

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By terms of reference issued under the direction of Deputy Commissioner Brett Pointing, I was instructed to conduct a review of the workplace culture within the Gold Coast District of the Queensland Police Service (QPS).

The circumstance which was the catalyst for the review was a suggested escalation of incidents of inappropriate workplace conduct (including, but not limited to, discrimination and bullying incidents).

This report of the review is prepared as required by the terms of reference. It has been prepared following:

- (i) consultation with senior police personnel identified in the report, in order to better understand the issues of concern to the QPS;
- (ii) interviews conducted on a voluntary and confidential basis with 80 officers and staff members, in which their feedback and opinions were sought about their personal and observed experience relevant to the issues in question;
- (iii) a review of any written information provided by the participants to the interviews;
- (iv) a review of an extensive list of documents predominantly sourced from QPS and the Public Safety Business Agency. The purpose being to better understand existing policies, protocols and processes that may be influencing the culture. Many documents were reviewed, the report names those identified as being documents of particular assistance.

This report is not intended to identify every aspect of information received during the course of the review. The approach of the report is to succinctly identify and objectively discuss:

- recurrent, notable or concerning issues or themes which have emerged from the process;

- my considered opinion about the extent to which those themes are indicators of an existing or emerging negative culture within the Gold Coast District of the QPS. My role has been to identify those matters which may pose a threat to the enactment of the values and ethics principles upon which the QPS and its members enact their duty. The focus of this review is entirely on the internal workplace culture;
- in relation to any matters so identified, the strategies which might be employed in consideration of those already initiated by QPS with a view to addressing and correcting these potential impacts.

Review processes of this nature have limitations and it is acknowledged that evidence provided, while carefully analysed, is not subjected to more strict forensic analysis typical of a quasi-judicial process. However, I consider that the approach taken facilitated robust and valuable feedback.

The interview process predictably disclosed a wide and contrasting range of experiences and opinions and it was greatly assisted by the insight, enthusiasm, candour and courage displayed by participants. I was sincerely impressed by the level of dedication and expressed sense of positive commitment to the Service and its values from those with whom I spoke. It is important to note that I met with an extensive cross section of officers and civilians representative of all ranks, station locations and specialist commands.

I acknowledge the participants who made the effort to share with me regrettably difficult experiences in their professional life in order to assist my understanding.

After careful consideration of the information provided, I can summarise my findings as follows:

- [i] There is no evidence indicating that there is a widespread or pervasive negative culture within the QPS Gold Coast District which supports or enables inappropriate workplace behaviours to be practiced;

- [ii] There are what I have described as “negative workplace indicators” evident in varying degrees in District workplaces. These are certainly matters requiring attention and strategies to address them; these are identified and grouped within the report as I believe most of them have similar causes; some I consider to be in need of short term attention. By way of example, the reluctance and sense of futility held in relation to making a workplace complaint is a serious matter which requires attention to what gives rise to conflict in the first place.
- [iii] A level of instability has certainly arisen from a perceived lack of high level District leadership up until recent times. The appointment and immediate actions of the four new senior officers during the course of my review has already had a significantly positive impact upon morale. However, my previous comment is not to be misunderstood as directed at leadership within work groups (stations or specific areas of command). The information suggests that a large number of District leaders are held in high regard. Officers, however, placed a great deal of store in having a stable, longer terms, visible, engaged leaders for the District and appear already hopeful that recent appointees will fulfill that expectation. Among other things, those leaders, with the help of the office of the relevant Deputy Commissioner, shall need to enhance community understanding of the work police perform and to correct publicised misinformation where it occurs;
- [iv] Leadership remains probably the most important quality that must be employed to address emerging issues; there are issues with “middle” operational leadership which need to be considered and I believe that the recent and progressive restructure of QPS lends itself favourably to such responses. I respectfully agree with certain of the findings of Operation Tesco which (while concerned with other forms of behaviour), highlighted supervision and mentoring as important ways to instill a complete and proper understanding and application of organisational values to officers; in turn, those supervisors need to be assisted and reminded of the skills required and to reflect those values themselves. Supervision is not to be misunderstood: it is not about “watching over” but effectively guiding and teaching. The QPS needs to make sure these important matters are not lost among its many responsibilities.

I otherwise direct your attention to the detailed discussion of these matters in the report.

The report concludes with what I have defined as aims to be achieved by QPS in order to address the issues I have identified. The strategies to achieve those aims are also articulated, but of course these need to be reviewed and assessed against any existing or proposed strategies.

Most of the strategies are aimed at enabling officers and employees to stop and reassess their perspective on the values and ethics principles and understand how they may be effectively applied as they work together among the challenges of modern policing.