



The Commission of Inquiry into QPS responses to domestic and family violence

Submission to Commission of Inquiry

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1. Introduction

The Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc. (GCCASV) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence.

Our submission is based on GCCASV's collective knowledge and experience of counselling victim/survivors of domestic and family violence (DFV), and rape and sexual assault (SV) for over 30 years. During this time, we have provided support to complainants through the civil and criminal justice systems from seeking protection, reporting to police and progression through magistrates and district court.

We support trauma informed processes, that make it safer for the victims of sexual, domestic, and family violence to report to police, to be seen, to be heard and to be believed in order for their concerns to be formalised and progressed through the criminal justice system.

GCCASV did provide an earlier broader submission to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. This submission repeats some of that material but provides a more targeted focus on police and police culture as outlined in the Independent Commission of Inquiry's specific Terms of Reference.

In addition to presenting domestic and family violence material, this submission will also cover police responses to sexual violence - both intimate partner sexual violence in the context of domestic violence, and sexual violence committed outside of this context. We believe that this is pertinent as the same police culture and responses are encountered by women reporting sexual violence.

GCCASV endorses the implementation of the 89 domestic and family violence recommendations from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce contained in Hear her voice: Report One, Addressing coercive control and domestic and family violence in Queensland. GCCASV also endorses the adoption and implementation of the 92 sexual violence recommendations from Hear her voice: Report Two, Women and girls' experiences across the criminal justice system.

GCCASV endorses recommendations from the Domestic Violence Death Review Board reports and the recent recommendations of the Deputy Coroner in Doreen Langham and Hannah Clarke and her children.

As a member of the Queensland Sexual Assault Network (QSAN), GCCASV also endorses the recommendation in the QSAN submission to the Police Commission of Inquiry.

GCCASV will make further recommendations within this submission speaking to our experience and amplifying the voices of victim/survivors which we hope will inform the outcome of this Inquiry.

Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc.

GCCASV (formerly Gold Coast Sexual Assault Support Service) was founded on the Gold Coast in 1990. The agency is a feminist community based, not for profit, charitable organisation that has been providing free, confidential, specialist sexual violence intervention and prevention programs for more than 30 years.

Our vision is safe communities free from sexual, domestic, and family violence. GCCASV provides a safe, supportive, woman-centred environment in which sexual, domestic, and family violence survivors can begin their healing journey.

Since 2018, GCCASV has also delivered specialist counselling to domestic violence victim/survivors who may not have experienced sexual violence.

GCCASV's professional and qualified counsellors work with women aged 14 years and over and therefore have an eclectic and client-centred approach, which means they acknowledge that there are a variety of interventions and different approaches that will work for different people. We operate within a holistic, feminist framework, which means we always:

- Focus on the client's needs
- Work with them at their own pace to explore thoughts and feelings
- Provide a safe space to consider issues
- Respect individual coping strategies and help to find strategies not used before
- Provide choices and options when exploring any difficulties being experienced
- Help clients to gain control in their life
- Acknowledge power imbalances within society
- Acknowledge sexual violence as gender-based violence

The organisation also provides community education and training to the public, schools, and other professionals.

2. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That testing for appropriate attitudes and values in relation to gender, violence, race, and culture form a mandatory part of the QPS recruitment process and only people who meet service and community standards of behaviour are inducted.

Recommendation 2

That all QPS recruitment information portray the reality of Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Violence as routine, everyday police work.

Recommendation 3

That QPS promotion processes must involve the candidate providing examples to demonstrate how their attitudes and values have impacted positively on their policing.

Recommendation 4

That someone with a conviction for a domestic violence offence, or a history of being named as a respondent to civil domestic violence, should be automatically excluded from working as a police officer in Queensland.

Recommendation 5

That QPS co-design and co-deliver training with specialist DFV and Sexual Violence workers and those with lived experience, First Nations, CALD, disability, and other vulnerable groups and include a strong component on dispelling mythology and attitudes and values.

Recommendation 6

That Queensland Police undergo regular competency-based training in understanding and responding to domestic, family, and sexual violence in all its forms, and that this training always includes a strong attitudinal component.

Recommendation 7

That the principles of “Start by Believing” are embedded in the practice of all QPS officers to ensure effective engagement with victim/survivors in a trauma informed way from the first point of contact.

Recommendation 8

That QPS collaborate with Elders and First Nations organisations to enhance support and safety of victim/survivors of DFV and sexual violence in culturally appropriate ways

Recommendation 9

That QPS in conjunction with First Nations People co-design and co-deliver training that will enhance the cultural capability of all police officers particularly in relation to interviewing, responding, and engaging with victim/survivors of DFV and sexual violence.

Recommendation 10

That QPS review the translation and interpreting services it uses for First Nations peoples to ensure police officers are able to communicate appropriately and meaningfully with all First Nations peoples, including victim/survivors of DFV and sexual violence.

Recommendation 11

That competency-based training is developed and delivered in collaboration with specialist sexual violence services to prevent the reinforcing of unconscious bias within the QPS, and that training always include the voices of victim/survivors to ensure that this training is authentically trauma informed and victim centric.

Recommendation 12

That trauma informed, specialised sexual violence competency-based training in engaging with, interviewing, and communicating effectively with rape complainants is embedded in detective training and is ongoing.

Recommendation 13

That applications and cross applications for a Domestic Violence Order must be considered together and that cross orders should only be made in exceptional circumstances.

Recommendation 14

That QPS implement specialist DFV investigative squads and specialist oversight mechanisms to respond more effectively to keep victims safe and hold offenders accountable.

Recommendation 15

That specialist units within QPS are considered for adult sexual violence complaints to operate in the way that CPIU works in relation to child victims and historical investigations.

Recommendation 16

That QPS take strangulation cases seriously, as a red flag to homicide, assess risk and move to charge offenders accordingly.

Recommendation 17

That QPS undergo training on the seriousness of image-based abuse and its relationship to pornography, DFV and sexual violence to respond more effectively to victim/survivors.

Recommendation 18

That consideration is given to community lead awards and recognition for police officers who perform well, engage positively with victim/survivors, display appropriate attitudes and values in responding to DFV and sexual violence.

Recommendation 19

That Queensland police undertake training in recognizing Intimate Partner Sexual Violence, including its impacts, implications for risk assessment, and effective trauma informed police responses.

Recommendation 20

That Queensland police undertake training in recognizing elder sexual abuse, including its impacts, implications for risk assessment, and effective trauma informed police responses.

Recommendation 21

That QPS develop an accessible, clear, transparent, internal right of review process for victim/survivors regarding police decision making to not charge or to discontinue, including unsubstantiated and unfounded complaints. That the review is conducted by a more senior officer with outcomes clearly communicated to the victim/survivor.

Recommendation 22

That an independent DFV and Sexual Violence Commissioner, as an independent statutory office, be established to promote and protect the needs of victim/survivors of all DFV and sexual offences.

3. Commission of Inquiry

a. Cultural issues within the Queensland Police Service (QPS) that negatively affects police investigations of domestic and family violence

The vision of the QPS is Queensland as the safest state. Police officers will only be able to effectively prevent, disrupt, respond, and investigate when they operate from an appropriate attitudes and values base, immersed in reality not mythology. This will contribute to a positive and respectful police culture.

Mythology

Domestic, family violence and rape myths are pervasive in our community. The most recent National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS, 2020) found that the broader community didn't believe victim/survivors and had a range of unrealistic expectations to be met before a woman's allegation about male violence was considered believable.

Impact of mythology on QPS culture

Employees within the QPS are not immune to the broader community attitudes however the additional complexity brought by the dimension of power and control that is held within the institution magnifies misogyny and racism and impacts decision making and responses.

GCCASV clients confirm that they have witnessed firsthand this mythology reflected in the actions of some officers in relation to credibility, cultural background, disability, mental health, alcohol/drug consumption, and misconceptions about real victims and real offenders.

Ultimately police officers, immersed in the mythology, who adopt the 3 D's (Disbelieve, Discount and Dismiss) when responding to women reporting male violence are potentially giving offenders a "free pass" to continue offending.

Attitudes and values

The QPS must attract people who share the expressed formal QPS values:

- Integrity
- Professionalism
- Community
- Respect and Fairness

Attitudes and values must be a fundamental consideration at entry point into the QPS. Research shows that skills can be taught but attitudes and values cannot. The process of

building a police service where officers prioritise respect and fairness, and the community has confidence in this behaviour, starts at the point of recruitment.

Recruitment

Starting with the Queensland Police Service [recruiting webpages](#), in the *Are you the right fit?* section there are six (6) criteria listed for you to make a determination. “*Integrity*” is listed last, and “*use of force*” listed in third place. If the QPS is serious about attracting people with appropriate attitudes and values, then this needs to be reflected by placing “*Integrity*” at the top of the list.

QPS could better identify people who do not meet service and community standards of behaviour at the point of recruitment. Testing attitudes and values in relation to gender, domestic violence, rape, power, race, culture, and disability should be mandatory to gain entry. Only those candidates who successfully pass the attitudes and values test should advance to the academy for knowledge and skills-based training.

On the Queensland Police Service recruiting webpage section that describes “*life as an officer*” there is no commentary on DFV matters. Real police work is not “cops and robbers”, but DFV and SV. Recruits need to know the reality is much of their time will be spent policing in a DFV context. Emphasis of this reality in recruitment, interviewing, induction, and throughout academy training would be more likely to ensure that only those with realistic expectations about police work as well as appropriate attitudes and values are able to graduate.

In light of the current QPS culture, GCCASV does not support the recently announced initiative of adjusting the applicant age limit allowing 17-year-olds to apply to join the Police Service. GCCASV believes that a more positive police culture needs to be achieved before young impressionable people are brought into the ranks.

Recommendation 1

That testing for appropriate attitudes and values in relation to gender, violence, race, and culture form a mandatory part of the QPS recruitment process and only people who meet service and community standards of behaviour are inducted.

Recommendation 2

That all QPS recruitment information portray the reality of Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Violence as routine, everyday police work.

Promotion

Appropriate attitudes and values identified at point of recruitment need to be maintained throughout the course of an officer’s career.

When an officer is seeking promotion, attitudes and values questions must be asked by panel members. The candidate for promotion should have to clearly demonstrate how their appropriate attitudes and values have impacted positively on their engagement and investigation.

Recommendation 3

That QPS promotion processes must involve the candidate providing examples to demonstrate how their attitudes and values have impacted positively on their policing.

QPS officers who commit DFV

In a positive and respectful police culture there will be zero tolerance for officers within the QPS perpetrating DFV.

When Police Officers are themselves involved in DFV this presents increased risks and barriers for victim/survivors in terms of reporting to and engaging with police. Victim/survivors will have seen first-hand the loyalty their partner has engendered from police colleagues. Women have told GCCASV that they felt police were less interested in their safety and more interested in the offending police officer's career and mental health. This perception contributes to a lack of confidence in police responses and impacts victim/survivor access to justice.

When police officers commit DFV, this behaviour is not consistent with the Queensland Police Service's values of integrity, community, respect, and fairness.

Recommendation 4

That someone with a conviction for a domestic violence offence, or a history of being named as a respondent to civil domestic violence, should be automatically excluded from working as a police officer in Queensland.

Training

External recommendations for police DFV training have been on the agenda for decades, beginning with "Beyond these Walls" (1989), the Taskforce on Women and the Criminal Code (2000), Queensland DV Death Review Advisory Board Reports, and have been committed to in The Prevent. Support. Believe. Queensland's framework to address sexual violence—Action plan 2021–22) and various internal documents through to the current QPS Sexual Violence Response Strategy 2021–2023.

Despite numerous training programs having been rolled out, this doesn't seem to have significantly impacted police culture and response to DFV and Sexual Violence. Doing the same thing and continuing to deliver more inwardly focused training BY police TO police will not achieve a different result.

Internal police trainers may reinforce rather than challenge the current culture or status quo and the inclusion of token guest speakers has limited impact.

Meaningful collaboration in developing and delivering training with external stakeholders and specialist DFV and sexual violence services is essential to shift the culture and be realistic, transparent, and accountable. Police need to work with DFV and SV workers and learn from victim/survivors, First Nations, CALD, disability, and other vulnerable groups not just about them.

Police are the gateway to the justice system and their response at first point of contact will shape victim/survivor confidence and engagement with the system. The biggest fear for victim/survivors in reporting to the police is the fear of not being believed. If there is one simple way to improve victim/survivor satisfaction and safety, it is for police to start by believing.

This is why GCCASV, in collaboration with police in the South Eastern Region, introduced the “Start by Believing” training derived from the successful international campaign (see Promising Practice Section 4).

<p>Recommendation 5 That QPS co-design and co-deliver training with specialist DFV and Sexual Violence workers and those with lived experience, First Nations, CALD, disability, and other vulnerable groups and include a strong component on dispelling mythology and attitudes and values.</p> <p>Recommendation 6 That Queensland Police undergo regular competency-based training in understanding and responding to domestic, family, and sexual violence in all its forms, and that this training always includes a strong attitudinal component.</p> <p>Recommendation 7 That the principles of “Start by Believing” are embedded in the practice of all QPS officers to ensure effective engagement with victim/survivors in a trauma informed way from the first point of contact.</p>

b. Cultural issues which have contributed to the overrepresentation of First Nations people in the criminal justice system

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 5 times as likely to experience physical violence, and 3 times as likely to experience sexual violence, than other Australian women (Our Watch, 2014).

However, across the board there is under reporting of domestic, family, and sexual violence by First Nations women. In seeking justice and engaging with police, these women experience additional barriers including misidentification, discrimination, racism, fear of child removal, mistrust of authorities, and culturally unsafe practices.

In the [2016 Census](#), Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people made up 1.7% of the Gold Coast population. First Nation women make up 6% of the women supported by GCCASV (Annual Impact Report, 2020-2021).

These women have told us, and this is reflected in the WSJT report, that they have no trust in the system, are worried about interacting with police, don't want to talk to male police as this is not culturally appropriate, are worried about not being believed and taken seriously, and worry about being discriminated against.

Recommendation 8

That QPS collaborate with Elders and First Nations organisations to enhance support and safety of victim/survivors of DFV and sexual violence in culturally appropriate ways.

Recommendation 9

That QPS in conjunction with First Nations People co-design and co-deliver training that will enhance the cultural capability of all police officers particularly in relation to interviewing, responding, and engaging with victim/survivors of DFV and sexual violence.

Recommendation 10

That QPS review the translation and interpreting services it uses for First Nations peoples to ensure police officers are able to communicate appropriately and meaningfully with all First Nations peoples, including victim/survivors of DFV and sexual violence.

c. Capability, capacity and structure of the Queensland Police Service to respond to domestic and family violence

There is no single answer to addressing capability, capacity and structure of the QPS to respond to DFV. A multi-faceted response is required which includes competency-based trauma informed training, resourcing, specialisation, and meaningful collaboration with support organisations.

Training

If over 40% of police callouts are responding to DFV, then this percentage needs to be reflected as an equivalent percentage of all police training. The Coroners Court of Queensland Findings of Inquest into the death of Hannah Clarke and her children concluded that police officers were undertrained when it came to domestic violence and that the training was inadequate considering that DFV accounts for up to half of all police work.

QPS training must be trauma informed and culturally appropriate and move from knowledge based to competency-based training in understanding and responding to DFV and sexual violence. Training must include a strong attitudinal component.

All aspects of DFV and sexual violence including the gendered nature, power and control, predominant aggressor, risk assessment, lethality, traumatic impact, vulnerable populations, mythology, and social context must be understood and used to actively inform engagement and investigative skills.

When developing training, QPS must collaborate and involve stakeholders in intervention and prevention space. There are a range of specialist DFV and Sexual Violence services who are committed to improving safety for victim/survivors and can meaningfully contribute.

Recommendation 11

That competency-based training is developed and delivered in collaboration with specialist sexual violence services to prevent the reinforcing of unconscious bias within the QPS, and that training always include the voices of victim/survivors to ensure that this training is authentically trauma informed and victim centric.

Recommendation 12

That trauma informed, specialised sexual violence competency-based training in engaging with, interviewing, and communicating effectively with rape complainants is embedded in detective training and is ongoing.

Misidentification

Cross applications are taken when police don't correctly identify the predominant aggressor and decide who is in most need of protection. If the victim/survivor is defending herself, police may apply for an order against her as well or criminalise her if she has no visible injuries and he has a minor injury such as a scratch. This appears to be more common for an Indigenous or a CALD women with the Queensland Death Review (DFVDRAB, 2018) finding that a high percentage of the indigenous victims of domestic homicide had been charged as the offender.

Recommendation 13
That applications and cross applications for a Domestic Violence Order must be considered together and that cross orders should only be made in exceptional circumstances.

Specialisation and oversight

DFV outranks any other crime issue in Queensland in terms of occurrences and police time, but there is no specialist investigative capability and no specialist oversight. DFV is often treated as an issue that may be addressed through generalist policing, rather than a "real crime" issue attracting attention and specialist resources similar to policing bikie crime.

Specialisation is considered the gold star in providing appropriate, effective trauma informed responses in the area of violence against women. In the USA, it has been noted that sexual offence conviction rates are much higher than average (from 60-80%) within trained specialist units (The White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014).

Recommendation 14
That QPS implement specialist DFV investigative squads and specialist oversight mechanisms to more effectively respond to keep victims safe and hold offenders accountable.

Recommendation 15
That specialist units within QPS are considered for adult sexual violence complaints to operate in the way that CPIU works in relation to child victims and historical investigations.

Strangulation

Strangulation is a red flag to homicide as victims of strangulation are 750% more likely to become a homicide victim compared to victims who have never been strangled. (Glass et al., 2008)

All presentations of strangulation at DFV and sexual violence services may not be covered in 315A of the Criminal Code; however, police need to take strangulation cases seriously, assess risk and move to charge offenders accordingly. Apart from investigating and charging offenders, there is an ethical duty to warn victim/survivors about the immediate and long-term health consequences of strangulation.

Recommendation 16

That QPS take strangulation cases seriously, as a red flag to homicide, assess risk and move to charge offenders accordingly.

Image based abuse

Most image-based abuse is not reported to police. In Victoria, police recorded 2,055 image-based abuse offences in the four years to 2018–19 – at most, one for every 3,000 Victorians – yet studies show as many as one in four Australians have experienced image-based abuse ([Sentencing Advisory Council, 2020](#)).

Image-based abuse is usually only reported and prosecuted when some other offending brings that behaviour to the attention of police.

Women have told GCCASV that when reporting to QPS, officers have judged them, minimised their experience/s and viewed this type of abuse as less serious than “hands on” offences.

Image based abuse is a serious offence that has far reaching consequences into the future for victim/survivors and is linked to depression and suicidality (Henry et al., 2020).

Recommendation 17

That QPS undergo training on the seriousness of image-based abuse and its relationship to pornography, DFV and sexual violence to respond more effectively to victim/survivors.

Collaboration

Currently throughout Queensland there is a lack of formally funded and resourced models to improve collaboration between victim/survivors, support agencies, police, ODPP and Queensland Health. Improved cohesion and communication between various stakeholders can improve service quality, increase victim/survivor satisfaction, and improve safety outcomes.

Formal agreements, understanding roles and responsibilities, cross training, building trust between stakeholders and recognising promising practice can build confidence and an evidence base for future prevention and intervention models.

Recommendation 18
That consideration is given to community lead awards and recognition for police officers who perform well, engage positively with victim/survivors, display appropriate attitudes and values in responding to DFV and sexual violence.

Intimate Partner Sexual Violence (IPSV)

Intimate Partner Sexual Violence (IPSV) is often considered by police as either DFV or Sexual Violence. IPSV is BOTH DFV AND SV and responses need to reflect this dual reality.

Intimate Partner Sexual Violence is sexual violence occurring in a broad range of intimate relationships including married, unmarried, dating, heterosexual and same sex relationships. It includes any form of unwanted sexual activity with a current or former partner that is without consent or due to force, intimidation, or threat (direct or implied) (Winters, 2008).

IPSV is invisibilised through the persistence of rape mythology and society’s reluctance to acknowledge the issue. However, IPSV is one of the most common forms of sexual violence, has a long-lasting traumatic impact on victim/survivors and is a high-risk factor for domestic homicide with a physically abused women also subjected to forced sex being over seven times more likely to be killed (Campbell, 2003).

Recommendation 19
That Queensland police undertake training in recognizing Intimate Partner Sexual Violence, including its impacts, implications for risk assessment, and effective trauma informed police responses.

Elder sexual abuse

Elder sexual abuse includes the coercing of an older person through force, trickery, threats, or other means into unwanted sexual activity and sexual contact with elders who are unable to give informed consent.

Elder sexual abuse is almost invisible being the least reported and substantiated form of elder abuse. However, reports of this crime are increasing in some sectors with 1488 assaults reported by aged-care providers in 2021, and 500 cases of sexual abuse of aged care residents reported in the last three months of 2021. Serious physical assaults made up 80 per cent of complaints, 19 per cent were sexual assaults, and 1 per cent were both (ACQSC, 2021).

Despite the focus on aged care, the majority of elder sexual abuse occurs in the context of DFV and is still hidden. This is sometimes referred to as “domestic violence grown old” and presents significant challenges in effective, trauma informed responses, investigation, and prosecution.

Recommendation 20

That Queensland police undertake training in recognizing elder sexual abuse, including its impacts, implications for risk assessment, and effective trauma informed police responses.

d. Adequacy of the current conduct and complaints handling processes against police officers

GCCASV considers the current conduct and complaints process to be inadequate.

Internal complaints

This inward facing process is not transparent and accessible to victim/survivors, who are often not aware of their rights in relation to questioning decisions or complaining about processes or lack of process.

Many women have told GCCASV that they would like to complain about not being believed, not being told about the status of the case, and a general lack of communication. These women have also told GCCASV that they are concerned about “making a noise” for fear that may affect progression of their case through the system.

This lack of a visible, robust pathway for complaints may lead victim/survivors to the media, which in turn invites police to be defensive.

An in-house response to complaints means that officers are charged with reviewing and improving systems within the existing police culture. Processes occurring behind closed doors, mirroring the dynamics of DFV, do not lead to public confidence.

Recommendation 21

That QPS develop an accessible, clear, transparent, internal right of review process for victim/survivors regarding police decision making to not charge or to discontinue, including unsubstantiated and unfounded complaints. That the review is conducted by a more senior officer with outcomes clearly communicated to the victim/survivor.

External complaints

When safety is compromised and processes are not working well for victim/survivors who are reporting to or engaged with police, as well as other agencies and organisations, these women currently must raise issues with every individual organisation or agency.

There is no central body providing oversight or management of complaints so currently it is up to the traumatised victim/survivor to negotiate with multiple individuals and systems. To streamline issues and complaints a role such as a Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner, similar to the UK model, would be invaluable as a central touch point.

The Commissioner could be an independent voice for victim/survivors and provide support and early intervention when system responses fail - which could potentially save lives. The Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board Annual Report (DFVDRAB, 2018) stated that murdered women had on average 28 contacts with numerous agencies prior to the homicides, indicating that these deaths were predictable and preventable.

Issues and concerns need to be identified earlier with an audit of responses on the way through the system, rather than waiting until someone is murdered to identify “service gaps”

Recommendation 22

That an independent DFV and Sexual Violence Commissioner, as an independent statutory office, be established to promote and protect the needs of victim/survivors of all DFV and sexual offences.

4. Promising Practice

GCCASV seeks to work collaboratively with police, sharing information and assessing responses to sexual violence based on the specific needs of victim/survivors. Where gaps have been identified in service delivery to victims; GCCASV has worked with police to develop and implement strategies that resolve identified problems, improve responses, and enhance safety and access to justice for victim/survivors.

Some of the Promising Practice examples of collaboration at a regional and state level are outlined below.

Start By Believing

Start By Believing is a global public awareness campaign created by 'End Violence Against Women International' to change the way people respond to sexual assault. Thousands of people around the globe have joined the campaign.

This campaign has been widely engaged by criminal justice agencies in the United States on the basis that Start by Believing is appropriate for this cohort because case outcomes will only change when police and prosecutors start from the presumption that a sexual assault report has merit, and then follow the evidence through the course of a fair, impartial and thorough investigation.

The campaign was brought to Australia in 2019 by GCCASV and was quickly adopted by A/C Brian Wilkins and the South East Region as an important tool in organisational change within the Queensland Police Service. An official QPS launch occurred in early 2020 along with delivery of the training package outline to senior staff.

The commitment reflected the intention of QPS to be proactive including the delivery of:

- Information sessions to middle level managers in both Gold Coast and Logan Districts, primarily those involved in plain clothes and vulnerable persons duties; and
- Provide information (train the trainer) sessions for two persons from each District to then facilitate information sessions as deemed appropriate by respective District management.

The arrival of COVID stalled further dialogue as training opportunities were placed on hold. A strong alliance was formed with senior detectives as the organisations worked together to improve responses to victim/survivors and in recent months the QPS began to refocus on Start By Believing, with the initially developed training package outline sent to People Capability Command for review and further development.

Project Engage

In October 2021, the Queensland Police Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence to co-locate a female detective in the

centre one day per week. The purpose of accessing a female police officer onsite at GCCASV is to:

- Remove barriers and increase access to justice for victim/survivors of sexual violence
- Provide a safe location for police to positively engage with vulnerable victim/survivors
- Increase reporting rates and reduce attrition in cases of sexual violence
- Enhance satisfaction of victim/survivors who interact with QPS

The benefits of Project Engage also extend well beyond that of the direct client contact with QPS staff directly observing trauma informed and victim centric practice in action, being immersed in a feminist workplace with a priority on equality and respect, and the cross pollination of ideas and knowledge.

Intimate Partner Sexual Violence – Investigating Sexual Assault and Corroborating and Understanding Relationships Evidence (ISACURE)

ISACURE is a highly regarded training course that is sought out by QPS officers in senior roles wanting to improve responses to sexual violence across the lifespan. Throughout the two weeks of ISACURE, a variety of community service representatives are invited to present. Since March 2021, GCCASV has facilitated six sessions on Intimate Partner Sexual Violence as part of the ISACURE training course. Delivered in collaboration with a senior member of the Vulnerable Person's Unit, this partnership has enabled GCCASV to amplify the voices of survivors with support from QPS to translate that messaging into practice examples and actions.

IPSV was not originally a component of ISACURE, however the QPS recognised the role of sexual violence in domestic violence and more seriously domestic homicide. This led to an invitation for GCCASV to present, initially with a focus on Start By Believing which quickly developed into a more in-depth presentation on both IPSV and collaboration between police and community for improved responses to victim/survivors of sexual, domestic, and family violence.

The sharing of approaches and understandings of what it means to be victim-centric and trauma-informed is an important foundation of the course and a reflection of the commitment of QPS to improve responses to victim/survivors.

Match.com collaboration – Technology Facilitated Violence

In July 2021, GCCASV was invited to collaborate with the Media and Public Affairs team of Queensland Police Service on an innovative campaign addressing technology facilitated sexual violence.

Promoting safety without further silencing victims is a unique challenge in the prevention space. From the outset the communication with the team was professional and proactive.

The team demonstrated their commitment to excellence and professional development by engaging with GCCASV to learn about the issue and ensure the campaign would have real impact. They also demonstrated a longer-term commitment to prevention by raising public knowledge of Sexual Violence Awareness Month with a well-timed campaign launch.

From the beginning the project was well planned, showed empathy and skill, and allowed for in-depth discussions and explorations of not only the issue but the experiences of victims. GCCASV contributions were heard and valued, and the team worked hard to ensure the final product was victim-centric and trauma informed.

Trauma Informed Interview Room

To address increased reporting, QPS in the Gold Coast district have formed a specialist sexual assault crime team dedicated to the investigation of historical matters. Taking on board best practice, and in collaboration with GCCASV, a small sitting area and a separate statement room has been set up using a trauma informed environment checklist. This collaborative and innovative approach is expected to assist with engagement, and focus, minimise triggering and maximise safety of complainants attending the station.

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