

12/09/2022, 18:20

Queensland police defends force following anti-police sentiment sparked by death of Indigenous woman Aunty Sherry - ABC News

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Queensland police defends force following anti-police sentiment sparked by death of Indigenous woman Aunty Sherry

By [George Roberts](#)

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The death of Indigenous woman Aunty Sherry in police custody earlier this month has sparked public protests and anti-police sentiment. (ABC News: Tim Swanston)

Queensland's Police Commissioner has defended the state's force as being "in no way racist," following a wave of anti-police sentiment sparked by the death of an Indigenous woman in custody last week.

Several hundred protesters marched in Brisbane's streets to Queensland's Police Headquarters on Friday night, demanding an end to Indigenous deaths in custody.

The protest was organised in response to the death of 49-year-old Aunty Sherry Tilberoo, an Indigenous

Key points:

- Several hundred protesters marched Brisbane's streets for the second time calling for an end to Indigenous death in custody

12/09/2022, 18:20

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woman who was found [unresponsive in a cell at the Brisbane watch house last week](#).

She had been held in the watch house for several days on drug and theft charges and was awaiting transfer to a correctional centre.

Friday's vigil was held outside Queensland police headquarters where protesters lit candles to remember the 49-year-old woman.

- Police Commissioner Katarina Carroll says the force is "in no way racist"
- Police Minister Mark Ryan says the Government has invested a record amount into police resources



Protesters held candles outside the Queensland Police Headquarters to remember Aunty Sherry. (ABC News: Tim Swanston)

Some protesters blamed deaths in custody on police negligence and "systemic" racism.

Aunty Sherry's death sparked a wave of anti-police sentiment, with protests sparked the week before resulting in police being [accused of "aggressive" behaviour as they made multiple arrests](#).

'We are in no way racist'

While the woman's death remains under investigation by the Ethical Standards Command, police said autopsy results indicated the woman had died of natural causes.

Speaking from the Brisbane suburb of Morningside, Commissioner Katarina Carroll said she was upset to hear some protesters labelling the force as "racist".

12/09/2022, 18:20

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"I am really upset about that," Commissioner Carroll told the media.

"We've done the right thing here all along.

"We've been extraordinarily open and transparent about this investigation, like we should be and always are.



Queensland Police Commissioner Katarina Carroll says the state's police force is "in no way racist".

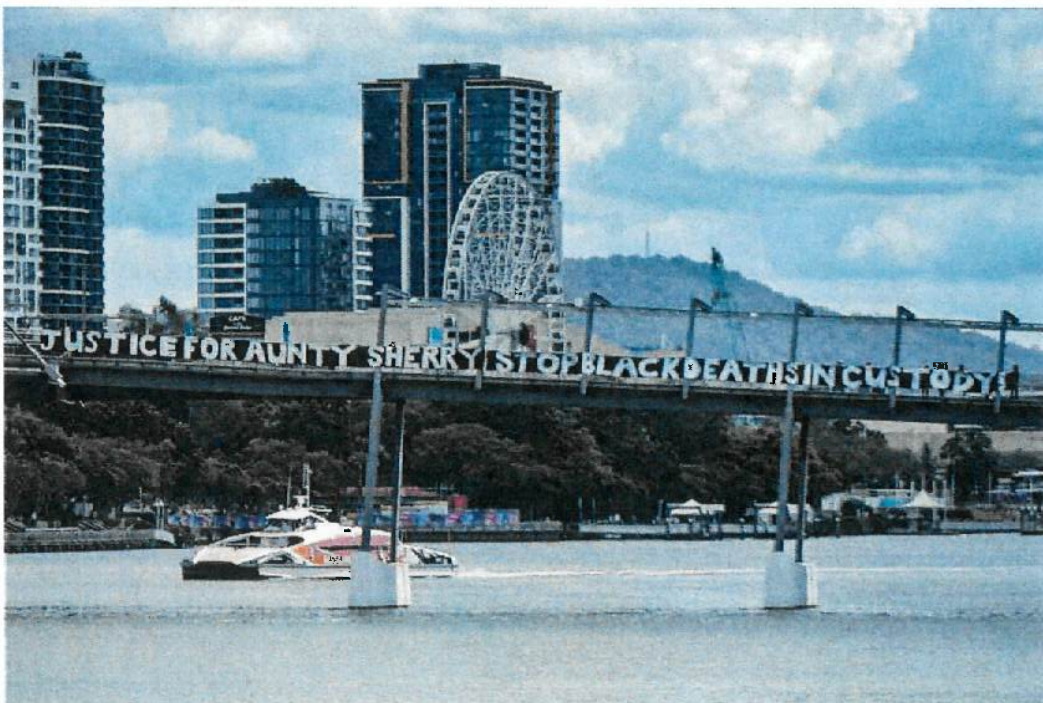
(AAP Image: Rob Maccoll)

"Sadly, she did pass away — sadly, it was of natural causes, but we are in no way racist.

"That does concern me."

There have been calls for police to release CCTV footage from the night Aunty Sherry died, but Commissioner Carroll said that had been referred to the coroner.

The Commissioner acknowledged reports of protestors describing the police service as racist.



A banner on Brisbane's William Jolly Bridge was seen in the lead up to Friday's vigil. (ABC News: Chris Gillette)

12/09/2022, 18:20

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"I think there is a select few that might say that, but in some ways ... it's not the right thing to always say that when we are trying to work very hard together," she said.

"So, please, let's settle ... let's make sure that the corner gets to do the hearing or the investigation and we'll go from there."

She said, overall, Queensland police have a good relationship with the majority of the community.

It comes as Queensland's Police Minister Mark Ryan said the Government had invested a record amount of money into the police force across the state.

"Over the last five years our Government's been rebuilding the police service," he said.

"We've been putting on more staff — over 600 new staff — and we've given police a record budget, it's up 20 per cent."