

Summary prepared by the Commission of Inquiry into QPS responses to domestic and family violence

Case study 3

In 2020, an investigation by the Juniper Investigation Team found that six officers in the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] had engaged in negative workplace behaviour, including systemic bullying, against 15 other officers over a protracted period of time. The investigation was based on 72 interviews.

The officers who engaged in negative workplace behaviors and/or bullying were the Officer-in-Charge (a Senior Sergeant), a Detective Senior Sergeant, two Sergeants, a Senior Constable and a Constable.

The Officer-in-Charge

The worst of the behaviour was carried out by the Officer-in-Charge who was found to have engaged in repeated negative workplace behaviour towards nine complainants over a 13 year period from 2006 to 2019. Further to those complainants, there were a significant number of other officers who identified that they had been the subject of unacceptable workplace behaviour by the Officer-in-Charge but did not wish to make a complaint.

The behaviour engaged in by the Officer-in-Charge included yelling, making threats, swearing, openly criticizing members, making inappropriate comments, referring to members by inappropriate names, allowing inappropriate material to be displayed in the office and extending favoritism to certain members over others. The investigation found that this created an unsafe working environment where discord and enmity flourished.

In addition, the Officer-in-Charge was found to have engaged in systemic bullying of three complainants. One of the bullying complainants was a female Senior Constable. It was her complaint which instigated the entire investigation. Two other officers, in addition to the Officer-in-Charge, also bullied that same woman.

The behaviour towards her occurred at a time she was on sick leave and included accusing her of faking work-related injuries, and threatening to suspend her drivers licence as a result of her injuries; facilitating the service of a summons on her whilst on sick leave; harassing her when she was off duty and setting unrealistic tasks; signing off on adverse work performance reports without considering any response by her (in circumstances where the reports were factually incorrect; yelling at her and refusing to provide appropriate professional assistance to her.

The second bullying complainant was a Sergeant. The Officer-in-Charge's behaviour towards him included offensive and demeaning commentary; unjust criticism; setting unreasonable timeframes and constantly changing deadlines; changing work arrangements to deliberately inconvenience denying access to support

Summary prepared by the Commission of Inquiry into QPS responses to domestic and family violence

and guidance; denying development and reliving; preferential treatment of others; calling the officer a fuckhead and heavily criticizing his decision making.

The third bullying complainant was also a Sergeant. The Officer-in-Charge's behaviour towards him included workplace alienation; lying about what staff wanted with respect to rosters causing the Sergeant to be ostracized; failing to acknowledge his departure from the workplace; failing to provide feedback and inappropriately criticizing him to others.

Particular examples of sexist, misogynist and racist behaviour by the Officer-in-Charge

The Officer-in-Charge did not create an inclusive workplace and allowed sexist material to be displayed including an image female in swimwear titled 'Tap and Go' and five fridge magnets of females in lingerie to be displayed on the work fridge. There was one female officer working in the unit at that time.

Other examples of sexist and misogynist behaviour by him included:

- He sent pornographic images to officers in the station; and
- He said, "These lickens will never get a job in this office" in respect of two female job applicants.

He also engaged in racist behaviour. He referred to an officer in the station as "Osama" or "Towel Head" and allowed mock certificates for completion of courses including Al Qaeda Car Bombing course, Covert Al Qaeda Operative course and Suicide Jacket Making course to be displayed on the work notice board.

Outcomes

Many of the affected officers sought transfers from the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to escape the behaviour. A number suffered adverse psychological conditions as a result of their time in the Squad.

During the investigation, the Officer-in-Charge continued in his role and was provided opportunities to relieve in higher roles. He was ultimately dealt with by way of local managerial resolution and has since been promoted to Officer-in-Charge of a larger station.

The female Senior Constable whose bullying complaint instigated the investigation felt she had no choice but to transfer to a different workplace when she was informed that the Officer-in-Charge (and one of the other officers who had bullied her, a Sergeant) were both returning to the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] after relieving in higher roles elsewhere. Her career trajectory has been damaged by having made the complaint.