



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, appearing 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 on [page 38](#).



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>



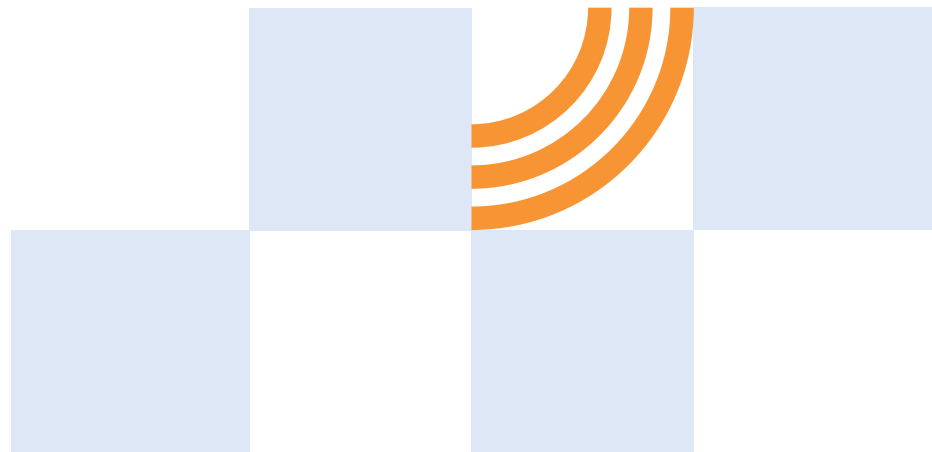


Table of Contents

Executive summary	1
About the Review	2
The case for change	4
Foundations for change	7
Leading change	9
Preventing harm and addressing risks of discrimination	11
Recruiting the talent needed for a modern police service	13
Developing and valuing a diverse, high-performing workforce	15
Enabling flexible and inclusive workplaces	17
Recommendations	19
Where to go if you need help	38

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	<p>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.</p>
Build a safer, more productive workplace	<p>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.</p>
Create a capable and modern police service	<p>Police are increasingly required to tackle complex social issues, and police from diverse backgrounds bring unique skills and experiences to the job.</p>
Enhance community trust	<p>A more diverse workforce creates a solid foundation for QPS to build trust and better reflect the community it serves.</p>

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.

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.

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.”

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.

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'.¹²

“ If the golden handcuffs weren't there I would leave and look for something else.

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.
12. The term 'golden handcuffs' was used by a number of QPS officers to refer to the above-average employment conditions available to QPS officers.



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





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