

7<sup>th</sup> July 2022

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Executive Director

Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence

**RE: WHEQ Submission into Submission to the Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence**

Women's Health and Equality Queensland (WHEQ) has been supporting women's health and wellbeing in Queensland for over 40 years. WHEQ provides free support services to women in QLD with experiences of domestic, family, sexual and other forms of violence (DFSV).

An anonymous survey of key women's services within Queensland was conducted to collate responses to the key Terms of Reference identified in the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service (QPS) responses to DFSV.

Approximately 71 participants across different organisations responded, and overall, the themes of this response align with the key areas that WHEQ believe need to be addressed through the Inquiry.

We submit to the Inquiry that there are cultural and systemic issues within QPS that impact on the identification of and responses to DFSV. It is strongly recommended that QPS develops and implements a gender-based violence primary prevention framework and action plan that looks both internally and externally to shift police culture and systems. One of the four drivers of gender-based violence is male peer relationships and cultures (personal and professional) that 'emphasise aggression, dominance and control.' [Our Watch, Change the story](#) highlights how 'structural factors – such as poor organisational cultures, inadequate policies and insufficient penalties – can reinforce, support or excuse violence..., particularly in male-dominated organisations and contexts.'

A gender-based violence primary prevention framework and action plan that embeds strategies and evidence-based approaches through accountability and commitment will increase the access, equity and fairness of process and ensure consistency of QPS responses. It must be developed in consultation with gender-based violence prevention experts and independently evaluated to assess effectiveness. The action plan should also consider the role that the police can play in the primary prevention of gender-based violence in the communities in which they work. This will support QPS to meet their [operational goal](#) of 'Work(ing) with each other, the community, and partner agencies to strengthen our (QPS) responses to, and prevention of, domestic and family violence.'

All policy frameworks, accompanying action plans and recruitment processes, alongside gender-based violence prevention, must also include a strong understanding of intersectionality, the impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and skills in trauma informed practice. This will support community and victim-centric policing approaches.

In response to the Independent Commission of Inquiry into QPS responses to DFSV Terms of Reference we recommend that the Inquiry consider;

Terms of Reference #1
<p>1. Zero-tolerance Leadership, in word and action, is fundamental to improving QPS culture.</p> <p>1. Shift police culture through accountability and commitment to increase the access, equity and fairness of process and ensure consistency of QPS responses.</p> <p>2. Police systems need to be established to provide trauma responsive and collaborative approaches.</p> <p>3. Child safe standards to be applied to Police system and approaches.</p> <p>4. Clear Policy approach to access and diversity, improved ongoing training and development for Officers in reflective practice.</p>
Terms of reference #2
<p>1. A preparedness of the police to negotiate the role they play in discreet local communities including Meaningful investment in culturally restorative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led solutions and working in partnership with community Elders and leaders.</p> <p>2. Creating non carceral solutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>3. Imprisonment as last resort. Accountability to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system as outlined in <i>Closing the Gap</i> Target 10: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15 percent.</p> <p>4. Elders and Police Liaison Officers (PLOs) should hold decision making positions in local policing matters.</p> <p>5. Significant investment in developing trauma-informed policing responses as it relates to domestic, family and sexual violence.</p> <p>6. Supporting independent research and evaluation to identify systemic or institutional bias and racism within the QPS in the context of DFSV response and investigation.</p>
Terms of reference #3
<p>2. Recruitment and selection – pre-assessment; specifically assessing for bias and tolerance toward gender-based violence and to what extent this will affect judgement, decision-making, social competence and collaboration.</p> <p>3. Change legislation to allow for a single statement process across all forms of DFSV and ensure statements are able to be completed in a safe and trauma-informed environment, with suitably trained officers and specialist support.</p>

4. Commitment to reasonable adjustments to taking statements in accessible and trauma responsive manner taking into account disability, language and cultural needs. And responsive processes that use innovative solutions such as the body worn camera trial.
5. Clear policy framework and accompanying action plan that requires QPS to understand and address the causes and drivers of gender-based violence, intersectionality and embed appropriate systems responses. All policy frameworks, accompanying action plans and recruitment processes alongside gender-based violence prevention must also include a strong understanding of intersectionality, the impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and skills in trauma informed practice.
6. Multidisciplinary team approaches to co response to DFSV such as DFSV Specialists, Mental Health and legal professionals, alongside community Elders.
7. Standardised screening for cognitive disability (including FASD) for all first responders and complete review of the DV PARF and commitment to using the CRASF.

#### Terms of reference #4

1. Establish an independent Victims Commissioner as an independent statutory officer with powers to advocate for the respect, recognition and inclusion of victims of crime victims of crime in the justice system, as both a prosecuting and investigatory function.:
  - a. Providing oversight of QPS and its compliance with The Charter of Victims' Rights, set out in the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009*
  - b. to provide leadership and give expert advice to QPS about laws, policies, practices and services for victims of DFSV;
  - c. to analyse and evaluate, at a systemic level, policies and practices relevant to victims of DFSV and the performance of QPS in appropriate response and investigation
  - d. oversee complaints about QPS from victims of crime in the context of the Victims' Charter.
2. QPS should facilitate targeted and appropriate engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, peak multicultural, migrant and refugee community organisations, along with other groups who have historically faced barriers to accessing appropriate resolution of complaints including youth organisations, LGBTIQ+ organisations and disability organisations to ensure complaint process is victim centric.

#### Terms of reference #5

QPS needs to have a zero-tolerance position to domestic, family and sexual violence both as an employer, through a public education campaign and as a responsible public entity subject to the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

WHEQ is member organisation of peak body Ending Violence Against Women Queensland (EVAWQ) and provide our support for the submission to the Inquiry by EVAWQ.

It is imperative that QPS embed the recommended changes to meet community needs and align with key strategies outlined in the [QPS Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026](#), including:

'Advance the use of evidence-based policing strategies to deliver victim-centric, trauma-informed responses to victims and design strategic prevention activities'

'Strengthen the integrity and professionalism of police to enhance community satisfaction, trust and confidence in the QPS, in an environment of evolving community expectations.'

'Champion collaborative approaches to promote outcomes which are victim-centric and trauma-informed for vulnerable people, and enhance social cohesion and community safety.'

'Promote a workforce which is flexible, inclusive and diverse, to enhance engagement and performance.'

WHEQ thanks the Commission of Inquiry for the opportunity to provide a submission and looks forward to working collaboratively to create safe, supportive and equal communities for all people.

WHEQ notes that the short time frame for submissions may have significantly limited the number and diversity of submissions provided to the Inquiry, making it particularly challenging for some victim/survivors to provide evidence. WHEQ recommends a much longer consultation time with greater accessibility and engagement opportunities.

Sincerely,

Emma Iwinska

CEO