susan Robinson, ‘Rethinking Recruitment in Policing in Australia: Can the Continued Use of Masculinised Recruitment Tests and Pass Standards That Limit the Number of Women Be Justified?’ (2015) 2(3) *Salus Journal* 47, 38.
508. Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency, *Police Workforce Compendium (Report, 2019)* 17.
509. Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency, *Police Workforce Compendium (Report, 2019)* 57.
510. ‘Discrimination: Race’, *Queensland Human Rights Commission (Web Page, 2019)*, <www.qhrc.qld.gov.au/your-rights/discrimination-law/race>
511. *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)*, s 11. Section 11 of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)* sets out that it is for the respondent to prove, on the balance of probabilities, that a term complained of is reasonable. Note: from 1 July 2025, a new, simplified version of this legal test will come into effect. Indirect discrimination will involve imposing an unreasonable condition, requirement or practice that has or is likely to have the effect of disadvantaging a person because they have a protected attribute. See *Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Act 2024 (Qld)*, s 7B.
512. *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)*, s 25.
513. *Opinion re: Queensland Police Service [2002] QADT 3*, adopted in *Walsh v St Vincent de Paul Society Qld [2007] QADT 10*, [65].
514. *X v Commonwealth* (1999) 200 CLR 177, [102].
515. See *Chivers v State of Queensland [2014] QCA 141*, [40]; *Toganivalu v Brown & Department of Corrective Services [2006] QADT 13*, [101].

516. In the case of *Flannery v O'Sullivan* [1993] QADT 2, the Tribunal found that section 25 is objective in its terms, and it is not sufficient for an employer to set a requirement if it is not objectively required. It deemed that police officers were not required to complete and pass any further fitness/medical tests or report any deterioration in their eyesight to remain in the service.
517. *Walsh v St Vincent de Paul Society Qld* [2007] QADT 10, [65].
518. *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth), s 47C; *Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Act 2024* (Qld), s 25.
519. See Australian Human Rights Commission, *Guidelines for Complying with the Positive Duty under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) (August 2023) and Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, *Guideline: Preventing and Responding to Workplace Sexual Harassment* (2020).
520. Australian Human Rights Commission, *Guidelines for Complying with the Positive Duty under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) (August 2023) 77.
521. Australian New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency, *The Inherent Requirements of a Police Officer* (2017) 3.
522. Doc.078, Recruitment Data 2019 to mid-October 2023, 26 October 2023.
523. Applicants from non-English speaking background passed the psychological testing stage 5% less often than the dominant group; Data provided by QPS records the culturally diverse group as 'non-English speaking background'. Data limitations about culturally diverse police mean that data on this group is unreliable. This is because of recent Queensland Government-wide changes about how that data is collected. This means that data is unable to be reliably compared with previous years and may not capture, or accurately represent, all officers who identify as culturally diverse.
524. First Nations applicants passed the psychological testing stage 6% less often than the dominant group; Doc.078, Recruitment Data 2019 to mid-October 2023, 26 October 2023.
525. Doc.022, QPS Police Recruiting Manual v1.0, 25 November 2022, 36.
526. Doc.022, QPS Police Recruiting Manual v1.0, 25 November 2022, 36.
527. Doc.029, Standard for Health Assessment Requirements for Employment as a General Duties Police Officer with the Queensland Police Service, February 2022, 64.
528. Doc.029, Standard for Health Assessment Requirements for Employment as a General Duties Police Officer with the Queensland Police Service, February 2022, 64.
529. F Judd, A Komiti and H Jackson, 'How Does Being Female Assist Help-seeking for Mental Health Problems?' (2008) 42(1) *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 24-9 <doi.org/10.1080/00048670701732681>.
530. F Judd, A Komiti and H Jackson, 'How Does Being Female Assist Help-seeking for Mental Health Problems?' (2008) 42(1) *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 24-9 <doi.org/10.1080/00048670701732681>.
531. Doc.078, Recruitment Data 2019 to mid-October 2023, 26 October 2023.
532. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, *Independent Review into Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, Including Predatory Behaviour, in Victoria Police* (Phase 2 Audit, September 2017) 205, 129.
533. AM Roche, K Pidd, JA Fischer, N Lee, A Scarfe and V Kostadinov, 'Men, Work, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review of Depression in Male-dominated Industries and Occupations' (2016) 7(4) *Safety and Health at Work* 268-83 <doi.org/10.1016/j.shaw.2016.04.005>.
534. See TG Westerman and GE Dear, 'The Need for Culturally Valid Psychological Assessment Tools in Indigenous Mental Health' (2023) 27(3) *Clinical Psychologist* 284-9 <doi.org/10.1080/13284207.2023.2247532>.
535. Doc.345, Review of the QPS Preemployment Psychological Evaluation Process (PPEP) for Police Recruits, August 2024, 71. The Review of the QPS Preemployment Psychological Evaluation Process indicates that the Personality Assessment Inventory may disproportionately screen out culturally diverse applicants at a higher rate than the general group.
536. Doc.345, Review of the QPS Preemployment Psychological Evaluation Process (PPEP) for Police Recruits, August 2024, 71.
537. Doc.028, Fitness requirements and standards, October 2022, 1; Doc.022, QPS Police Recruiting Manual v1.0, 25 November 2022, 32.
538. Beasley Intercultural, *Cultural Diversity and Drowning Prevention Report for Royal Life Saving Society* (Report, 2018) 2. Note: the Commission did not obtain data on pass rates of the swim test during the Review.
539. Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency, *The Inherent Requirements of a Police Officer* (2017) 3.
540. Jacqueline Drew and Carol A Archbold, 'Issues of Merit and Affirmative Action in Police' in Tim Prenzler (ed), *Gender Inclusive Policing: Challenges and Achievements* (Taylor & Francis, 2023) 105.
541. Susan Robinson, 'Rethinking Recruitment in Policing in Australia: Can the Continued Use of Masculinised Recruitment Tests and Pass Standards That Limit the Number of Women Be Justified?' (2015) 2(3) *Salus Journal* 34, 37.

542. Doc.028, Fitness requirements and standards, October 2022, 1.
543. Recruits are required to complete a beep test, operational simulation exercise and dummy drag in order to graduate the academy; 'Fitness Assessment Requirements', *Queensland Police Service Recruiting* (Web Page, 2024), <www.policerecruit.qld.gov.au/fitness-assessment-requirements>.
544. Between 2019 and 2020, 77% of women passed this stage of the recruitment compared to 87% of men; Doc.078, Recruitment Data 2019 to mid-October 2023, 26 October 2023.
545. Confidential conversation, participant 67, February 2024.
546. Jacqueline Drew and Carol A Archbold, 'Issues of Merit and Affirmative Action in Police' in Tim Prenzler (ed), *Gender Inclusive Policing: Challenges and Achievements* (Taylor & Francis, 2023) 105.
547. Doc.022, QPS Police Recruiting Manual v1.0, 25 November 2022, 33.
548. Doc.022, QPS Police Recruiting Manual v1.0, 25 November 2022, 29.
549. Recruitment Data 2019 to mid-October 2023, 26 October 2023.
550. Confidential conversation, participant 67, February 2024.
551. Anti-Discrimination NSW, *Inclusive Recruitment Project* (Report, 2023) 31.
552. Anti-Discrimination NSW, *Inclusive Recruitment Project* (Report, 2023) 32.
553. M Adamovic, and A Leibbrandt, 'Is There a Glass Ceiling for Ethnic Minorities to Enter Leadership Positions? Evidence from a Field Experiment with Over 12,000 Job Applications' (2023) 34(2) *The Leadership Quarterly* 101655 <doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2022.101655>.
554. 'Specialised Roles and Areas', Queensland Police Service Recruiting (Web Page, 2024), <www.policerecruit.qld.gov.au/specialised-roles-and-areas>.
555. Queensland Police Service workforce data, 31 January 2024.
556. Focus group participant, July 2024.
557. *Chivers v State of Queensland* [2014] QCA 141, [65]. See also *Toganivalu v Brown & Department of Corrective Services* [2006] QADT 13, [101] and *Opinion re: Queensland Police Service* [2002] QADT 3.
558. *Flannery v O'Sullivan* [1993] QADT 2.
559. Doc.022, QPS Police Recruiting Manual v1.0, 25 November 2022, 22.
560. For example, the Psychological Assessment Unit is responsible for assessing psychological suitability, the Vetting Unit is responsible for integrity and vetting checks; Doc.022, QPS Police Recruiting Manual v1.0, 25 November 2022, 17 and 22.
561. The QPS Executive Leadership Team informs and operationalises strategy and monitors organisation wide risk and performance. Membership is approved by the Commissioner and currently includes the Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioners, the Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Commissioners, Heads of Divisions and Chief Superintendent, Crime and Corruption Commission (Police Group). As the scope of our Review only extends to sworn police, when we refer to the Executive Leadership Team, we generally focus on sworn members.
562. This term was used to describe the letter applicants receive when they are advised by QPS that they have been unsuccessful.
563. Confidential conversation, participant 67, February 2024.
564. Confidential conversation, participant 67, February 2024.



7 Developing and valuing a diverse, high-performing workforce

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26	Amend the Police Service Administration Act 1990
27	Consult with the Public Sector Commission following legislative changes
28	Bring career advancement into alignment with the Public Sector Act 2022
29	Improve the use of performance management processes
30	Align performance and selection processes
31	Create transparent structures for acting and relieving opportunities

Why it matters

Developing and valuing a diverse, high-performing workforce is an imperative part of realising workplace equality. Too often organisations prioritise strategies for increasing diversity without ensuring the strengths of diverse staff are valued and developed.

Ensuring all police have equal access to career advancement will support QPS to fulfil its strategic vision of a highly skilled and capable workforce that understands and represents the community it serves.⁵⁶⁵

Throughout our consultations, we heard that police from diverse backgrounds face barriers in advancing through the organisation. This can reduce diversity at leadership levels, limit the organisation's capacity to realise the benefits of diversity, and impact retention. It can also signal to police from diverse backgrounds that diversity and inclusion are not valued in practice, even when the value of diversity is outwardly promoted.

In this chapter

We explore how valuing performance, supporting career advancement and improving selections and appointments are critical to achieving workplace equality within QPS.

This discussion contributes to the overall picture of what positive steps QPS should take to prevent discrimination, whether there is adequate transparency about recruitment promotion and retention, and what should be done to increase the retention of QPS members from diverse backgrounds.⁵⁶⁶

Address under-representation throughout the organisation

During our consultations, we heard that it is important that QPS reflect the community it serves.⁵⁶⁷ We also heard that there are ‘bottlenecks’ for police from diverse backgrounds as they progress into the more senior ranks of the organisation and that women on part-time agreements particularly have difficulty moving into leadership positions.⁵⁶⁸ We also heard certain units have particular work cultures that are less available to police from diverse backgrounds.⁵⁶⁹ QPS data supports these sentiments, as will be explored below.

Queensland’s police do not reflect the community they serve

Over the past decade, the composition of QPS’s sworn workforce has remained relatively constant.⁵⁷⁰

Despite small increases in diversity over time, Queensland’s police do not currently reflect the community they serve:

- 50.7% of Queenslanders identify as women, yet they make up 28.5% of sworn police and recruits⁵⁷¹
- 4.6% of Queenslanders identify as First Nations, yet they make up 2.4% of sworn police and recruits⁵⁷²
- 22.7% of Queenslanders reported that they were born overseas, and 12.5% spoke a language other than English at home.⁵⁷³ While the data limitations on the cultural diversity of sworn police limit direct comparison, a rough comparison is that police from culturally diverse backgrounds make up about 3.2% of sworn police and recruits.⁵⁷⁴

Police from diverse backgrounds are less likely to move up the ranks

Police from diverse backgrounds are less likely to move up the ranks in QPS. Workforce data obtained by the Review showed that:⁵⁷⁵

- The lowest representation of women is at the Superintendent and Chief Superintendent ranks (17.5% and 9.1% respectively).
- The highest representation of women is at the Constable and Senior Constable ranks (29.1% and 30.1% respectively).
- Only four sworn officers from Inspector level to Executive Leadership Team⁵⁷⁶ level identify as culturally diverse.
- Only five commissioned officers identify as First Nations.
- The highest representation of culturally diverse sworn officers is at the Constable rank.
- The highest representation of First Nations sworn officers is at the Senior Constable rank.



Table: Demographics of sworn officers and recruits by rank as at 31 January 2024⁵⁷⁷

	Women	Culturally Diverse ⁵⁷⁸	First Nations
Executive Leadership Team	26.1%	4.3%	0%
Chief Superintendent	9.1%	0%	0%
Superintendent	17.5%	0%	1.8%
Inspector	21.6%	1.3%	1.7%
Senior Sergeant	25.2%	1.8%	2%
Sergeant	25.9%	2.8%	2.9%
Senior Constable	30.1%	3.1%	2.7%
Constable	29.1%	4.9%	1.2%
Recruit	25.8%	3.8%	0.8%
Overall	28.5%	3.2%	2.4%

There are very few sworn police who have multiple attributes – that is, female police who are First Nations or culturally diverse.⁵⁷⁹

Some work units have particularly low levels of diversity

Workforce data also show that some work units have relatively high levels of diversity, whereas others have very low levels. This reflects what we were told by some participants about assumptions about gender and roles. For example, we heard that it was common for managers⁵⁸⁰ to assume women would work in roles such as child protection and corporate services, whereas other areas, such as detective units and ‘high-risk’ specialist operations teams, were considered to be the domain of men.⁵⁸¹ In these areas, a masculine stereotype was normalised.

There’s something in that detective category that has a culture of its own. It’s very much a boys club or male dominated and there is no room for ‘weakness’. I know a woman who was bullied because she suffered an injury and had to go on light duties. This is when the bullying started from her boss, it was just a perceived weakness as a female.⁵⁸²

Gendered career trajectories are a recognised structural barrier for the progression of women; unlike overt discrimination, this kind of bias arises from ingrained cultural norms and organisational practices that seem neutral on the surface but actually advantage one gender over another.⁵⁸³

Say you’ve got a job that requires physicality where things could get a bit ugly, and you have a big burly male and a female both who apply. The bosses think it’s just a safer bet to go with the male. That happens so often. It’s not even remotely part of the requirements of the position. The boss might say I’m looking for someone who can sort people out here, someone who can stand their ground... these are the unwritten rules that will promote a certain type of person.⁵⁸⁴

Culture can influence progress

During our consultations, we heard that cultural dynamics can make it difficult for police from diverse backgrounds to progress in the organisation. We were told that police were being overlooked for roles because they were not part of the ‘in-crowd’ or ‘boys’ club’.⁵⁸⁵ We heard that when police from diverse backgrounds are promoted, they are branded as ‘diversity hires’,⁵⁸⁶ and that assumptions are made about women ‘sleeping their way to the top’.⁵⁸⁷ These sentiments reflect the two major evidence-based barriers preventing the progression of diverse employees to higher organisational levels in the wider literature: lack of access to networks and perceptual comparison to an ideal White male leadership standard.⁵⁸⁸

Assimilation required to progress

The Commission heard that dominant views and attitudes create unofficial definitions of the types of attributes or characteristics that are preferred for advancement opportunities.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re CALD or First Nations, if you’re different you get picked on.”⁵⁸⁹

“You will never get promoted beyond Sergeant if you don’t play the game. That is the QPS way.”⁵⁹⁰

Police from diverse backgrounds observed that managers tend to promote people most similar to them.

“The people getting relieving positions were just good mates with the Sergeant. If you’re not in the cool kids’ group with the Sergeant, you don’t get recommended for things.”⁵⁹¹

The Commission heard that First Nations officers felt as though they needed to play down their identities in order to advance.

“I’ve been promoted a few times. But I wouldn’t have been promoted if I vocalised my Aboriginality much more. That is for certain for me.”⁵⁹²

Review participant

We heard that those who refused to ‘assimilate’ experienced consequences for their careers.

“From the moment [my colleague] decided she didn’t want to be out drinking with the boys she got scrubbed, went from being one of the favourites to being discriminated against.”⁵⁹³

The phenomenon of being drawn to those who think, look and act like us is not unique to QPS and is a well-recognised problem for women working in historically male-dominated environments and roles where there are deeply held beliefs and norms about who is suitable for leadership.⁵⁹⁴

“Biggest flaw is unconscious bias. They don’t do it deliberately. They see themselves in the white person, so unconsciously favour them.”⁵⁹⁵

Narrative

Sam's* story

*Not their real name

Sam joined QPS after moving to Australia some years ago. Over the years, Sam has experienced discrimination from his colleagues and from people in the community because of his cultural background.

“*It is worse internally than externally. Internally when they are being sneaky that is a whole other ball game. That hits much harder.*”

Sam feels on the outer with his colleagues and that they ignore him, even when he is acting in managerial roles.

Recently, Sam had been acting in higher duties for two years. In his view, he was by far the most qualified person for the role. One day he learned that someone else was to be appointed to the position he was acting in without the position being advertised. After Sam challenged this, QPS advertised the position, and he won on it on merit.

“ [They] knew they would have to blatantly discriminate to not give me the position on merit.

“ I've seen CALD [culturally and linguistically diverse] people leave because of jokes, being blocked by promotions, not being able to move up the ranks.

This has come at a cost for Sam, but he is determined to oppose racism and stand up for others.

“ Emotionally, mentally...[I] don't know if I can do it anymore. It has pretty much beaten me. I can't see a light at the end of the tunnel. What is the point of putting my life in danger every day, why am I even bothering when the people I work for are treating me even worse?

“ What keeps me going is needing to protect people who are not treated fairly. [I] will do the right thing, stand up for others, [and I] don't care if you don't like me.

Stereotypes disadvantage police from diverse backgrounds

We heard there are a number of narratives within QPS that seem to place blame on police from diverse backgrounds for not advancing in the organisation – for example, not applying for roles because they lack confidence.⁵⁹⁶ Conceptually, this form of resistance parallels the resistance we observed in the survey that revealed the challenges of recruiting police from diverse backgrounds.

It was also commonly reported that there are perceptions about women's capacity to give what is required to police work due to assumptions about child-rearing and their ambition to progress.⁵⁹⁷ We observed widespread assumptions about gender roles.

“I was told flat out that an OIC [officer-in-charge] wouldn't take me because I was of child bearing age.”⁵⁹⁸

Shifting the responsibility to police from diverse backgrounds rather than addressing the structural issues underlying this problem serves to reinforce negative stereotypes. These narratives are inaccurate and seek to frame skills and traits exhibited by police from diverse backgrounds as deficits rather than strengths, keeping the attention away from the structural inequalities in QPS. These perceptions relate to how merit is defined within QPS.

'Who you know' is strong currency for promotion

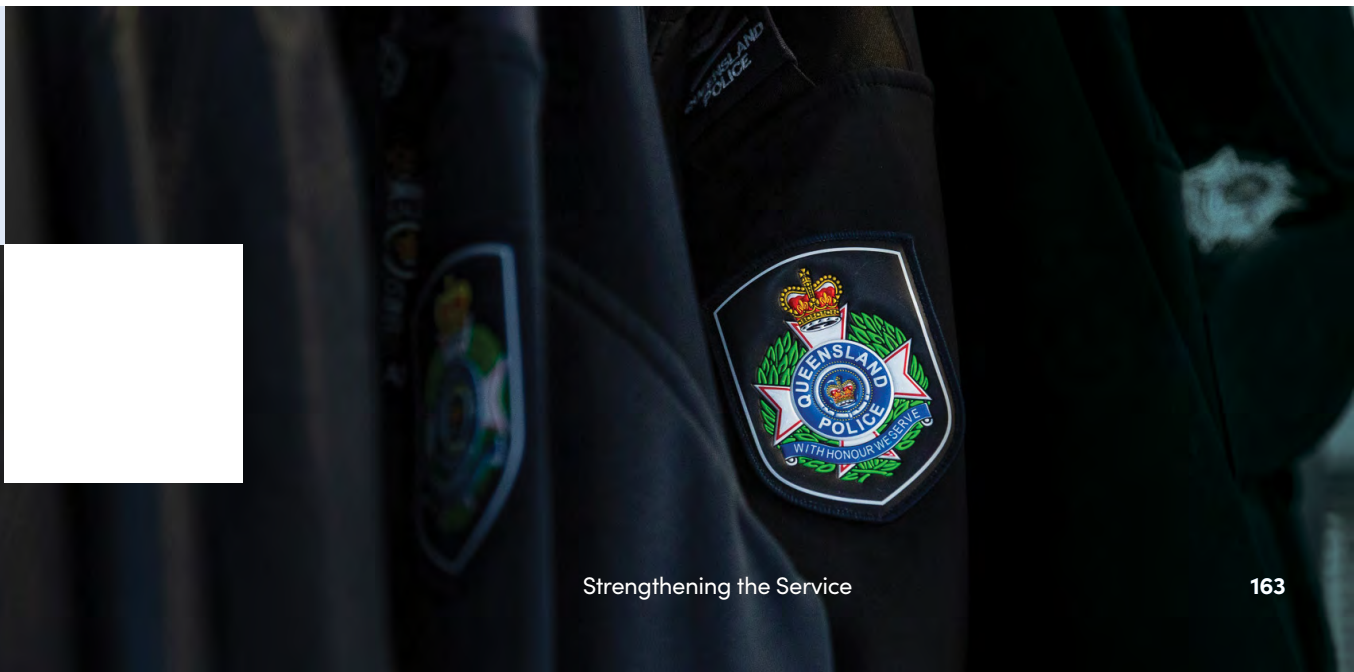
Participants reported to the Commission that acting arrangements and informal career opportunities were more likely to be offered to the dominant group, placing them in an advantageous position for promotions.

“I'm not a drinker, [I] don't socialise with the cops. [I'm] not in the cool club, so I won't get any relieving whatsoever.”⁵⁹⁹

Despite there being more checks and balances for formal promotional processes, the Commission heard that these processes can also be worked around to get the candidate the manager or panel convenor desires.

“The officer-in-charge will pick the person they want unless there's someone like me on the panel. Some people can be pushed over on the panel.”⁶⁰⁰

QPS recently reintroduced the Central Panels Unit to address perceived inequities in the recruitment and selection processes.⁶⁰¹ The Central Panels Unit is designed to provide an independent, centralised and coordinated approach to statewide promotional panels for the Sergeant and Senior Sergeant ranks.⁶⁰² While the Commission was told the Central Panels Unit could improve, many participants reported positive experiences with its processes.⁶⁰³ Some suggested the mandate of the unit should be expanded to oversee the promotion processes of other ranks.⁶⁰⁴



Valuing performance

Meaningful engagement with performance systems is an essential part of developing workplace equality. It is important that performance is captured, rewarded and incentivised more broadly than only the operational or technical components of a role – this is particularly crucial for supervisors.⁶⁰⁵ For QPS to successfully increase diversity and inclusion, leadership needs to be united in working towards this goal across multiple organisational levels.⁶⁰⁶ The performance system should therefore capture how QPS officers contribute to the organisation's objectives to promote a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Create a culture that values performance

During our Review, we identified that QPS has made improvements to its development and performance system in recent years. However, we also observed that cultural factors continue to undermine and limit meaningful engagement with the system.

The new development and performance system came into effect in QPS in January 2022 and is designed to recognise good work performance, as well as behaviour or performance that does not meet expectations. The Commission heard that, while the system has potential, meaningful engagement with and take-up of the system can be limited.

“DAPs [development and performance systems] are useful when used properly. But [a] lack of training [and] capacity for managers to have difficult conversations around performance [and] conflict means that discussions are avoided.”⁶⁰⁷

Some participants commented that development and performance processes are seen as a box to be ticked.

“Twice in [nearly a decade] in [General Duties] did I actually have one on one with sergeant who actively discussed goals and performance. Otherwise they just click it and say improve XYZ so you go up in pay points. [There is] no guidance on where [you are] bettering [yourself].”⁶⁰⁸

The Commission heard there are significant workplace pressures on officers that may also impact the time they attribute to development and performance system processes.⁶⁰⁹

We were told that strong cultural factors may disincentivise the use of development and performance systems to record poor or unacceptable workplace behaviours. Participants commonly reported a tendency for police officers to ‘protect’ other officers, which includes not turning on ‘your own’.⁶¹⁰ Some participants thought this may deter people from completing the development and performance processes as required by the system.

“I’ve worked a lot in the past in General Duties where a lot of supervisors are actually reluctant to [use the development and performance systems] because they think that will cause a cultural issue in the station because you’re dogging on them.”⁶¹¹

It is important that QPS reframe the narratives that undermine the performance system so that officers who have not met their performance requirements do not move up in the organisation.

“There are first years that have gone through that need more development and shouldn’t have been signed off, but [their officer-in-charge] can’t not sign them off because nobody’s put it in the book.”⁶¹²

Embed values-based performance

An inclusive and values-driven culture values and integrates the perspectives and talents of all employees,⁶¹³ as well as rewarding and promoting positive behaviour. Creating this culture results in a safer, more respectful and inclusive working environment.

Essential aspects of embedding values-based performance include both discouraging and providing consequences for negative behaviour, as well as providing rewards and incentives for positive behaviour.⁶¹⁴

Some participants told us they felt the system rewards officers who exhibit negative behaviour because managers can prefer to move the person with problematic behaviour to another work unit rather than deal with the behaviour themselves.

“ They often get rewarded, because [no one] wants to work with them. So they [their supervisors] put them in places that people want to go.”⁶¹⁵

In addition to not addressing poor workplace behaviour, behaviours that are rewarded within the performance system tend to focus on operational skills – for example, prioritising ‘arrest rate’ and ‘traffic tickets’, rather addressing other problematic interpersonal behaviours.

“ Make the performance evaluations a real thing and include people’s behaviour in that – don’t just make it how many tickets they gave out, or how many traffic stops they did – the section where it says ‘works collaboratively and acts in accordance with QPS values’, that really needs to be taken seriously.”⁶¹⁶

A further barrier to embedding values-based performance is that some managers do not feel supported when they do call out poor behaviour.

“ When I was acting I tried to do some constructive DAPs [development and performance]. I did not feel supported. All of these have now been challenged.”⁶¹⁷

“ The messaging has to come from the top down that they are supporting the use of DAPs for constructive feedback.”⁶¹⁸

A suggestion from a focus group participant shows how simple reward and recognition for positive behaviour can be:

“ I would advocate for reinvigorating awards and recognitions both in formal and informal settings – even an email from the Superintendent or the Inspector to the work unit.”⁶¹⁹

As we discuss in this report, the Commission’s position is that QPS should establish performance indicators for managers that prioritise workplace equality. If managers are held accountable for workplace equality, it is likely to trickle down to their staff by rewarding employees who are exhibiting behaviour in accordance with QPS’s values. These rewards and incentives should be linked to development opportunities including training, relieving and higher duties.

Link performance feedback to selection processes

Currently, information about a candidate's broader performance, including performance in workplace behaviour, management skills and contributions to workplace culture, is not formally available to selection panels in determining appointments for recruitment and promotion, unless the applicant has highlighted it in their application.⁶²⁰

The Commission heard that officers conducting panel selection processes can lack key information about an officer's performance when assessing their suitability for a position.

▮ As a service we need to capture the practical skillset. If you're writing a resume in your second or third language, you can display the practical skills in the field but not know how to get that in the CV. DAP [the development and performance process] is the right place for that but as a panel convenor I don't have access to that as part of that process. All I know is that they had a DAP and they succeeded.⁶²¹

▮ Processes could line up to give an example to the key selection criteria that correlates with the DAP. You've gathered that experience in the field, so then you can just submit it without having to write a long assignment in 2 pages about it.⁶²²

As a relevant comparison identified during our review, the Australian Defence Force has recently amended its Appraisal and Development Report for Senior Officers in the organisation.⁶²³ A key change was to ensure star ranked officers 'demonstrated commitment consistent with the cultural change, diversity requirements and WHS legislative duties expected of Senior Officers of the ADF'.⁶²⁴ The information collected during the appraisal period 'may be used when making decisions related to your career management, including, postings, promotion and career development'.⁶²⁵

By aligning its systems in this way, a candidate's suitability and potential are more accurately assessed. This would ensure that:

- poor workplace behaviour is captured and available to panel members so that people who may have a reputation for conduct that is racist and sexist are called out and this behaviour is considered when deciding if they can advance into management and leadership positions
- officers would be incentivised to demonstrate positive behaviours.

Career advancement opportunities

There is a strong business case for cultivating diversity in leadership roles.⁶²⁶ QPS staff have sent strong messages to the Executive Leadership Team in recent years through the Working for Queensland surveys that the promotional system must be improved.⁶²⁷ Key concerns reported in that survey are consistent with what was reported to the Commission – namely, that career advancement processes are not transparent, performance is not assessed clearly, and promotion decisions are not based on clear criteria.

The wider literature indicates that lack of access to informal networks and evaluation against the White male leadership standard are the major barriers leading to under-representation of diverse leaders.⁶²⁸ We found that both factors were supported by information gathered in the Review.

The Commission also heard that formal selection processes, including the two-page written application and interview processes for promotion, were overly rigid which can disproportionately impact diverse police.⁶²⁹

Make acting opportunities available to everyone

Networks play a core role in supporting career development and progression – they provide access to information, resources, sponsorship, role models and evidence of career path success.⁶³⁰

Consistent with this principle, outside of the formal QPS promotion system, informal or upstream factors such as acting opportunities can influence subsequent promotion decisions. This process was often described as ‘jobs for the boys’ or ‘who you know’ and was one of the most frequently reported issues across our consultations.⁶³¹

“How are we ever going to break the ceiling when we are being interviewed and assessed by Caucasian people who have unconscious bias towards their own?”⁶³²

Review participant

Equitable access to relieving and higher duties

Relieving and higher duties – often referred to as ‘acting opportunities’ – are valuable career advancement opportunities in QPS because they provide the requisite experience for promotion, and they have potential to be extended on an ongoing basis.⁶³³

Participants reported to the Commission that these opportunities are often made based on proximity to the officer-in-charge, rather than through an open and transparent selection process. We heard that it is possible to make ‘captain’s calls’ and direct approaches to people.⁶³⁴

“In this area, people get phone calls, not expressions of interest.”⁶³⁵

Review participant

“Our boss doesn’t advertise half of the opportunities available. I don’t know when they’re coming up. There are no check and balances.”⁶³⁶

Managers often occupy roles, including officer-in-charge positions, for short periods of time, which can contribute to this issue.

“When you have a turnover of bosses in the seat, they don’t know who’s applying for things. You could put a secondment in [to a relieving officer-in-charge] and then the boss comes back and they don’t know you’ve put the secondment in.”⁶³⁷

The Commission was told that, in some cases, relieving opportunities are used as a way to solve a workplace issue a manager might have, rather than to provide staff with development opportunities.

“A lot of blokes promoted same time I was, they’ve done lots of relieving with a view to getting promoted. I didn’t bother to apply in the end. I applied at my level, they put another bloke in the spot. The inspector said you’re probably better for the position but he’s sick so need to put him somewhere.”⁶³⁸

Failing to have adequate processes and procedures in place to record how higher duties and relieving decisions are made puts new managers, and would-be applicants, at a clear disadvantage. Managers may be missing key information to make informed decisions – for example, about which officers have had acting opportunities in the past and which have been waiting for their opportunity.⁶³⁹

A trusted and accountable relieving process that develops officers

Managers, particularly officers-in-charge who are in supervisory positions, are at the coalface of operational demands and are gatekeepers to development opportunities through relieving and higher duties. Improving relieving and higher duties decisions in QPS involves a balance of supporting some of their discretion with policies and procedures while not bogging them down in red tape.

During our Review, we identified that there is no current consistent way of recording or reporting on acting and relieving opportunities. Unless the data on relieving or higher duties is captured adequately, consistently and in a centralised way, QPS will be limited in its ability to assess whether or not the higher duties and relieving system is meeting its objectives of promoting workplace equality.

Some managers appear to be making decisions without all of the relevant information to hand, due to the lack of a consistent system for recording all officers who are eligible and interested in pursuing acting opportunities. They need reliable systems in place to support them to make consistent and justifiable decisions so that acting opportunities are available to all officers in QPS.

QPS should look for alignments that can be made with the development and performance system, which is designed for proactive and forward-thinking conversations about development opportunities. Using these conversations for officers to articulate their development needs to meet their career objectives would provide a written and transparent record of development goals that ensures accountability.

Systems improvements such as these are likely to improve the transparency of decisions, moving away from decisions based on nepotism and proximity and towards ensuring that opportunities are available to all.

Remove rigidity from selection processes

While improvements have been made over the years to improve the transparency, fairness and oversight of formal selection processes in QPS, the Commission heard that structural barriers remain that may be discriminating against police from diverse backgrounds.



Narrative

Gabriel's* story

*Not their real name

Gabriel is a long-serving First Nations officer who joined QPS because he wanted to make something of himself and give back to the community.

Whether to identify as First Nations in the workplace is something Gabriel has always thought about carefully. In some environments he has been open about his identity and in others he has not disclosed it.

In his first posting he encountered a work culture that didn't align with his values.

“ I don't drink; I don't smoke. There was a big drinking culture back then and I didn't like it. There was misogyny. I turned up to predatory drunk men. To be honest I didn't sign up for that.

Gabriel chose not to identify as First Nations to the officers who demonstrated this behaviour.

“ [The new first-year constables] were seen as the new breed and we stood out. The last thing I wanted to do was say I was Aboriginal – I felt like I didn't need to add diversity to the mix.

Over the years Gabriel has experienced racist comments that are justified as 'banter'. He said he doesn't want to 'whinge and complain about every little thing, sometimes they're just seeing if I react, so it's easier not to react'.

For Gabriel the system to get promoted is a barrier.

“ I have applied for higher ups but I can't write a resume to save myself. I've applied for roles in First Nations areas up north but I apparently haven't been able to sell my cultural diversity very well.

By making small changes to his own environment and the culture around him, Gabriel hopes to make a difference.

“ I find that as a manager I can use good management practices without dragging people into the discipline system. I want the people above me to be better. They have to be good people. But I was told during one of the interview processes that “nobody wants to hire you because you're a good person”.

He feels that with his experience and what he has to offer, he could offer QPS so much more. He says what is keeping him in the job is the 'golden handcuffs'.⁶⁴⁰

“ If the golden handcuffs weren't there I would leave and look for something else.

Selection processes could be adjusted to better assess skills and potential

A commonly reported theme from the consultations was that the current selection processes do not adequately assess an applicant's skills and potential.

Formal selection processes that require officers to submit a two-page response to selection criteria and attend formal interviews were described by some participants as 'rigid' and 'overly proscriptive', making it challenging for diverse applicants to succeed.

📖 It's not an interview, it's an oral exam. They don't care how you perform. You have to fill in a two pager and you have to answer the questions but nothing about your past performance has any merit.⁶⁴¹

Some First Nations participants identified that this form of assessment process can be particularly difficult.

📖 The process is flawed – it is based on your ability to write and interview. As a First Nations person you don't have the best educational background. You might need a little bit of support through the interview to make you feel at ease, but they don't have [First Nations] people on the panel.⁶⁴²

The Commission also heard that police from diverse backgrounds do not tend to have the same connections that experienced officers and leaders from the dominant group do, and they are having to navigate those processes on their own.

📖 I feel like my strengths are my practical skills, but if you look at my history my grandfather didn't go to school, mum didn't and I was out at year 11. I'm practical – I've done things some sergeants haven't done yet [but] I can't put it in writing. I am petrified to submit it because I've never done a uni assignment – I've got no one in my family to ask, not something I'm used to.⁶⁴³

The Commission heard that having a panel member of the same cultural background as the candidate can have a positive impact on that applicant.⁶⁴⁴ Other areas that consultation participants identified as requiring adjustments were providing additional time, or prompting, during an interview.⁶⁴⁵

Under Chapter 2 of the Public Sector Act 2022 (Qld) the Commissioner of Police has an obligation to 'take actions to promote equity and diversity in employment and promote a culture of respect and inclusion'. A practical area in which this obligation may arise is in ensuring that QPS's interpretation of the Police Service Administration Act 1990 (Qld), which in turn informs how it conducts its selection procedures, results in accessible and, if necessary, adjusted processes for police from diverse backgrounds.

The Commission notes that QPS's policies and procedures relating to recruitment and selection have not been updated to consider and reference the new obligations in the Public Sector Act 2022.

The requirement that selections are made by fair and equitable procedures would permit reasonable adjustments being made for those with protected attributes, provided that they did not deviate from merit-based selection or unjustly discriminate.

Opening up pooled recruitment to the whole organisation

Currently, QPS's ability to undertake 'bulk promotion processes' or establish 'merit pools' (also known as 'pooled recruitment') is limited, except at the Executive Officer level.⁶⁴⁶

There are a number of benefits for QPS in being able to conduct promotion processes that appoint a number of officers to a particular rank, rather than to a position. For example, it would provide QPS with greater consistency in how it conducts its processes, given that it is possible at the Executive Officer ranks but not others.

During the consultation processes the Commission heard many examples where promotional processes run at the local level has favoured those in the ‘in-crowd’ (or commonly referred to as ‘jobs for mates’). It also advantages applicants with direct experience in the work area, particularly those who have been given an informal opportunity to act in the role. A pooled recruitment process, on the other hand, could result in fairer and more consistent outcomes for all officers but particularly police from diverse backgrounds.

The Commission also heard that QPS is constantly in a state of flux, with positions becoming available on a regular basis. It would be far more efficient and cost-effective for QPS to run promotional processes in this manner, rather than for every process under the Executive Leadership Team to be done at the ‘position’ level.

The perception of pooled recruitment processes by police from diverse backgrounds is that they can even the playing field and create space for their skills and competencies to be valued.

I I felt going through that system that you got the same opportunity as everyone else and I also feel that women and diverse people can have better negotiation, communication and empathy ... we got to be on a level playing field through that process, we got to show our actual skills.⁶⁴⁷

The Commission’s position is that allowing the appointment of officers to a rank, rather than just a position, across the whole of QPS may provide greater flexibility when conducting pooled recruitment, which in turn may improve consistency of decisions and improve the accessibility of the promotion system.

Selections and appointments

Selections and appointments of sworn officers in QPS are made on the basis of ‘merit’. ‘Merit’ is formally defined in the Police Service Administration Act 1990, which provides a list of what the merit of a police officer comprises.⁶⁴⁸ As discussed in this report, there are also myths and attitudes that have developed about ‘merit’ and what it should entail. These myths appear to influence selections and appointments in QPS.

Shift to the best suited principle

There are two distinct legislative frameworks that apply to recruitment and promotion appointments in QPS:

- the Police Service Administration Act 1990, which applies to sworn officers
- the Public Sector Act 2022, which applies to staff employed as public servants.

The provisions that relate to recruitment and selection are different and inconsistent.

This results in different approaches to recruitment of sworn and unsworn staff. It therefore creates a lack of consistency and increases the administrative burden.

The table below sets out the principles that underpin the recruitment and selection appointments under the two legislative frameworks.

<i>Police Service Administration Act 1990</i>	<i>Public Sector Act 2022</i>
<p>5.2 Appointment to be on merit on impartial procedures</p> <p>(2) A decision to appoint a person, other than an executive officer, as a police recruit or to a police officer position, or to appoint an executive officer to a police officer position or rank, must be made by fair and equitable procedures that</p> <p>(a) include inviting applications and selection on the basis of the merit of applicants; and</p> <p>(b) prevent unjust discrimination, whether in favour of or against a person.</p> <p>...</p> <p>(5) For the purposes of this section merit of an officer comprises</p> <p>(a) the integrity, diligence and good conduct of the officer; and</p> <p>(b) the potential of the officer to discharge the duties of the position or rank in question; and</p> <p>(c) the industry shown by the officer in performance of the duties of office in the course of the officer's career; and</p> <p>(d) the physical and mental fitness of the officer to perform the duties of the position or rank in question.</p> <p>(6) For the purpose of determining the potential of an officer to discharge the duties of a position or rank the following factors must be taken into account</p> <p>(a) the performance of duties of office in the course of the officer's career;</p> <p>(b) the range of practical experience of the officer in the service or outside the service;</p> <p>(c) the ability, aptitude, skill, knowledge and experience determined by the commissioner to be necessary for the proper performance of the duties of the position or rank in question;</p> <p>(d) any relevant academic, professional or trade qualifications of the officer.</p>	<p>44 Principles underpinning recruitment and selection</p> <p>(1) The purpose of this section is to ensure the recruitment and selection of a high-performing, apolitical and representative public sector workforce.</p> <p>(2) A person undertaking a recruitment and selection process in a public sector entity, including, for example, making a decision about employment of a public sector employee, must undertake the process in accordance with the principles mentioned in subsection (3).</p> <p>(3) The principles are –</p> <p>(a) recruitment and selection processes must be directed to the selection of the eligible person best suited to the position; and</p> <p>(b) recruitment and selection processes must be fair and transparent; and</p> <p>(c) recruitment and selection processes must reflect the obligations under chapter 2 relating to equity, diversity, respect and inclusion.</p> <p>45 Employment on merit and for equity and diversity</p> <p>(1) A person selected for employment in or to a public sector entity must be the eligible applicant best suited to the position.</p> <p>(2) In deciding the eligible applicant best suited to a position, a person undertaking a recruitment and selection process in a public sector entity –</p> <p>(a) must consider each eligible applicant's ability to perform the requirements of the position; and</p> <p>(b) may consider –</p> <p>(i) the way in which each eligible applicant carried out any previous employment; and</p> <p>(ii) the potential of each eligible applicant to make a future contribution to the entity; and</p> <p>(iii) the extent to which the proposed decision would contribute to fulfilment of the entity's obligations under chapter 2, including, for example, the objectives, strategies and targets stated in the entity's equity and diversity plan.</p>

While a primary objective of the Public Sector Act 2022 has remained consistent over time – ‘to find the right person for the job’ – including after the Act was repealed and replaced in 2022, the way to achieve that has shifted from merit-based recruiting to recruiting the eligible person best suited for the position.⁶⁴⁹

The best suited approach was adopted as an advancement of the principle that appointments must be on merit alone.⁶⁵⁰ The rationale for the shift to ‘best suited’ was that merit-based appointment is best achieved by giving preference to the person who is best suited to the position and that merit remains a primary consideration while also allowing consideration of equity and diversity factors.⁶⁵¹

The Commission has been unable to identify any reason that QPS should need to deviate from the principles that govern the other aspects of the public sector. The Commission’s position is therefore that the Police Service Administration Act 1990 should align with the principles underpinning recruitment and selection in the Public Sector Act 2022.⁶⁵²

Challenge ingrained ideas about the definition of merit in selections

 *We are such a culturally diverse state, but the head [and] all the senior police are white people... How is that possible? If given the opportunity, I would have risen through the ranks at a rapid rate on merit.*⁶⁵³

Review participant

While the current legislative definition of ‘merit’ may constrain QPS in promotion decisions, there is a sound argument that the Police Service Administration Act 1990 does not preclude consideration of equity and diversity in how appointment processes are conducted and decided.

We identified opportunities for QPS to redefine its core values, including by challenging and broadening its informal definition of ‘merit’ to include the skills, experience and potential of all its officers. Because the current interpretation of ‘merit’ within QPS emphasises treating demographic groups equally, this frame is antithetical to drawing attention to differences as part of selection – a fundamental issue that needs to be changed.⁶⁵⁴

A person’s attributes can be considered as part of suitability for a role

It is legitimate for an organisation to consider a person’s attributes when assessing their suitability for a role, as it is relevant to their contribution to organisational capability and culture. It further assists QPS to meet its objectives to promote workplace equality and reflect the community it serves.

While selection must be on the basis of merit,⁶⁵⁵ a broad application of merit could include consideration of an applicant’s gender, ethnicity and other characteristics. These characteristics may be particularly relevant to the applicant’s potential to discharge the duties of the position or rank in question, including their ability, knowledge and experience.⁶⁵⁶

In fact, the Commission heard there are already ways QPS is doing this – for example, by requiring officers working in First Nations communities to demonstrate cultural capability. Panel members for these positions are required to have a First Nations person on the panel.⁶⁵⁷

The Commission heard that in some areas the skills of people who speak languages other than English can be valued informally but not formally. This may contribute to ‘cultural load’ and a sense of frustration from that diverse officer, who may feel as though their skills are not formally valued by the organisation – for example, through formal selection processes.⁶⁵⁸

There are officers within QPS who see value in the unique skill sets officers can bring to the role. However, because QPS does not as yet define skill sets like these in the selection criteria, police from diverse backgrounds are not rewarded for them on a consistent or formal basis. The Commission heard that some police from diverse backgrounds have been allocated to areas that enable them to utilise their foreign language skills, as well as their ability to build rapport with the community based on their cultural background and lived experience.

“Because I [speak] Mandarin and Cantonese, [it is] good for [location redacted] and [location redacted] which have big Chinese communities. I think [it] is why I was allocated there.”⁶⁵⁹

A broader way of thinking about merit is identifying skills that benefit QPS’s strategic or operational objectives.

Correctly identifying diversity as a strength

A common perception within QPS is that considering diversity means lowering standards and undermining the merit principle.⁶⁶⁰ We also heard that QPS’s 50:50 gender equity recruitment strategy carried out in 2016 may have contributed to a common perception that women, and other police from diverse backgrounds, require a ‘leg up’ to be police officers.⁶⁶¹

This framing portrays diverse skill sets as ‘deficits’ rather than strengths. We heard this could result in police from diverse backgrounds who are successfully promoted being labelled as a ‘diversity hires’, with an assumption they are lacking in merit.

“I worked really hard to get into police, I did exactly the same fitness as everyone, the same everything, but people just see me as a ‘diversity hire’. Even though I do exactly the same things as everyone else does.”⁶⁶²

Review participant

We heard that some female officers who were successfully promoted were directly told they only got the job because they were female or ‘slept their way to the top’.

“If a female was to get promoted it’s because she was screwing the boss. A male can get a promotion on his own merit, but if it’s a female it’s because she was having sex with a male on the panel, or a male in a higher role helped her get that job.”⁶⁶³

Review participant

The perception that police from diverse backgrounds have an advantage over the dominant group in QPS appears to be widely held among QPS employees. In the 2023 Working for Queensland survey, 69% of QPS respondents agreed with the statement ‘being a woman is not a barrier to success in my organisation’, whereas only 57% of QPS respondents agreed with the statement ‘being a man is not a barrier to success in my organisation’.⁶⁶⁴

This perception does not align with what the Commission heard during consultations or with the workforce composition data – which indicate police from diverse backgrounds are facing barriers to succeeding in the organisation. A common reference participants made during consultations was that women, culturally diverse and First Nations officers have had to work twice as hard to get the recognition of their colleagues.⁶⁶⁵

The Commission heard that police from diverse backgrounds bring much-needed skill sets and strengths that make the job of policing easier.

“ I had a situation where we were in a very hostile environment and I tried to de-escalate a situation, using my language to build rapport. I was then accused back in the office why I needed to speak a language that wasn’t English. It was obvious I was perceived as not on police’s side. I was on the side of the offender. I felt really isolated after this.⁶⁶⁶ ”

Merit should not be seen as ‘zero sum’. Instead, the skills different groups bring to the role should be celebrated and encouraged.

“ We need to move beyond our thinking that diversity is just a label, First Nations, woman, gay, whatever. Diversity is, our backgrounds, our leadership styles, our personalities, our approaches, you know, that’s diversity as well.⁶⁶⁷ ”

Review participant

Promote managers who have more than technical or operational skills

As outlined in Nishii and colleagues’ synthesis of the empirical literature, diversity practices aimed solely at reducing discrimination do not automatically lead to inclusion.⁶⁶⁸ The workgroup context plays a pivotal role, and managers have a powerful influence in driving diversity and inclusion outcomes on the ground. To foster inclusion, managers must be equipped with the capabilities, tools and motivation to create inclusive climates, enhance social connections and design work processes that encourage collaboration across boundaries.⁶⁶⁹

One consequence of the policing environment is that operational or technical skills are often the basis for promotion, rather than any of the other skills required to be a good leader. Leadership skills have been articulated in the Ambulance Victoria report as:

- strong interpersonal and communication skills
- the ability to build inclusive team cultures and relationships of trust
- the ability to manage conflict constructively
- the ability to invite feedback.⁶⁷⁰

In recent years QPS has introduced a suite of programs that focus on developing and selecting people with the necessary skills for managerial and leadership roles. The Commission heard that, despite this shift, the system continues to reward those with technical and operational skills with promotional opportunities.

“ [There is still the perception that] good officers should be able to go into a scene and punch their way out.⁶⁷¹ ”

Review participant

“ To become sergeant in that office – you would need a high arrest rate, [be someone] that agrees with the boss, good work performance.⁶⁷² ”

We have heard through consultations that the current training for managers gives good grounding for managing conflict constructively but that, culturally, it is difficult to implement once back in the workplace because of a lack of support from superiors when difficult workplace issues arise.⁶⁷³

We also heard that some officers who were promoted on their technical skills can struggle with the interpersonal demands of managing staff and some do not have a desire to upskill.

▮ They get promoted in the service, are very good at their base level job. And then they get to a point where the job is no longer the work. It's now management. And they have no idea. They struggle because it's completely different ... So I think the challenge for the service is that it's very difficult to find leaders that are both very good administratively and very good operationally.⁶⁷⁴

Promoting people to management and leadership roles who do not have strong management skills can lead to workplace issues, including discrimination, bullying, poor performance and the acceptance of poor behaviours.

▮ When they're being a leader in the specific circumstances, it's great. The issues are when stuff isn't happening, that's when the HR issues start. They are good under pressure, will make quick decisions, able to be mission-focused as opposed to people-focused, which unfortunately is counterproductive later on where you need to be people focused first.⁶⁷⁵

Promotion and career advancement opportunities should be distributed based on what a person contributes to the organisation and its culture, rather than because a person has 'earned' the right through tenure, experience and operational expertise.

These vital management skills are not being monitored or evaluated

As discussed in earlier in the report, monitoring and sustaining progress is one of the foundations of change. Without genuine accountability, workplace equality will remain a low priority across QPS.

To ensure these management skills are given appropriate attention, managers should be given performance indicators that measure their development over time. In particular, the potential to promote inclusion and synergy within a diverse workforce should be a focus of the selection process for managerial roles, backed by training on inclusive leadership and in creating value from a diverse workforce.⁶⁷⁶



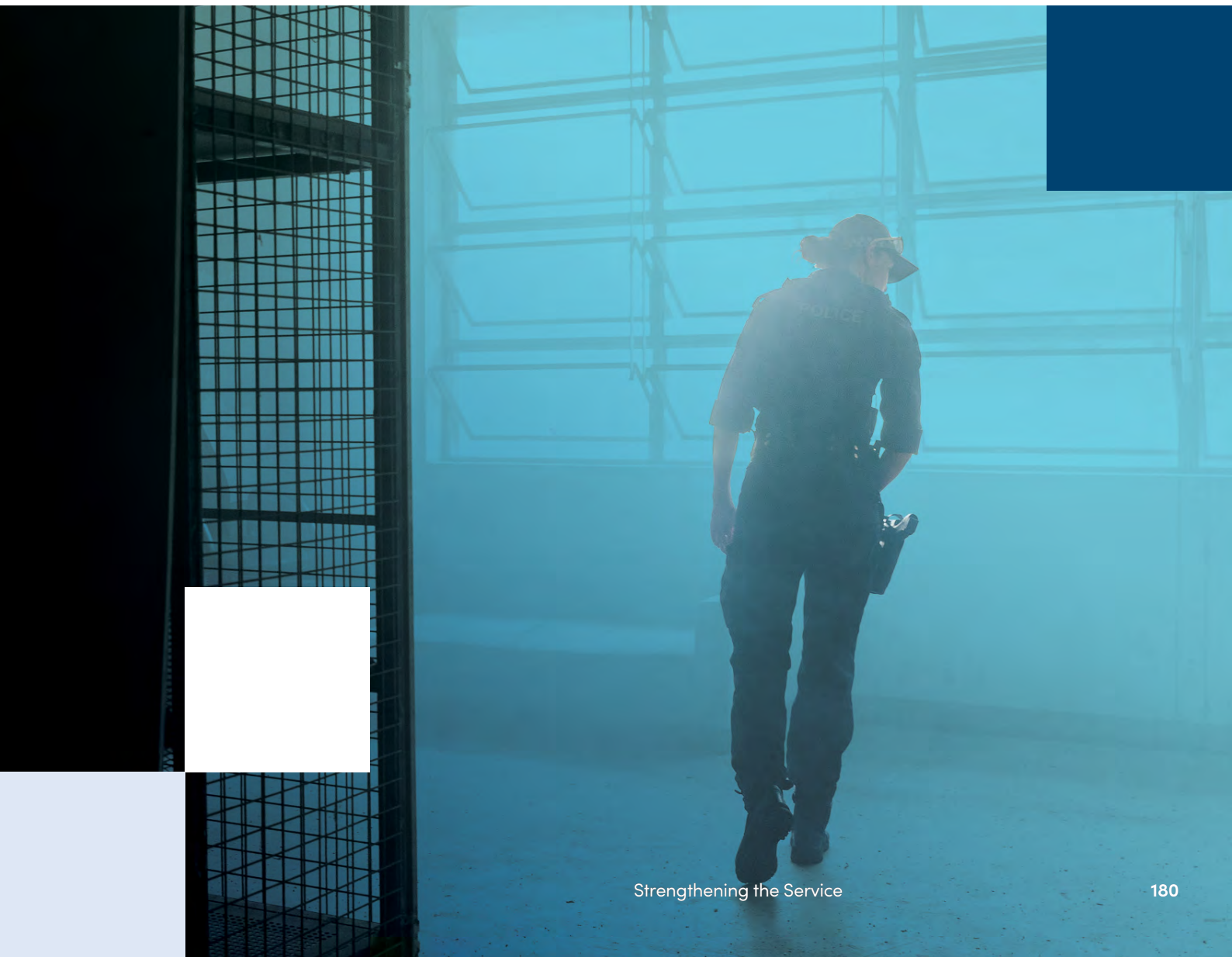
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575. Queensland Police Service workforce data, 31 January 2024.
576. The QPS Executive Leadership Team informs and operationalises strategy and monitors organisation wide risk and performance. Membership is approved by the Commissioner and currently includes the Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioners, the Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Commissioners, Heads of Divisions and Chief Superintendent, Crime and Corruption Commission (Police Group). As the scope of our Review only extends to sworn police, when we refer to the Executive Leadership Team, we generally focus on sworn members.
577. Queensland Police Service workforce data, 31 January 2024.
578. Data limitations about culturally diverse police mean that data on this group is unreliable. This is because of recent Queensland Government-wide changes about how that data is collected. This means that data is unable to be reliably compared with previous years and may not capture, or accurately represent, all officers who identify as culturally diverse.
579. Workforce data shows that, of QPS's total sworn workforce, 1.57% (190 officers) identify as culturally diverse women or First Nations women. As at 31 January 2024, there are currently no culturally diverse or First Nations women above the rank of Inspector. Queensland Police Service workforce data, 31 January 2024.
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582. Confidential conversation, participant 20, November 2023.
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8 Enabling flexible and inclusive workplaces

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Key recommendations

- 32 Normalise flexible work
- 33 Strengthen flexible work governance structures
- 34 Improve flexible work policies
- 35 Improve workforce planning
- 36 Make workplaces more inclusive

Why it matters

Offering flexibility and ensuring the workplace is inclusive are essential ingredients in creating workplace equality and are increasingly seen as expectations of a modern workplace. They signal that difference is not a barrier to successfully participating in the workplace and that those with differences are seen and valued.

Providing opportunities for flexibility and ensuring the workplace is inclusive will strengthen the entire service. They aim to ensure that everyone feels they have a place in QPS by encouraging them to be themselves and not expecting them to conform to a stereotype. They are also two important ways in which QPS can promote the health and wellbeing of all officers, who provide such an invaluable service to the community.

Throughout our consultations, the Commission heard that there are multiple systemic barriers to accessing flexible work within QPS. Flexible work is stigmatised, the full range of flexible options are not utilised, policy and practice are not aligned, and a lack of transparency leads to distrust. We also heard that a 'boys' club' persists and that diverse officers are often excluded in the workplace, undermining workforce inclusion – the key to leveraging the benefits of a diverse workforce.⁶⁷⁷

In this chapter

We will explore workplace flexibility, which includes various arrangements that allow employees to balance their work and personal lives more effectively. We will discuss how workforce planning needs to include diversity as a fundamental underpinning. We will also explore inclusive workplaces, where all employees experience trust, belonging and affinity.

This chapter contributes to the overall picture of what should be done to increase the retention of QPS members from diverse backgrounds.⁶⁷⁸

Assume that the modern workforce expects flexibility

Recently, there has been a fundamental shift in the flexibility employees expect in their workplace. Particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, it is assumed that employers will offer some flexibility in working arrangements,⁶⁷⁹ and the evidence reliably demonstrates the benefits for organisations in providing ways for employees to meet the demands of their non-work roles.⁶⁸⁰

Creating flexibility for frontline staff in service roles is not simple. Policing is a 24/7 job, 365 days a year. Regional and remote stations can present further challenges. However, QPS is not unique in having to implement different kinds of flexible work options for its officers. An estimated 70% of the Australian workforce are unable to work at home or remotely due to the frontline nature of their roles.⁶⁸¹ Although there may be limited opportunities to offer flexibility in *where* police work, offering increased flexibility regarding *when* they work can maximise positive outcomes for both employees and the organisation.⁶⁸²

If QPS is not able to adapt to these changing expectations, it will simply not be able to attract and retain enough police, with obvious ramifications for service delivery.

During consultations, we heard concerns about attrition rates increasing into the future, which may undermine the pursuit of flexibility within QPS.

“ You know over the next 12 to 18 months, maybe two years, you’ll start to see a real clamp down on things like flexible working arrangements ... to keep the numbers on the front line. Now you can’t have that. If I start clamping down on things like flexible working arrangements, people just leave. Sometimes it’s shooting themselves in the foot a little bit.”⁶⁸³

The expectations of the modern workforce need to be taken into account, and flexibility should become business-as-usual.

Embrace changing demographics

QPS wants to build a capable and sustainable workforce that is diverse and reflects the community it serves.⁶⁸⁴ It also recognises that attracting and retaining the right talent in a highly competitive labour market is a risk for the organisation.⁶⁸⁵

Police service workforces are diversifying across the globe.⁶⁸⁶ The QPS workforce demographics have already changed significantly in the last 30 years. If the recommendations of this report are implemented, they will continue to change, and the diversity of Queensland police officers will increase. To retain diverse officers and maximise their contribution, QPS will need to adapt its work systems and environment to meet a broader set of needs and expectations.

“ There’s no reason why we can’t have more women in those roles, but in a flexible sense, and the problem that they’ve got a lot of the time is staffing ... the staffing models can’t support flexible working agreements. That’s it. Your diversity drops because they can’t have the flexibility that they need in order to run their life normally. And I think that’s a problem.”⁶⁸⁷

Flexibility assists employees to meet the demands of both their work and their personal lives and provides employees with greater control over their work–life balance.⁶⁸⁸ We heard that flexibility is a key factor in whether people stay in QPS, especially – but not only – for diverse officers.

“ *Why would I go to the police service and have to juggle so many balls in the air and try and keep it together at work? ... When I can go and work somewhere else, get an extra day off a week or work from home ... These are real issues that we probably need to address in order to keep women and others in the service.*”⁶⁸⁹

Review participant

Narrative

Laura's* story

*Not their real name

Laura is a Senior Constable working at a station in a metropolitan area. She was motivated to join QPS to make people's lives better. Laura always wanted to progress to a specialist area of QPS.

Once she became a Senior Constable, she applied for advertised roles but was always unsuccessful. She requested feedback from an officer-in-charge, who told her that the officer-in-charge of the relevant unit would not take her on because Laura was of child-bearing age.

Laura had her first child and on returning from maternity leave continued to apply for positions. When she spoke to her officer-in-charge about how she might progress to the specialist area she was interested in, they said,

“ I don't believe in part-time at QPS.

After this, Laura transferred to another area and worked for a different officer-in-charge. She said this officer-in-charge did eventually approve her part-time arrangement but made her feel like it was an inconvenience.

Laura said that balancing her caring responsibilities with a career at QPS has been very challenging. When she takes leave to care for her child, her supervisor makes her feel as though she is letting the unit down.

“ I don't know how I could encourage a woman to become a police officer. I'd be like “just stick it out in general duties, do your minimum three years, and that whole time try to build up experience to apply elsewhere because you can't stay in general duties if you want to do part-time or pick up kids”.

Laura said she has been able to bounce back from these experiences because of her resilience. She told us,

“ *I believe I'm super, super resilient. I have amazing family support.*

Shift the norms that have been shaped by the dominant culture

There are barriers to accessing flexible work embedded within the culture of policing

For a long time, police services including QPS were heavily dominated by a reasonably homogenous group of men.⁶⁹⁰ Most officers were not primary caregivers. This meant that in many QPS workplaces there were expectations of long hours and officers always being available.⁶⁹¹ The systems put in place, including rostering and allocation of personnel, catered to full-time workers with similar needs.

We heard during consultations that some people who work flexibly are not seen as team players.

▮ There is an industrial entitlement to have flexible workplace agreements. But it then becomes a negative thing because you're letting the side down. Because women have babies that results in a negative approach that we have. That is culturally an issue for us.⁶⁹²

However, over the last 30 years, many diverse officers who may have significant responsibilities outside work have joined QPS. In addition, across our society, many men are taking on significant caring roles within families.⁶⁹³

Despite these changes, the masculine aspects of police culture persist, including the prevalence of masculine routines.⁶⁹⁴ Indeed, we heard that there remains an image of the 'ideal' police officer as being male and full-time and that being available for overtime is highly valued.

▮ So another woman was a Senior Constable applying for a Sergeant position. [He] was overheard just saying to a number of blokes that there was no way she was going to get the position because she would just end up pregnant with kids.⁶⁹⁵

These norms mean that, despite internal policies allowing flexible work, there remain significant barriers for officers in accessing those options. To make matters worse, when flexible work options are accessed, individuals may not realise the intended benefits because of the stigma.

Unless QPS addresses these barriers grounded in the organisational culture, policy changes will be ineffective. Expecting new employees to conform to historically masculine values and norms set by the dominant culture will continue to reinforce discrimination and exclusion.⁶⁹⁶

The physical environment should not make life harder for diverse police

Reflecting QPS's historical workforce demographics and culture, in many cases physical workplaces have been tailored to suit the dominant group.

During site visits, the Commission observed that some QPS stations did not appear to be gender inclusive in their design. Some women told the Commission that there remain stations and other workplaces without adequate sanitary facilities for women.⁶⁹⁷

The QPS pregnancy policy outlines work health and safety obligations around firearms and personal protective equipment. However, we heard that it is not widely known, so pregnant and breastfeeding women are often given no options that meet their needs.⁶⁹⁸

We also heard that facilities for culturally diverse officers such as prayer rooms are not commonplace in QPS. It therefore falls to individuals to drive initiatives, often at a station level, and supportive leadership to agree to them.⁶⁹⁹

Re-thinking flexible work

While flexibility can be particularly important for diverse officers, all officers are likely to have competing priorities and needs outside work at some point during their careers.

These other priorities can include health, disability, children, study, preparing for retirement, or caring for aged parents. Embracing this reality can help to shift flexibility from being a ‘women’s issue’ – where flexible work is only discussed in the context of being a primary carer for small children – to being a whole of workforce requirement.

There are benefits for the organisation and individuals when flexible work is implemented well. Access to flexible working is linked to:

- improved organisational productivity
- an enhanced ability to attract and retain employees
- improved employee wellbeing
- an increased proportion of women in leadership
- future-proofing the workplace.⁷⁰⁰

QPS’s own flexible work policy outlines that the benefits include improved morale, increased productivity and reduced absenteeism.

QPS has statutory obligations to provide flexible work in certain circumstances. The Industrial Relations Act 2016 (Qld) provides that an employee can request flexible work, including hours, place of work and way of working, and the employer must grant or refuse the request only on reasonable grounds.⁷⁰¹

Under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld), it is unlawful to discriminate against an employee on the basis of protected attributes, several of which may relate to requests for flexible work – for example, age, disability, parent or carer status, pregnancy or sex.⁷⁰²

The Fair Work Ombudsman has commented that, increasingly, best practice employers are going beyond their minimum legal obligations to allow all employees access to flexible working arrangements.⁷⁰³

Adapt workplace flexibility to suit the operational environment

There is a broad range of flexible work options

The Fair Work Commission has also observed that, while not all types of flexibility are ideal for every role, greater flexibility is nearly always achievable.⁷⁰⁴

There are many ways to incorporate flexibility, such as staggered start and finish times, compressed working weeks, time-in-lieu, telecommuting, part-time hours, job sharing, split shifts, shift-swapping, multiskilling, purchased leave, extended leave and self-rostering or team-based rostering. Some of these may be more suited to the various environments within QPS.

🗨️ In general duties, which is predominantly the biggest workforce, flexible work is challenging because I have a 24/7 churn, seven days per week. That’s the challenge ... People that are sitting in police headquarters, and intelligence office, or people who are prosecutors or CIB don’t have that same demand.⁷⁰⁵

Flexible working can be formal or informal. Informal arrangements are those that happen as a once-off, while formal arrangements are re-occurring.

We found that a lack of data makes it difficult to gauge the uptake of informal flexible work in QPS. However, anecdotally we heard that some informal flexible work is occurring and should be encouraged. In the remainder of the discussion in this chapter, we focus on formal arrangements.

The Commission was not able to obtain data about the uptake of flexible work by QPS members in areas other than part-time hours. There are no internal guidelines on flexibility other than part-time work, and in consultations we did not hear that other forms of flexibility are common. Given this, it appears that the practice is not widespread and does not form part of QPS's current strategic approach to human resource management.

High operational demand is a reason to use flexibility, rather than avoid it

During site visits, high operational demand was often cited as a reason that flexible work is not feasible.

“We have a very big tension in that it is really hard to have flexible workplace arrangements in an operational environment ... There are many places where a big organisation can be flexible ... We just can't shut down stations, we just can't stop delivering our service.⁷⁰⁶**”**

We often heard from managers⁷⁰⁷ and others that 'flexible work' was not feasible in an operational policing environment.⁷⁰⁸ However, managers typically associated flexible work with part-time hours, rather than other forms of flexibility.

The QPS flexible working arrangements policy recognises lower levels of stress as one of its benefits. The Commission of Inquiry found that burnout or poor wellbeing is an issue in high operational demand environments. Expanding the types of flexibility available could help relieve some of the pressure those environments place on frontline officers.

These operational pressures are also a significant incentive for QPS to support diversity and inclusion initiatives, which may assist in retaining staff who might otherwise leave. Retaining current staff helps to address workforce shortages.

A trial-and-evaluate approach will encourage innovation

The Commission suggests that QPS adopt a trial-and-evaluate approach to broadening the flexibility options available to officers. There is no 'standard' operational environment in QPS, and a 'one-size-fits-all' approach will not work. Testing different types of flexibility will allow QPS to see what works and does not work in different operational environments. Best practice guidelines from the Fair Work Ombudsman indicate that trialling a flexible work arrangement for three to six months is a valid way to see what does or does not work for the employee and employer.⁷⁰⁹

Other policing agencies have implemented all-roles flex policies in recent years.⁷¹⁰ These are a source of rich information about what has worked and what has not, from an implementation point of view. QPS should look to engage with counterparts in other states to learn from their experiences.

Likewise, other 24/7 industries and sectors have been grappling with flexibility and provide a useful starting point for QPS to consider.⁷¹¹

Involve managers in decisions about how flexible work can be implemented

During consultations, we heard about the chasm between general duties officers and the senior leadership.⁷¹² To ensure this is not another strategy that falls flat during implementation, the expertise and experience of officers-in-charge should be harnessed when coming up with options or strategies that could be trialled.

Flexibility may look very different in regional, remote or smaller stations

There are genuine challenges with flexibility in smaller and more remote stations because of smaller numbers of staff available to meet 24/7 community needs.

However, there is also an extremely experienced group of people who have worked in those stations over many years, and they should be heavily involved in the problem-solving about how QPS can offer flexibility to officers in those stations.

Industrial instruments are not creating fertile ground for flexible work

Police officers are covered by the Queensland Police Service Employees Award 2016 and the Queensland Police Service Certified Agreement 2022.

The award does not contemplate anything other than part-time hours.⁷¹³ The certified agreement mentions some flexibility other than part-time hours but not in detail or in a way that makes options clear.⁷¹⁴ The sections of the agreement that deal with rostering are very detailed but do not have flexibility as a key priority.⁷¹⁵

With negotiations for the new certified agreement occurring soon, this is an opportunity for QPS to embed flexibility in its organisational fibre.

Part-time hours should be available to more people who want them

For QPS members, part-time hours are the exception rather than the rule.

While we recommend a broadening of flexible work in the section above, this section focuses on part-time hours as one option within the suite of flexible work possibilities.

While there is nothing official to prohibit police leaders from having worked part-time or taking a career break on their rise through the ranks, unofficial narratives suggest the cultural markers of the 'ideal' police leader – credibility, commitment and competency – are best achieved through the possession of a 'full-time and uninterrupted' career status.⁷¹⁶

“ *There were snide, underhanded, and then obvious comments about it in a way that made me feel that I certainly was not a valued member of the team in wanting to work [flexibly].*⁷¹⁷

Review participant

We heard in our consultations that some officers have not accessed part-time work because they have not wanted to stymie their careers.

“ *I had another baby, and then came back to work full time. I never went part time because I had this perception that it would inhibit my career. So I worked pretty hard to not access part time and we just managed it with my husband's shift work and family and childcare.*⁷¹⁸

QPS is required to provide an annual equity and diversity audit report to the Office of the Special Commissioner, Equity and Diversity.⁷¹⁹ In the September 2022 report, QPS indicated that female officers are far more likely to be on part-time arrangements than their male counterparts.⁷²⁰

As at 31 January 2024, the figures for uptake of part-time hours were:

- 4.1% of all police officers (492 of 12,117)
- 12.5% of all female officers (426 of 3,409)
- 0.8% of all male officers (66 of 8,708).

In the previous decade, the percentage of part-time male officers had never been higher than 0.9%, while the percentage of women part-time officers was highest in 2014 at 15.5%.

In those ten years, no commissioned officer has been part-time.

While the situation remains one of relatively low uptake, particularly by men, and no uptake by commissioned officers, stigma will continue to attach to those who utilise the policies.

“It’s easier for me to apply [for] part time or flexible working arrangements as a woman than it is [for him] ... He suggested at one point to one of his bosses that he might ask for flexible working arrangements ... my God the commentary and the looks ... that’s woman’s work – what makes you think we would approve that?”⁷²¹

Review participant

The next section looks at what other jurisdictions have achieved in this area.

Uptake of part-time hours is low compared with other police services

There are two other police services that have undergone reviews like this one and then had follow-up evaluation, so we are able to see the progress made after implementation of changes in this area.

Victoria Police

In Victoria Police, between 2015, when the first external review took place,⁷²² and 2019, when the final review took place,⁷²³ the number of women utilising flex work increased from 27% to 38% and the number of men from 8% to 17%. The key areas of change after 2015 had been:

- revision of workplace flexibility policy, including committing to ‘all roles flex’
- guidance to help managers determine flex work requests
- central recording of certain types of flex work
- analysis of gaps in flex work data and planning to address those gaps.⁷²⁴

South Australia Police

The Equal Opportunity Commission conducted a similar review into South Australia Police in 2015, with follow-up monitoring in 2020.

South Australia Police have an ‘If Not, Why Not’ approach to flexible work. This is a ‘principles-based approach’. It is designed to avoid universal acceptance of flexible work requests but to ensure that operational effectiveness is the only grounds for refusal of a request.⁷²⁵

The 2020 South Australia Police report found that part-time work significantly increased for men – from 1% to 6% between 2015 and 2019. The main areas of change had been in policy, to cease the requirement for a reason for the flexible work arrangement, and putting in place checks and balances for non-approvals.

The 2020 report also found that flex work had still not been taken up at senior levels, stigma remained around flex work arrangements, and operational and resource constraints continue to pose difficulties.

The South Australia Police report noted that policies are unlikely to be effective without a strategy to challenge negative assumptions and attitudes about flexible work.⁷²⁶

Narrative

Juliette's* story

*Not their real name

Juliette is a Senior Constable with a decade of experience in QPS.

She is a single mother without extended family support and has had to fight for her flexible work arrangement and to be treated fairly on it.

While a few officers-in-charge support flexible work arrangements, some do not. This extends further, with some shift supervisors and district duty officers not supporting them either. Juliette regularly has her flexible work arrangement contested, with her superiors demanding that she work overtime at the end of a shift, despite needing to collect her child from daycare.

In her view, this is because,

“middle-aged men have never experienced the complexities of juggling work and raising a child with minimum or no support. There is an expectation that QPS officers devote themselves completely to the QPS which is an outdated concept.”

Recently her officer-in-charge made it his mission to ‘fix the flexible work problem’ by bullying out anyone who was on a flexible work arrangement. This created a toxic work environment which allowed officers on flexible work arrangements to be disrespected by unsupportive male colleagues. Several people on flexible work arrangements left QPS as a result.

Juliette said that, while legislation supports flexible work arrangements, there are many loopholes that allow bosses to disadvantage those who use them. Juliette told us that bosses make all decisions regarding the officers within their control, including shift times, shift roles and shift partners. They also approve or deny development opportunities, including courses and relieving.

Juliette found herself constantly rostered differently from her male peers, despite being a qualified and experienced first responder. Juliette believes this is punishment for her flexible work arrangement and a push to make her quit.

Despite applying more than 10 times for relieving opportunities, Juliette has had no success. Juliette raised the issue with human resources, which made the situation worse. Her boss was spoken to without Juliette's knowledge or consent.

As a result, Juliette has resorted to applying for internal administrative positions and external government positions.

Normalise flexible work

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency is a federal government agency created by legislation to promote and improve gender equality in Australian workplaces.⁷²⁷ It collects workforce data from employers and works with them to improve gender equality.

Having developed a sophisticated understanding of flexible work, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency suggests that, rather than viewing flexibility as an individual issue between an employee and manager, organisations should take a strategic approach to implementing flexibility.

This facilitates a shift to flexible work being an organisational issue that requires a holistic, integrated approach and is not dependent on any individual decision-maker. This also elevates flexibility beyond mere compliance and embeds it within the culture of the organisation.⁷²⁸ Through this approach, flexible working can become normalised rather than continuing to be an exception.

Within QPS, current internal policy and guidelines allow for anyone up to the rank of Chief Superintendent to request a flexible work arrangement for any reason. This is a good step towards normalising flexible work. However, more needs to be done to embed flexibility across the organisation.

Stigma remains an issue for flexible workers

We identified significant data limitations that mean we could not obtain a detailed picture of which areas of QPS have a greater or lesser uptake of flexible work than others. We explore those data issues later in this chapter. Given those gaps in knowledge, we have used the 2023 Working for Queensland results to gain some understanding of the current flexible work situation in QPS.⁷²⁹

That survey found that 17% of the workforce have not requested a flexible work arrangement and would like to adjust current arrangements. Of those, the most common reasons for not requesting a change were:

- flexible working is frowned upon in the workplace (40%)
- concern it would negatively impact the team (29%)
- feeling it would limit career progression (28%).

These results indicate that stigma remains a significant barrier to flexibility in QPS. We heard the same message through our consultations.

🗣️ I remember when I went in to negotiate a part time work agreement ... his words to me when he didn't like what I was asking for were [that I had to decide between family and work].⁷³⁰

Embedding flexibility in the thinking at all levels of the organisation is necessary

As we discuss earlier in this report, the senior leadership has a large role to play in making the workplace more inclusive, particularly through making their support visible, making strategic and policy decisions that promote diversity, and monitoring the efficacy of those decisions.

Flexible work is an area in which the senior leadership can communicate and model modern practices. Success stories where flexible work is being implemented well should be shared as part of the ongoing communication envisaged by the recommendations of this report.

Leadership also plays a key role in making long-term decisions such as what the next rostering system looks like. It is vital that flexibility is part of the thinking when these future decisions are made.

Managers need to be able to promote flexible work

Internal governance documents approved for application within QPS provide that officers-in-charge are expected to foster an inclusive workplace where health, safety and wellbeing are promoted and prioritised.⁷³¹ This expectation is amongst many other priorities that the average officer-in-charge is trying to manage.

We heard through consultations that some managers, while experienced in operational policing, can find the application of flexible work and other human resources components of their role challenging. We also heard that some managers do not have sufficient skills or experience to perform well in this aspect of their roles.

📖 So the sort of HR sort of side of things, like the interpersonal ... it's not necessarily valued in the same way.⁷³²

To enable those managers to promote flexible work, they must be upskilled and then expected to ensure flexible work requests are considered appropriately. Based on our research, we observe that the attitude toward the discussions needs to be about 'how can we make this work?' rather than starting from a deficit approach.

Promisingly, we heard through consultations that some managers are already taking this approach.

📖 So I think he changed my perspective on this, bosses out there that are willing to work with people with other children, with females, you know, just started flipping it.⁷³³

We also heard that some QPS environments are more receptive to flexible work.

📖 CPU, child protection is more inclined to be more family friendly and accepting of part time and flexible workplace agreements, etc.⁷³⁴

Upskilling of managers is required

The Champions of Change Coalition is an Australian-based member organisation for achieving gender equality, where men in positions of power and influence across sectors step up together to drive change. It has produced a research report that outlines the importance of:

- investing in additional and different training for managers, focusing on skills development and mindset shifts
- making the ability to lead a cohesive and inclusive flexible team a core leadership capability, with incentives tied to performance
- innovation, job redesign and team-based approaches
- celebration of leaders who implement innovative team-based solutions.⁷³⁵

To advance this approach, we observe that it will be important for QPS to ensure managers are provided with learning and development opportunities to understanding different types of flexibility and how to utilise the checklist in the flexible work policy to decide flexible work requests. They will also need support to feel confident with how to best manage flexible teams, including an understanding of identifying and applying team-based solutions.

As outlined in our chapter on developing and valuing a diverse workplace, managers should have performance indicators to measure their progress in developing those skills.

Make flexible work transparent and consistent

We have heard in consultations that flexible work is not consistently available across QPS, with some police able to access flexibility and others not. Some teams in similar operating environments are making flexible arrangements work, while others do not have any arrangements in place at all because the officer-in-charge says they are not workable.⁷³⁶

“ *It 100% depends on who your manager is ... It is a lottery depending on who you're working for at the time.*⁷³⁷

Review participant

Under the current system, this lack of consistency means flexible work arrangements can be perceived as unfair.⁷³⁸ We observed that this can translate into resentment and mistrust among colleagues. For example, we heard that you have to do the same for everyone or people will get hurt and/or display resistance.⁷³⁹ We also heard that there are discussions about whose need for flexible work is genuine and whose is not.⁷⁴⁰ Better transparency and consistency of decision-making across the organisation will ameliorate those risks and make the benefits of flexible work more apparent.

Governance structures are inadequate and are not taking a strategic role

The QPS Flexible Work Committee is a form of governance structure. According to the QPS guideline on flexible hours, it meets monthly and is chaired by the Assistant Commissioner of People Capability Command.

We were keen to identify how the Flexible Work Committee was operating. To get a better understanding, through our information requests, we obtained and reviewed minutes from that committee for the past two years.

We observed that the Flexible Work Committee does not appear to take a strategic view of flexible work. It appears to be more reactive in nature, particularly focusing on reviews of decisions about flexible work requests as required by the relevant guideline. The Commission's position is that this governance structure should be reviewed to ensure it can expand its focus to all forms of flexible work and is responsible for a broader range of strategic and forward-focused decisions.

Policy and guidelines do not give enough guidance

The QPS flexible work policy and guideline make it difficult for managers across the organisation to make consistent decisions. We heard that this unclear, long and very broad policy document adds to the inconsistent decisions that are being made about flexible work.⁷⁴¹ We also heard that it does not help managers who are trying to improve flexibility, as decisions can be challenged.

There would be benefit in updating the flexible working arrangements policy, including to clarify that applications can only be refused based on 'reasonable business grounds'. The policy should detail the considerations that apply to decisions about flexible work and ensure that managers have a checklist to complete, to assist with decision-making and to document how decisions are made.

Current data about flexible work is inadequate to inform strategic decisions

We wanted to see what data about flexible work was currently available, to understand whether QPS has a complete picture about flexible work in its ranks. We requested data in relation to the prevalence and types of flexible working arrangements.

Information received in response to our request included data about how many police had formal arrangements to work part-time hours. However, data about other forms of flexible work was not readily available. We understand that there is no current way of capturing, recording and reporting on all forms of flexible work that have been requested, approved or not approved within the sworn workforce.

In addition to this, the data about part-time hours is not available in granular detail, so we were not able to see, for example, which stations had high levels of part-time arrangements and which did not.

Without this data, QPS does not have an organisation-wide understanding of what arrangements are in place. This distorts the picture of what flexible work looks like within QPS and limits its capacity to set minimum benchmarks and stretch goals for future uptake of flexible work.

It is also important for the workforce to receive information about what is happening in other parts of the organisation to increase transparency. Data and success stories about flexibility should be shared broadly through regular communications to the whole staff body.

Making workforce planning more sophisticated

Earlier in this chapter we discussed the changing workforce expectations and demographics that QPS is already seeing. To be able to adapt to and successfully leverage these changes and not merely react to them, QPS needs to think strategically about its workforce and what it will look like in the future.

During our consultations we have heard that the QPS approach to diversity and inclusion needs is often tokenistic.⁷⁴² We have also heard that there is a lack of planning around these workforce issues.

“But I would say there’s an astounding lack of planning [in] this organisation, for an organisation that wanted to increase women ... Why are we spending hundreds of thousands of dollars training them, but as soon as they go and have a child, we can’t be bothered to give them flexible work or get them back being productive in the workplace? I just really felt like there was no thought put into it.”⁷⁴³

The Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency advises on current and emerging policing priorities and has membership from Australian and New Zealand policing jurisdictions. Its Police Workforce Compendium highlights that workforce planning is a complicated task with many variables. It establishes common workforce planning principles for policing and includes four core principles:

- **representation** – promoting a workforce that reflects the community police serve
- **service** – adopting strategies that make the best use and deployment of people
- **leadership** – developing leadership capabilities at all levels
- **flexibility** – promoting flexibility in people policies.⁷⁴⁴

It also includes material on the future workforce, recognising trends in the broader socio-economic environment that impact the development of the policing workforce – demographic changes, community attitudes, economic conditions, technological advances and changing work preferences.⁷⁴⁵

A 2023 Queensland Audit Office report indicates that QPS has a demand model that is not fed by all relevant data. Payroll and rostering systems do feed into the demand model, but the finance system, which includes leave and overtime, do not feed into the model.⁷⁴⁶

These reports highlight areas where QPS could become more sophisticated in its approach to workforce planning.

Workforce planning should take the modern workforce into account

Changing demographics within QPS must be taken into account in workforce planning. This includes flexible working needs, but it also means catering for the fact that, at some point during a long policing career, officers may need to take extended periods of leave for caring, health or other reasons.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's review into Ambulance Victoria considered that it was important to design rosters and work arrangements around the current and future workforce rather than the historical workforce that did not have a need for different work arrangements.⁷⁴⁷

Presuming a continuous, full-time workforce, when this is not the case currently and is not likely to be in the future, will leave QPS unable to meet demand. Conversely, factoring in the needs of the modern workforce will assist QPS in being seen as an employer of choice.

During consultations we heard that some officers feel resentful that, after giving so much to QPS, they are not readily given a small amount of flexibility in return.

“ So at that stage, I'd probably been working full time from the time of being sworn in to that time ... I want to work [flexibly] ... after working [many] years work full time. How dare I?⁷⁴⁸ ”

The recent Queensland Audit Office report highlights that 30% of the current sworn workforce is due to retire within the next ten years.⁷⁴⁹ At least some of those officers may wish to transition to retirement through reducing work hours. This is just one example of a group that may have significant impact on staffing levels in the near future.

Alternative models must be part of the flexibility conversation

In the current climate, like all policing and frontline services, QPS continues to face challenges around workforce shortages. During site visits, we heard that many stations and units have unfilled vacancies, and this impacts on operational policing, workplace culture and burnout.

We formed the view that a new way of looking at filling positions, and using diversity and inclusion to help address workforce shortages, is necessary.

One of the challenges for QPS is that there remains a perception that flexibility is difficult when staffing levels are not adequate.

“ I think the bigger issue is that ... there's been staffing issues for so long and then those things are never addressed and they keep putting more and more demands on people on the front line with less and less. So I do believe if those things were addressed, flexibility wouldn't be a problem.⁷⁵⁰ ”

Review participant

Backfilling positions where a flexible work arrangement is in place, or the member is on extended leave, has been implemented in South Australia Police. This change was made through the Equal Opportunity Commission's review and has been an important element of implementing an 'all roles flex' approach.⁷⁵¹

Backfilling remained more challenging in regional environments, and this would also need to be considered in the Queensland environment. We also know that police in regional and remote areas face external challenges such as the availability of childcare, specifically for people like police undertaking shift work. We recognise these external challenges and also believe that improving the flexibility and inclusiveness of the workplace holds opportunities for QPS that are within its immediate control.

The Commission of Inquiry stipulated that QPS develop a scheme to allow frontline officers to be placed in less stressful environments for a period of time.⁷⁵² It is possible that scheme could dovetail with any work that was done on backfilling.

The Australia New Zealand Policing Agency's Police Workforce Compendium notes several alternative models that could be investigated:

- Reserve programs can relieve temporary human resources pressures, particularly in non-enforcement activities such as community events, safety talks, crowd control, disaster planning and searches for lost persons.
- Flexible work options can be expanded by including a casual pool of backfill officers who may be on long leave but want to maintain skills with occasional shifts.
- Virtual teams and taskforces of specialists can be created where there is high demand and low availability in certain areas.⁷⁵³

The Commission encourages the Flexible Work Committee and other relevant areas of QPS to evaluate the potential viability of these options.

Including everyone in the workplace

Many participants in our consultations described a 'boys' club' within QPS that excludes other officers and which reflects a long-documented attribute of police organisational culture.⁷⁵⁴ This was a frequently reported issue⁷⁵⁵ that we explore in greater detail in other parts of this report.

Participants also described widespread patterns of everyday/casual racism and sexism. Often this was in the form of jokes, banter or dark humour.⁷⁵⁶ This behaviour was sometimes minimised by participants, including by people who experienced discrimination, who were unsure if harm was intended.⁷⁵⁷ Others saw it as important for camaraderie and stress relief, without acknowledging the associated harms. Whether overt or subtle, exclusion has a range of negative effects⁷⁵⁸ for individuals and organisations.

We heard during site visits that excessive overtime obligations are reducing people's appetite for socialising as a work group.⁷⁵⁹ This change is likely to have eroded levels of camaraderie between officers and limited their use of informal debriefing as a stress management mechanism.⁷⁶⁰

During consultations, we heard that diversity is not well understood when you are part of a relatively homogenous organisation.

🗨️ **How do we make people understand difference? You know, I think that's the fundamental part that's missing. You know, we've got so many middle aged white straight people in this organisation ... how do we get ... a genuine understanding of what it's like on a day to day basis to feel different, to not really fit in, to not really belong?**⁷⁶¹

There are many ways in which people can be made to feel part of the organisation, rather than an 'other', and here we focus on the importance of social inclusion. Inclusion in the workplace is when people from all backgrounds, not only those from historically dominant groups, are treated fairly, involved in making significant decisions and valued for who they are.⁷⁶²

When employees feel included, they feel safe, respected and valued as individuals and in terms of their identities; are able to influence decision-making; have access to critical information and resources;⁷⁶³ and can express their identities in authentic ways. Accordingly, an inclusive workplace embraces and respects the diverse perspectives represented among its employees, rather than reinforcing the values and norms determined only by the mainstream.⁷⁶⁴

Social inclusion should be prioritised to help keep officers safe and well

As already mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Operational Procedures Manual places responsibility on officers-in-charge to foster an inclusive workplace where health, safety and wellbeing are promoted and prioritised.⁷⁶⁵ When managers value diversity and inclusion, they are more likely to take active steps towards enhancing inclusion.⁷⁶⁶

As discussed in other parts of this report, officers-in-charge are not the only ones with responsibility to prevent discrimination – indeed, an inclusive organisation is characterised by inclusive practices at all levels⁷⁶⁷ – but we heard during consultations that they are important culture-setters.⁷⁶⁸

During our consultations we heard about the importance of being included.

“Inclusivity ... I tell my members when they come into the office, that is a non-negotiable for me. It is absolutely something that I live my working life by because I know what it likes not to feel included. Being a female walking into a room and you've got thirty men. No, it's right from the outset. It puts you on the backfoot you know. It changes the way you think, it changes the way you engage.”⁷⁶⁹

Research suggests that the culture plays an important role in being able to cope with the everyday stressors of being a police officer.⁷⁷⁰ We also heard this during our consultations.

“You know, we all want to be treated fairly. We all want to have a good experience when we're in a team or you know, working crappy jobs or going to critical incidents. We want to ... be part of something that's a social dynamic and we're social creatures, but to do it fairly. No one wants to be treated like crap.”⁷⁷¹

Review participant

This social dynamic will look different from workplace to workplace, and it is incumbent on officers-in-charge to ask their team what they value and how they would like to form cohesion amongst the group.

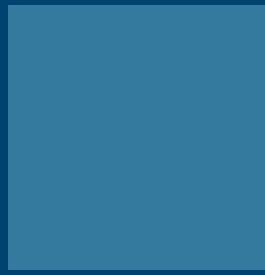
Social inclusion is important for all officers. There are enough pressures on police without adding to them by excluding some officers from the supportive network that their colleagues can provide.

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Report attachments

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A – Where to go if you need help

Please call 000 if you need emergency help.

The Commission acknowledges that the material in this report may cause distress. There are support services available for those who need them, including the services outlined below.

QPS employees and their families

The Queensland Police Service offers wellbeing and support services for members and families throughout their career and beyond.

Visit www.ourpeoplematter.com.au

Counselling and other support

Beyond Blue

Beyond Blue is a 24-hour service offering free information and support to people working through mental health issues.

Call 1300 224 636

Visit www.beyondblue.org.au

Lifeline

Lifeline is a 24/7 telephone counselling and referral service across a range of support areas.

Call 13 11 14

Visit www.lifeline.org.au

1800 Respect

1800 Respect is a national, 24/7 domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information, and support service.

Call 1800 737 732

Visit www.1800respect.org.au

13 YARN

13 YARN is a national crisis support line for First Nations people who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping.

Call 13 92 76

Visit www.13yarn.org.au

Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre

The Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre (QTMHC) is a specialist Queensland service that works to ensure culturally diverse people receive culturally responsive mental health care and support.

Call 1800 188 189

Visit www.qld.gov.au/health/services/specialists/queensland-transcultural-mental-health-centre

Making a complaint

Queensland Human Rights Commission

If you wish to enquire about, or make a formal complaint of discrimination, sexual harassment or victimisation, you can contact the Queensland Human Rights Commission.

Call 1300 130 670

For hearing impaired (TTY) call 133 677

For free interpretation and translations services call 07 4862 4444

Visit www.qhrc.qld.gov.au



B – Advisory Panel



Scott McDougall

Scott McDougall commenced as Commissioner on 8 October 2018, when the Commission was the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland. Prior to his appointment he was the Director and Principal Solicitor at Caxton Legal Centre in Brisbane.

Since admission to legal practice in 1993, Scott has advocated on behalf of communities and conducted litigation particularly in the areas of discrimination, native title, criminal law, guardianship and coronial inquiries.

Scott has overseen the design and implementation of numerous legal and social work service programs and was the President of the Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services from 2009 to 2013. He has undertaken several projects facilitating engagement between governments and communities, including working with the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council to prepare the Palm Island Future Direction Report (2006) and overseeing the G20 Independent Legal Observers Project (2014).

He holds a Bachelor of Laws from the Queensland University of Technology.



Steve Gollschewski APM

The 21st Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service (QPS), Steve Gollschewski APM, has more than 44 years of experience in policing, disaster management, governance and reform and was successfully appointed Commissioner on 22 April 2024.

Before being appointed Commissioner, Steve was selected by the Premier of Queensland to be the Special Coordinator for Police and Emergency Services Reform in December 2022, following the Commission of Inquiry into Police Responses to Domestic and Family Violence.

As Special Coordinator, Steve provided oversight of the QPS reforms, including those arising from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce and the Commission of Inquiry into Police Responses to Domestic and Family Violence, as well as a number of associated inquiries, inquests and reviews along with in-flight QPS reforms.

In his previous role as the former State Disaster Coordinator for Queensland, Steve was the Commander for the operational response to the global COVID-19 pandemic in support of public health authorities. He has extensive experience in disaster management and has been responsible for coordinating the Queensland Government response to weather-related emergencies, including the Toowoomba and Lockyer Valley floods in 2011, flood evacuation of St George in 2012 and Cyclone Oswald in Bundaberg in early 2013. He also coordinated the overall disaster responses to Cyclones Ita, Marcia, Nathan and Debbie, along with the state-wide fire responses in 2019 and the severe flooding in southern Queensland during early 2022.

In 2018, Steve led the largest security operation in Australia for the decade as Commander of Operational Sentinel at the 2018 Commonwealth Games. He has also managed the initial QPS planning and preparation for the security of the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games.

He is a graduate of the AFP Management of Serious Crime Program, the Leadership in Counter-Terrorism (LinCT) program and ANZSOG and is a graduate – and program visiting fellow – of the Australian Institute of Police Management. He has completed postgraduate studies in leadership through Charles Sturt and Harvard universities.



Peter Forday

Peter Forday is a respected leader in cultural diversity and in shaping organisations that value welcome, belonging and inclusion. He is the former CEO of MultiLink Community Services and the former Chair of the Police Ethnic Advisory Group, Multicultural Australia and the Cohesive Communities Coalition.

Peter received a Premier's Scholarship to participate in the inaugural Harvard-based Queensland Leadership Program. He is also an alumnus of the Executive Challenge Academy and subsequently, over several years, coordinated Executive Challenge Academy programs in Brisbane, the Hague, London and Houston for senior and executive leaders from a number of Queensland-based community and government agencies, including QPS.

Peter remains on the boards of Multicultural Australia, as well as being on the boards of YFS and Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland. He is an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow with Griffith University, and he also operates an independent consultancy delivering leadership coaching and facilitation for individuals and organisations seeking better ways to engage, develop and lead others.



Kristen Hilton

Kristen Hilton is a former Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner and has worked across public, private and community sectors. She has deep expertise in gender equality, human rights, ethical leadership, diversity and inclusion and organisational change.

During Kristen's five-year term as Commissioner, she led transformational reviews into harassment and discrimination in Victoria Police, Victoria's Fire Service and Ambulance Victoria. She recently led a Cultural Review of Victoria's Corrections System, which had a specific focus on Aboriginal cultural safety, and served as an expert advisor on Victoria Racing Integrity's Commission into abuse and harm in the racing industry.

Kristen convenes a number of Champions of Change groups across Australia promoting gender equality. In 2023, Kristen was appointed to the Board of the AFL Players Association and is the inaugural Chair of the AFLPA's Human Rights Steering Committee. Kristen is a former Churchill fellow and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and now runs her own specialist human rights advisory practice.



Thelma Schwartz

Thelma Schwartz is the Principal Legal Officer of the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (QIFVLS) – an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisation providing legal and non-legal support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors of family violence and/or sexual assault across more than 90 communities in Queensland, including the Outer Islands of the Torres Straits.

Thelma identifies as of Torres Strait Islander heritage, alongside her German Samoan and Papua New Guinea heritage. She is an award-winning lawyer and has worked as a legal practitioner for over 24 years. Thelma is an unwavering advocate for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence, advocating for system reforms and improving access to justice, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Thelma has worked extensively with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Northern Territory and regional/remote Queensland, with her practice experience and policy / law reform expertise seeing her provide evidence before Royal Commissions, Commissions of Inquiry and act as a Member of the Queensland Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce.



Linda Williams

Deputy Commissioner of South Australia Police, Linda Williams APM LEM, directly supports the Police Commissioner in his responsibility for the safety and protection of the state, serving 1.8 million South Australians, over one million square kilometres, while leading an organisation of nearly 6,000 employees.

Linda is a career police officer with over 40 years of experience since joining South Australia Police as a cadet. She has worked across a diverse range of areas, including frontline policing, prosecutions, internal investigations, crime prevention, road safety, counter terrorism and policy development.

Appointed as Deputy Police Commissioner on 21 July 2015 after 12 years in South Australia Police's senior management and executive team, Linda performs the role of Commissioner of Police and, as such, is the State Coordinator under the Emergency Management Act 2004 (SA) when required.

Linda holds tertiary qualifications including a Bachelor of Law with Honours, Bachelor of Arts, Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice, Graduate Certificate in Management and Graduate Diploma in Applied Criminology and Police Management.

C – Interviews

Sample and procedure

Between October 2023 and June 2024, the Review Team conducted 137 interviews, referred to as ‘confidential conversations’. Participation in the conversations was facilitated via an online form in which potential participants could register interest in participating in an interview. All former, current and prospective QPS members were eligible to participate.

The objectives of confidential conversations were to:

- gather information about the issues we were looking at, and identify themes
- learn more about experiences of the QPS workplace
- hear participants’ suggestions for change, and what positive steps they think QPS should take to prevent sexism and racism from happening.

The registration form was available on the Commission’s public website and was also promoted to the QPS workforce through a variety of communication channels including:

- posting on its internal communication platform, Workplace
- executive messaging (including from the Commissioner of Police)
- circulating through QPS diversity networks, which included staffing networks within the target attribute groups.

Interview registrations experienced a ‘snowball’ effect, where those who had participated would then circulate the registration link to others in their professional networks.

Participants were engaged and interviewed using a trauma-informed approach. This focused on safety, trustworthiness and choice.

The format included a semi-structured interview, where the Review Team followed a series of interview themes or topics that were explored. However, participants were not required to follow a rigid interview structure; it was up to each participant how and to what extent they detailed their experiences. Some themes were not relevant to all participants.

Major themes for discussion included:

- motivations for joining, and an overview of the participant’s career and experiences
- recruitment and promotion experiences
- if raised by the participant, experiences of discrimination, including impacts
- reflections on workplace culture
- reflections on participation in or observations of responses by QPS in responding to concerns, allegations and incidents of discrimination or sexual harassment
- factors impacting retention
- participant resilience factors
- participants’ suggestions for change.

Interviews were held face to face, online or over the phone and ran for approximately one hour each. A small number of participants provided their views and perspectives to the Commission in writing. Each conversation was conducted with the participant and two Commission staff.

Confidentiality was a key concern for many participants. Strict procedures were in place to uphold the confidentiality of information provided by participants during confidential conversations.

All participants were given options on how they would like their information to be captured and used by the Commission. Where consent was provided, interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The final sample comprised 96 female participants, 20 First Nations participants and 27 culturally and linguistically diverse participants, including multiple participants with intersectional identities (that is, those who belonged to more than one of these groups). There were a further 17 participants who did not identify with any of these categories. The ranks of participants varied, with the largest group of participants reporting they were the rank of Sergeants (21%), followed by Senior Constables (16%), and Senior Sergeants (15%). Police Liaison Officers comprised 7% of participants. Most participants were current police officers, except for a small group of former police officers and unsuccessful applicants (12%).

Analysis

Philosophically, data collection and analysis were grounded in the perspective of critical realism, aiming to reveal deeper structures or mechanisms underlying the subjective experiences and interpretations discussed during the conversations. The analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis, focused on identifying patterns of shared meaning (rather than summarising the surface-level content).⁷⁷² The process was inductive, driven from the data in a bottom-up approach.

Given the inherently active role of researchers in generating themes, it is vital to acknowledge the assumptions and experiences brought by the Review Team that may have shaped data collection and analysis. The Review Team's interpretation of the themes was broadly informed by a human rights perspective, and the team developed empathy for the experiences of all officers throughout the process and also for the QPS as an organisation. After the establishment of the Review, the Commission engaged psychologist Dr Susan Sisko to provide facilitated reflective discussion with the Review Team. These sessions occurred quarterly and provided a safe framework for debriefing around narrative construction, challenges and personal engagement in the work. This was conducted in part to ensure bias around subjectivity was identified and reflected upon.

The analysis was carried out through a series of stages in a recursive process of moving back and forth through the stages as needed by members of the Review Team. The first stage was familiarisation, in which the codes read and re-read the data and noted initial ideas. The second stage involved forming the initial codes in a systemic way across the dataset and combining codes with similar meaning. Regular discussions between the Review Team were used to agree on the coding structure in this stage. The codes were then integrated into potential themes, which were reviewed, revised and interpreted with the input of a subject matter expert to capture the deeper patterns in the data regarding experiences of diversity and inclusion in QPS.

D – Site visits

Sample and procedure

Between February and March 2024, the Review Team conducted 21 site visits at police stations.

The objectives of site visits were to:

- obtain information relevant to the scope of the Review
- provide information about the Review, including to increase uptake of our consultation processes by QPS members
- develop an understanding of organisational context and operational environments, including in regional areas, so recommendations can be applicable and relevant to the range of QPS worksites.

The list of locations for each site visit is outlined below.

Cairns PCYC	Dalby
Cherbourg	Deeragun
Gympie	Kingaroy
Kirwan	Logan
Mackay	Mudgeeraba
Mundingburra	Murgon
Northern Regional Office	Rockhampton
Southport	Surfers Paradise
Toowoomba	Townsville station
Townsville Academy	Townsville District Office
Warwick	

Various factors were considered in selecting these locations, including:

- ensuring variety in stations of different sizes and locations
- ensuring the Review engaged with regional officers
- using resources allocated for the Review as effectively as possible.

Because the objectives of the site visits did not include problem diagnosis or identification, the Commission did not select sites based on QPS internal complaint data or issues identified in the Working for Queensland survey.

Given that the Review sought to consider the recruitment and retention of diverse officers, rather than looking at how certain communities are policed, site visits were not selected based on the demographics of the local community.

The specific stations within each region were selected in consultation with QPS. We devised a draft list of locations and consulted the Coordination Committee to confirm sites.

The site visits were orchestrated through a network of officers (Sergeants and above) identified by the Coordination Committee. Often, the Review Team was connected with an officer-in-charge who arranged for the team to access the site and conduct the site visit.

A minimum of two Review Team members were present at each site visit.

The format of each site visit generally included:

- a brief tour of the site by local station personnel
- a 10- to 15-minute information session lead by the Review Team for officers at the work site (generally at a shift change but sometimes as part of a training session on an unrelated topic)
- an opportunity for individual or small group discussions with officers-in-charge and/or commissioned officers.

This format was adapted and changed depending on the site location, its size and the activities of the day. At some sites, the Review Team was invited to meet with groups of Police Liaison Officers, officers-in-charge and/or commissioned officers. These group meetings generally followed a similar format and incorporated a brief information session about the Queensland Human Rights Commission and the Review by the Review Team member, followed by a facilitated discussion on key topics.

Key topics covered included identifying and understanding operational demands and pressures, perspectives on recruitment and promotion, experiences managing diverse teams, and organisational responses to discrimination and retention of staff. At times, site visit participants were also offered the opportunity to provide their personal perspectives about topics relevant to the Review.

Review Team members took contemporaneous field notes during site visits and compiled site visit reports shortly after each visit. The reports recorded details of any information sessions provided, the number and ranks for QPS participants, summaries of formal discussions and informal discussions.

Analysis

The data captured in site visits was included in the systemic coding process described above for the confidential conversations.

Review Team members contributed to an analysis of key themes at the completion of the entire site visit schedule.

E – Survey

Sample and procedure

As part of the methodology for the Review, a survey of current QPS police, Police Liaison Officers and Recruits was conducted.

The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of current perspectives on issues of diversity, inclusion and fairness in QPS. The survey was intended to test the climate for change in the organisation by gathering information about:

- the extent to which attitudes to diversity, equity or inclusion are a barrier to, or facilitator of, increased recruitment and retention of diverse police
- police officers' openness or amenability to active steps to address workplace inequality, including which steps are favoured / not favoured.

The survey was administered via Qualtrics – a multinational research platform. This ensured that data collection was secure and provided an improved experience for survey participants. The survey link was activated for 45 days during April to June 2024.

QPS encouraged its members to complete the survey by:

- sending an update from the Commissioner of Police
- posting on its internal communication platform, Workplace
- updating the QPS screensaver to highlight the survey
- having members of the Executive Leadership Team distribute emails to QPS members encouraging their participation
- publishing information about the survey on the QPS intranet.

During that time, 3,853 responses were received. Responses were screened for eligibility, with certain types of responses excluded to safeguard data quality: 508 from respondents who were not sworn police officers of the QPS; 594 from respondents who answered only one question; and 27 where the response duration was less than 90 seconds.

The final sample consisted of 2,724 respondents. The number of respondents at each QPS rank is shown in Figure 1. Compared with QPS as a whole, the survey sample was slightly under-represented at the level of Constable and Senior Constable: 42.8% in the survey versus 66.1% in QPS. Participation from commissioned officers was slightly higher (5.9%) than the percentage of officers at those ranks within the QPS (1.7%). In terms of gender (see Figure 2), 25.2% of the survey sample were women, closely mirroring the 28.5% representation of women in the QPS. Additionally, 26.4% of respondents either preferred not to disclose their gender or did not answer the gender question, while 1.8% respondents identified as non-binary or used a different term to describe their gender. The following gender-related analyses are based on a sub-sample of 1,954 respondents, including 687 women (35.2%) and 1,267 men (64.8%). Finally, 5.4% of the sample were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, which is significantly higher than the percentage (2.9%) in the QPS as a whole.⁷⁷³

Although the survey had higher representation from commissioned officers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, given the small total number of respondents in these groups (in absolute terms), this is unlikely to have influenced the patterns of findings.

Figure 1: Distribution of survey respondents by rank

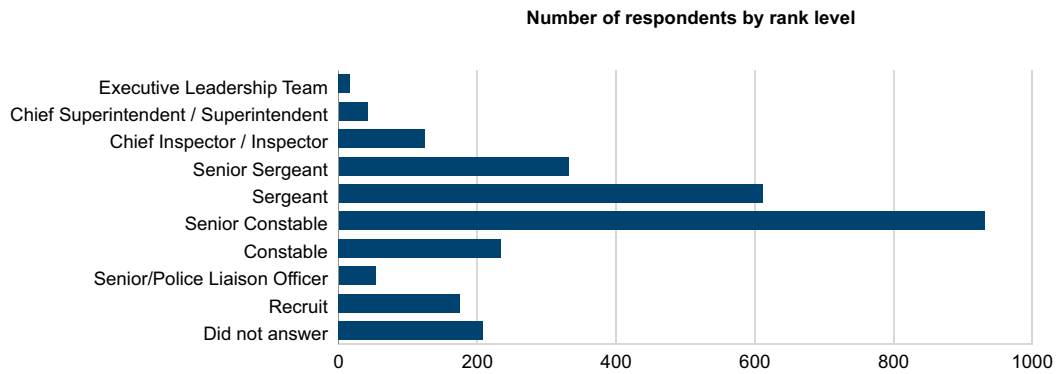
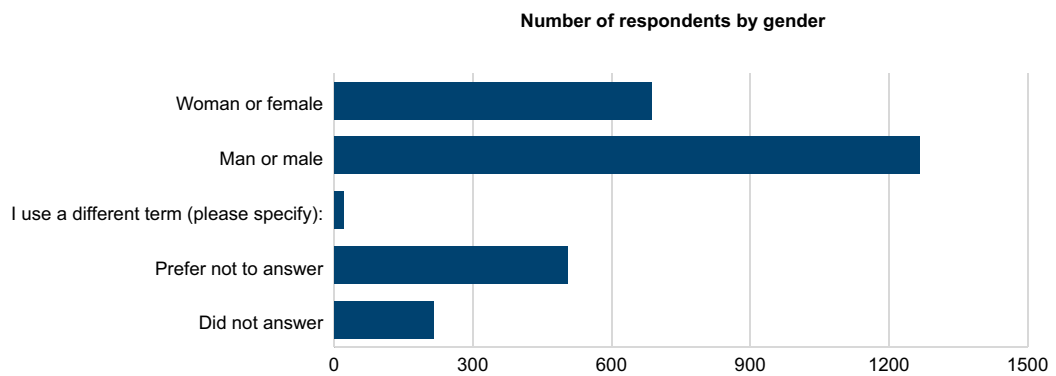


Figure 2: Distribution of survey respondents by gender



Measures

Attitudes towards diversity and inclusion

The first part of the survey measured three attitudes towards diversity and inclusion in three domains: Value of diversity, Value of fairness, and Equity initiatives. Items were developed based on work by Mor Barak et al. (1998) and Dwertmann et al. (2016).⁷⁷⁴ A total of nine items (three per domain) were presented, with the level of agreement or disagreement with each item rated on a 5-point scale, from 1 'Strongly agree' to 5 'Strongly disagree'. Due to concerns about construct validity, one item was excluded from the measures of Value of diversity and Value of fairness. Specifically, the excluded items demonstrated weak correlations with other items in the domain, which affected the overall consistency and reliability of the scale.

Nature and extent of resistance

Grounded in the work of Flood et al. (2020),⁷⁷⁵ the second part of the survey assessed eight distinct forms of resistance, each via one survey item. The forms of resistance and corresponding survey items are shown in Table 1. The level of agreement or disagreement with each statement was rated on a 5-point scale, from 1 'Strongly agree' to 5 'Strongly disagree'.

Table 1: Forms of resistance and corresponding survey items

Statement	Form of Resistance
There is no problem with the level of diversity in QPS.	Denial
It's not my responsibility how inclusive our organisation is.	Disavowal
There are more important things for QPS to be worrying about than how diverse our staff are.	Inaction
Once QPS has more resources, then we can start to address diversity and inclusion.	Appeasement
We would recruit and promote more people from diverse backgrounds if they were more interested in applying.	Appropriation
Measures to increase diversity and inclusion are divisive.	Co-option
When proper process is followed, initiatives to address diversity and inclusion are fair and reasonable.	Repression
I'm sick of hearing about diversity and inclusion.	Backlash

Perspectives on diversity and inclusion initiatives

The final section of the survey presented nine diverse initiatives for advancing diversity and inclusion, as shown in Table 2. The level of support or opposition for each initiative was rated on the following scale: 1 = 'Support', 2 = 'Somewhat support', 3 = 'Neither support nor oppose', 4 = 'Somewhat oppose', and 5 = 'Strongly oppose'.

Table 2: Survey items presenting initiatives for advancing diversity and inclusion

Diversity should be an explicit part of QPS's mission or policy statement.
QPS should conduct internal audits to assess the demographic composition of its workforce, and these findings should be published and discussed.
QPS should take the goal of increasing diversity more seriously through targeted attraction and recruitment strategies.
Women, culturally diverse and First Nations police and Police Liaison Officers at QPS should have more access to leaders with influence through mentoring/networking programs.
Members of diverse groups at QPS should have means of driving organisational change related to diversity.
QPS should ensure that women, First Nations and culturally diverse police are not overlooked in promotion decisions.
QPS should spend more money and time on diversity awareness and related training.
Managers should be held accountable for diversity goals at QPS.
Managers at QPS should be better educated in how to support staff from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Analysis

Attitudes towards diversity and inclusion

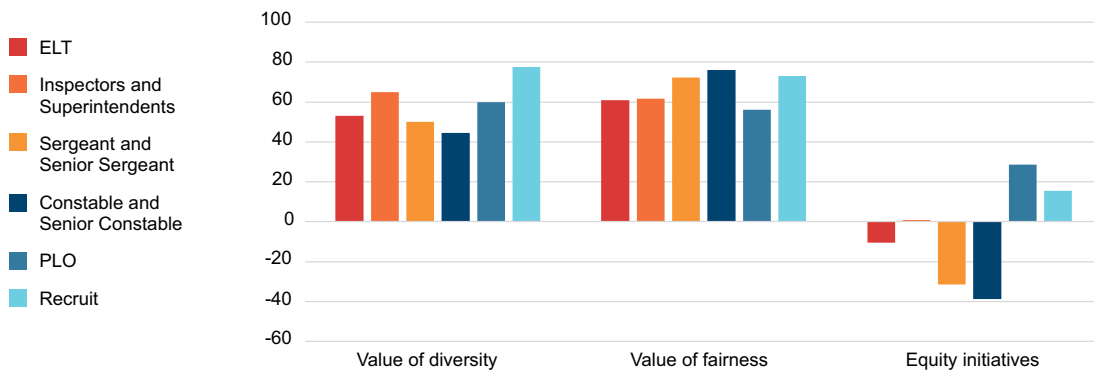
To calculate an overall score on each of the three domains – Value of diversity, Value of fairness and Equity initiatives – we first rescale the 5-point Likert scale to a distribution from –100 to +100. This rescaling allows for more intuitive interpretation of the scores, where –100 reflects a strongly negative perception, 0 is neutral, and 100 represents a strongly positive perception. The rescaling transforms the midpoint (3) on the Likert scale to 0, while the extreme values (5 and 1) are adjusted to represent the full range from –100 to +100.

After rescaling, we calculated the mean score for each domain based on the rescaled responses. The mean score for Value of diversity = 51.17, for Value of fairness = 72.81, and for Equity initiatives = -26.86. These means provide a summary of the overall perception across the survey sample within each domain, with positive scores indicating generally favourable perceptions and negative scores indicating less favourable (or negative) views.

The statistical technique Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was then used to explore differences between groups (that is, between respondents at different ranks, female and male respondents, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people relative to the rest of the sample) in their views regarding the Value of diversity, Value of fairness, and level of support or opposition to Equity initiatives, using the calculated scores. The MANOVA results indicate whether observed differences between these groups are trustworthy for forming conclusions.

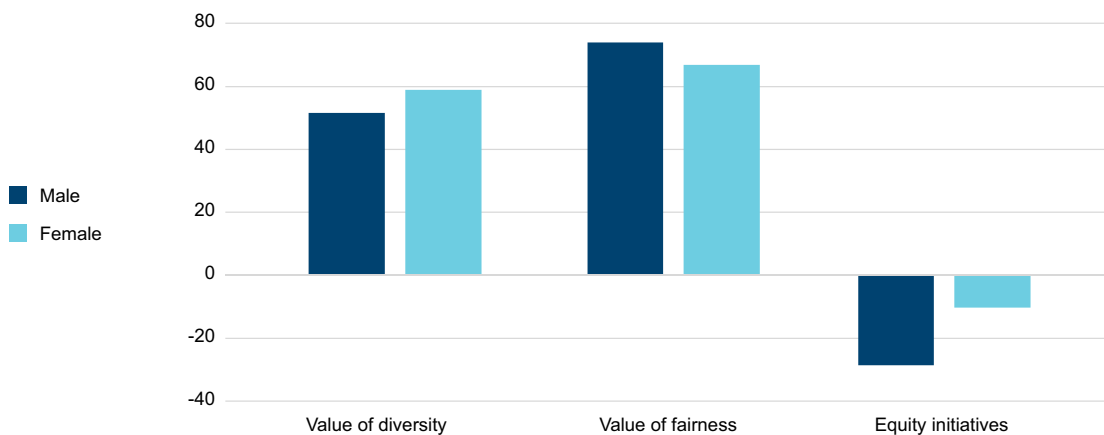
The MANOVA returned a significant result for differences in attitudes towards diversity and inclusion according to rank [Wilks' $\Lambda = .86$, $F(24, 7265) = 16.86$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$]. Specifically, respondents at the ranks of Sergeant and Senior Sergeant, as well as Constable and Senior Constable, expressed greater agreement with the Value of fairness, and lower agreement with the Value of diversity compared with respondents from other ranks; likewise, they expressed a greater level of opposition to Equity initiatives compared with other ranks. On the other hand, Police Liaison Officers and Recruits were more likely to endorse the Value of diversity and express support for Equity initiatives relative to respondents from other ranks. Compared with Sergeants and Senior Sergeants as well as Constables and Senior Constables, respondents from the Inspector and Superintendent ranks indicated more favourable attitudes regarding the Value of diversity and were slightly likely to endorse the Value of fairness (though the overall level of agreement was still high); likewise, they were more neutral in their views towards Equity initiatives relative to Sergeants and Senior Sergeants as well as Constables and Senior Constables. These differences are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Attitudes towards diversity and inclusion by rank



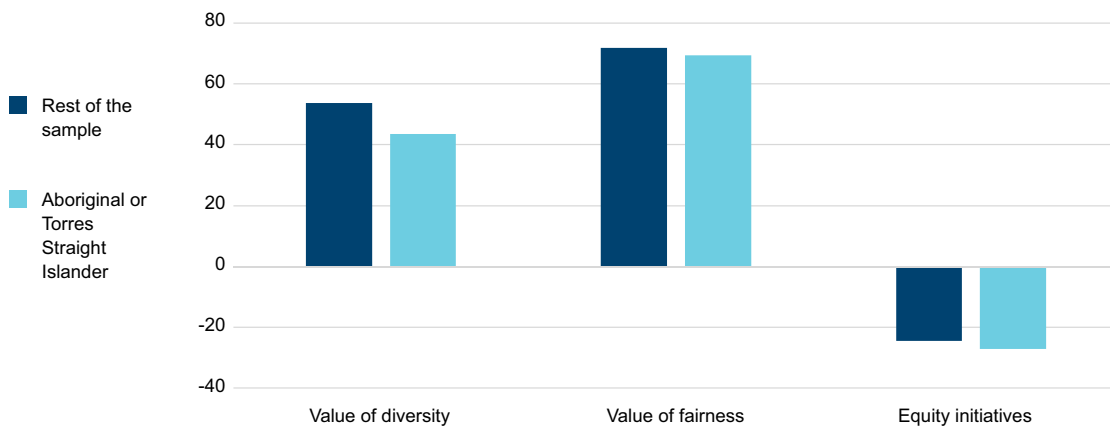
According to the MANOVA results [Wilks' $\Lambda = .97$, $F(3, 1950) = 19.03$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$], female respondents reported more favourable attitudes regarding the Value of diversity, along with slightly lower endorsement for the Value of fairness and less opposition towards Equity initiatives as compared with male respondents. Figure 4 illustrates these differences.

Figure 4: Attitudes towards diversity and inclusion by gender



The final MANOVA examined the attitudes towards diversity and inclusion expressed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared with the rest of the sample, as shown in Figure 5. These terms were chosen for this analysis, rather than First Nations, to account for the participation of First Nations people from other countries (such as New Zealand) in the sample. The MANOVA results [Wilks' $\Lambda = 1.00$, $F(3, 2075) = 13.57$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2 = .01$] indicate a statistically significant difference wherein Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people expressed lower agreement with the Value of diversity than the rest of the sample. There were no significant differences between the attitudes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared with the rest of the sample on the other two dimensions.

Figure 5: Attitudes towards diversity and inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared with the rest of the sample



Nature and extent of resistance

Similar to the approach used for attitudes to diversity and inclusion, data was rescaled to calculate mean scores for the eight forms of resistance, representing the overall level of agreement or disagreement for each type of resistance, across the whole sample. As a reminder, scores can range from -100 (representing anti-resistance) to +100 (representing resistance), with 0 as the neutral point.

The MANOVA technique was again used to determine whether the pattern of responses across the eight forms of resistance is significantly different across groups based on rank and gender.

The MANOVA indicated that levels of resistance are significantly different across the different ranks [Wilks' $\Lambda = .75$, $F(64, 14426) = 11.64$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$]. The profile of scores is shown in Figure 6. The standout findings are that, on average, respondents at the ranks Inspector and Superintendent, Police Liaison Officer, and Recruit reported significantly lower levels of resistance compared with respondents from other ranks. Alternatively, on average, respondents at the ranks of Constable and Senior Constable showed significantly higher level of resistance, followed by respondents holding the ranks of Sergeant and Senior Sergeant.

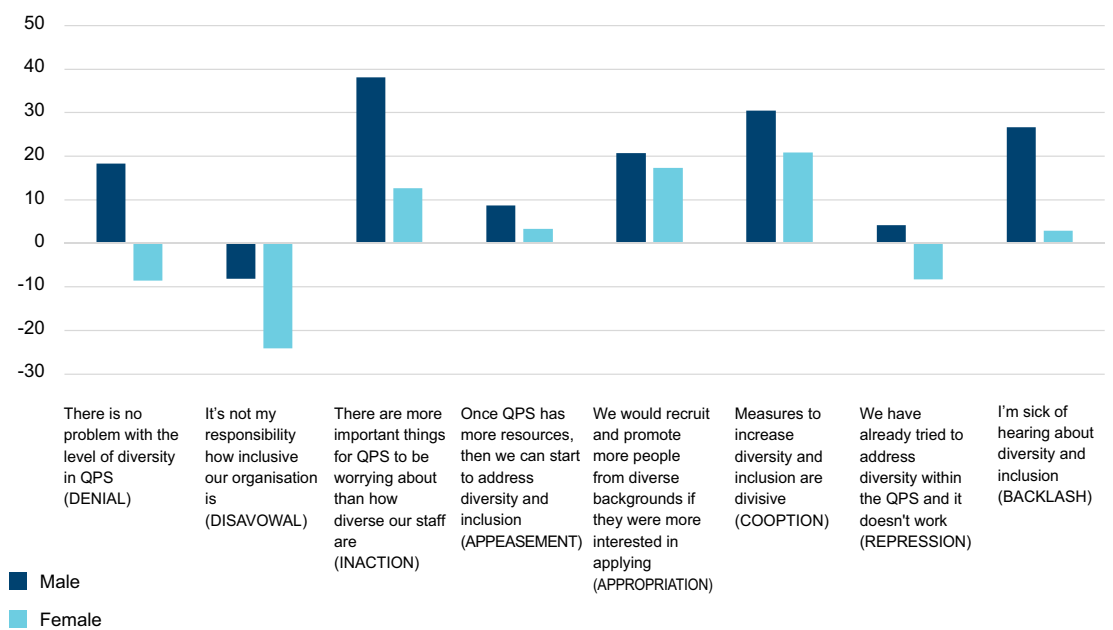
Figure 6: Forms of resistance by rank



There is one form of resistance for which there were no statistically significant differences between respondents from different ranks, according to the MANOVA: Appropriation (as measured by the item 'We would recruit and promote more people from diverse backgrounds if they were more interested in applying'.)

Turning to gender differences in forms of resistance, the results of the MANOVA showed that female respondents expressed significantly lower levels of resistance in all forms except Appeasement and Appropriation [Wilks' $\Lambda = .93, F(8, 1945) = 18.84, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$], as illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Forms of resistance by gender



Clusters of resistance

To better understand the resistance within QPS and identify potential areas of opportunity, the cluster analysis procedure was used to separate the sample into different clusters of resistance. The cluster analysis technique identifies clusters (or groups) of respondents who are most similar to each other in their ratings – in this case, those respondents who expressed similar patterns of views across the eight forms of resistance – while maximising differences between the clusters, so that each cluster is meaningfully different from the others – in this case, showed meaningfully different patterns of resistance across the eight forms.

The original responses on the 5-point Likert scale were recoded into a 3-point scale for this analysis. Specifically, ratings of 5 and 4, which corresponded to ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’, were grouped together and recoded as 3 to reflect general agreement. Neutral responses, originally rated as 3, were recoded as 2 to denote a neutral stance. Finally, the ratings of 1 and 2, corresponding to ‘Strongly Disagree’ and ‘Disagree’, were grouped together and re-coded as 1 to reflect general disagreement.

The cluster analysis identified five meaningful clusters of resistance. Table 3 shows the mean scores for each form of resistance for each of the clusters. When reading the table, note that scores for this analysis could range from 1 to 3, where 1 represents disagreement with the form of resistance (anti-resistance), 2 is the neutral point, and 3 represents agreement with the form of resistance.

Table 3: Mean scores for each form of resistance for the five clusters

Form of resistance:	Denial	Disavowal	Inaction	Appeasement	Appropriation	Co-option	Repression	Backlash
Cluster 1: N = 861 Moderate resistance	2.20	1.53	2.78	2.47	2.45	2.67	2.07	2.68
Cluster 2: N = 776 High resistance	2.58	2.69	2.91	2.29	2.40	2.63	2.56	2.78
Cluster 3: N = 324 Low resistance	1.66	1.18	1.40	1.55	2.82	2.22	1.34	1.22
Cluster 4: N = 305 Anti-resistance	1.55	1.24	1.27	1.15	1.37	1.67	1.28	1.21
Cluster 5: N = 388 Neutral	2.24	1.45	2.10	1.99	2.16	2.03	1.84	2.01

Looking at the means in Table 3, respondents in Cluster 5 reported relatively neutral views for each form of resistance. Said another way, with mean scores close to 2 across the eight forms of resistance, respondents in this cluster tended not to agree or disagree with the statements. One exception is that they rejected the idea that they are not personally responsible for how inclusive QPS is (as shown by the lower score for Disavowal). Respondents in Cluster 4 tended to reject resistance in all forms, as indicated by mean scores below 2 and closer to 1. Cluster 4 thus represents an anti-resistance cluster. Respondents in Cluster 3 expressed relatively low resistance, with two exceptions: Appropriation (‘We would recruit and promote more people from diverse backgrounds if they were more interested in applying’) and Co-option (‘Measures to increase diversity and inclusion are divisive’).

Clusters 1 and 2 are comprised of respondents who expressed moderate to high levels of resistance. Respondents in Cluster 1 indicated moderate resistance across all forms, except that they rejected the idea that they are not personality responsible for inclusion within the QPS (that is, they rejected Disavowal as a form of resistance). Cluster 2 expressed relatively high resistance – with mean scores closer to 3 – on all forms of resistance, including Disavowal.

To investigate whether membership of the clusters differs according to rank, a chi square test was used to compare the observed and expected frequencies of each rank across the clusters [X^2 (32, N = 2516) = 326.93, $p < .001$]. Compared with other ranks, respondents who were members of the Executive Leadership Team⁷⁷⁶ and those who hold the ranks of Sergeant or Senior Sergeant, and Constable or Senior Constable, were more likely to be in the moderate (Cluster 1) or high resistance (Cluster 2) clusters. In contrast, respondents at the ranks of Inspector or Superintendent and Police Liaison Officers were more likely to be in the anti-resistance cluster (Cluster 4) and the cluster (Cluster 3) with low resistance. Finally, Recruits were more likely to be in the neutral cluster (Cluster 5) – neither endorsing nor rejecting the forms of resistance (other than rejecting Disavowal).

A separate chi square test detected significant gender differences between the clusters as well [X^2 (4, N = 1954) = 60.03, $p < .001$]. Specifically, male respondents were more likely to be in the high resistance cluster (Cluster 2) and less likely to be in the anti-resistance cluster (Cluster 4). In contrast, female respondents were less likely to be in the high resistance cluster (Cluster 2) and more likely to be in the anti-resistance cluster (Cluster 4).

Perspectives on diversity and inclusion initiatives

Similar to the approach used for attitudes to diversity and inclusion as well as forms of resistance, data regarding the level of support or opposition towards initiatives for advancing diversity and inclusion was rescaled on a distribution from –100 (representing strongest opposition) to +100 (strongest support), with 0 as the neutral point. The rescaled scores were then used to calculate a mean score for each of the nine initiatives, across the whole sample.

Overall, the mean scores (shown in Table 4) indicate that respondents hold negative attitudes towards the initiatives presented, except for ‘Managers at QPS should be better educated in how to support women and people from culturally diverse backgrounds’. Respondents, as a whole, expressed significant opposition particularly for measures that may directly work to correct systemic disadvantage.

Table 4: Mean scores and percentage of opposition to diversity and inclusion initiatives across the survey sample

Initiatives	Mean score	Percentage of opposition
Diversity should be an explicit part of QPS's mission or policy statement.	–15.61	46.84%
QPS should conduct internal audits to assess the demographic composition of its workforce, and these findings should be published and discussed.	–9.70	41.23%
QPS should take the goal of increasing diversity more seriously through targeted attraction and recruitment strategies.	–55.45	74.23%
Women, culturally diverse and First Nations police and PLOs at QPS should have more access to leaders with influence through mentoring/networking programs.	–20.93	47.98%

Initiatives	Mean score	Percentage of opposition
Members of diverse groups at QPS should have means of driving organisational change related to diversity.	-9.68	38.54%
QPS should ensure that women, First Nations and culturally diverse police are not overlooked in promotion decisions.	-39.76	65.57%
QPS should spend more money and time on diversity awareness and related training.	-36.30	61.58%
Managers should be held accountable for diversity goals at QPS.	1.17	33.08%
Managers at QPS should be better educated in how to support staff from culturally diverse backgrounds.	-23.10	50.91%

The MANOVA technique was used to determine whether the pattern of support or opposition across the nine initiatives is significantly different for groups based on rank and gender.

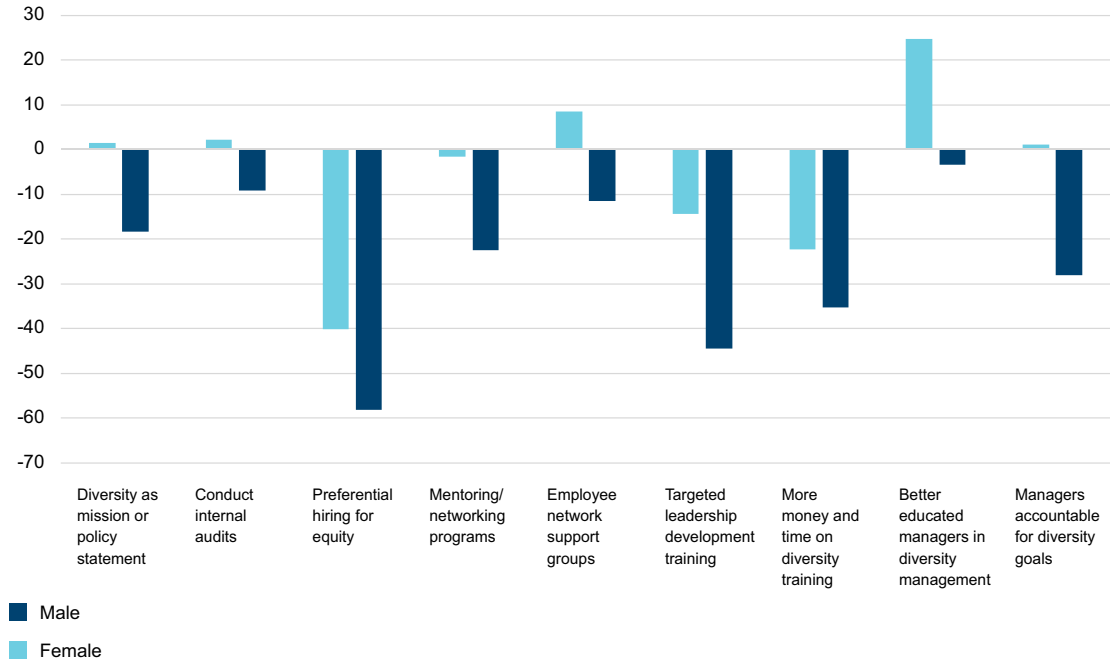
The MANOVA indicated that perspectives regarding the diversity and inclusion initiatives are significantly different according to rank [Wilks' $\Lambda = .81$, $F(72, 15208) = 7.53$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$]. The profile of scores is shown in Figure 8. Police Liaison Officer respondents expressed the highest level of support for the initiatives, followed by respondents who hold the rank of Recruit, Inspector and Superintendent. In contrast, there is greater opposition among respondents at the rank of Constable and Senior Constable, followed by those at the rank of Sergeant and Senior Sergeant. Overall, significant differences exist between respondents at the ranks of Police Liaison Officer, Recruit, Inspector, and Superintendent on the one hand, compared with those at the ranks of Constable and Senior Constable, as well as Sergeant and Senior Sergeant on the other hand, across all initiatives. The Executive Leadership Team tends to occupy a position between these two broad groups, indicating meaningful opposition to several initiatives at the senior level.

Figure 8: Perspectives on diversity and inclusion initiatives by rank



Shifting attention to gender differences, the MANOVA results indicated that female respondents reported significantly more positive views regarding all initiatives relative to male respondents [Wilks' $\Lambda = .90$, $F(9, 1944) = 23.04$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$]. The profile of scores is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Perspectives on diversity and inclusion initiatives by gender⁷⁷⁷



F – QPS presentations

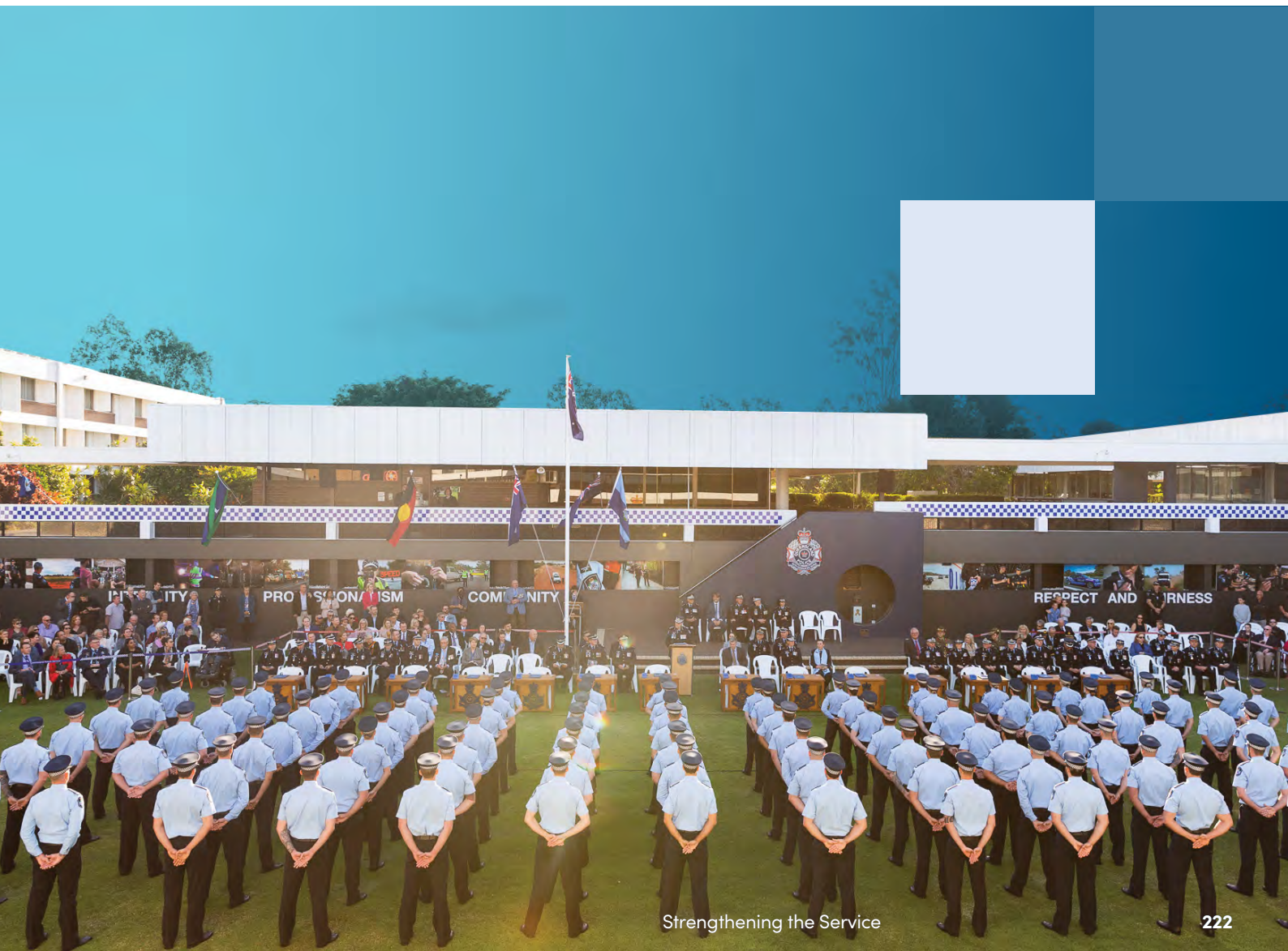
The Review Team was invited by QPS to various events and forums during the review.

Usually, two team members, and sometimes our Commissioner, attended those events. The format was generally a 15- to 30-minute presentation where we outlined the Review methodology, highlighted the benefits of workplace equality, encouraged participation in confidential conversations and the survey and answered questions from the audience.

We were also able to glean some information about operational pressures through attendance at those events.

The events were:

- QPS Officers-in-Charge Forum in Roma, 1 February 2024
- QPS Officers-in-Charge Forum in Maroochydore, 6 February 2024
- QPS Officers-in-Charge Forum in Caboolture, 7 February 2024
- State-Wide Police Liaison Officer Network Meeting, 20 February 2024
- Senior Leadership Team Conference in Brisbane, 22 February 2024
- Executive Leadership Team meeting in Mt Tamborine, 4 September 2024.



Endnotes

772. V Braun and V Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology' (2006) 3(2) *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 77–101, <doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>; V Braun and V Clarke, 'Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis' (2019) 11(4) *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 589-597, <doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>.
773. Due to the challenges posed by the culturally and linguistically diverse question mandated by the Queensland Government, which may not capture or accurately represent all officers identifying as culturally diverse, we have chosen not to present data and results on cultural and linguistic diversity. These challenges have been discussed in detail in Chapter 2.
774. ME Mor Barak, DA Cherin and S Berkman, 'Organizational and Personal Dimensions in Diversity Climate: Ethnic and Gender Differences in Employee Perceptions' (1998) 34(1) *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 82-104; DJ Dwertmann, LH Nishii and D Van Knippenberg 'Disentangling the Fairness & Discrimination and Synergy Perspectives on Diversity Climate: Moving the Field Forward' (2016) 42(5) *Journal of Management* 1136-1168.
775. M Flood, M Dragiewicz and B Pease, 'Resistance and Backlash to Gender Equality' (2021) 56(3) *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 393-408.
776. The QPS Executive Leadership Team informs and operationalises strategy and monitors organisation wide risk and performance. Membership is approved by the Commissioner and currently includes the Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioners, the Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Commissioners, Heads of Divisions and Chief Superintendent, Crime and Corruption Commission (Police Group). As the scope of our Review only extends to sworn police, when we refer to the Executive Leadership Team, we generally focus on sworn members.
777. V Braun and V Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology' (2006) 3(2) *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 77–101 <doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>; V Braun and V Clarke, 'Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis' (2019) 11(4) *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 589-597 <doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>.





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