

Summary prepared by the Commission of Inquiry into QPS responses to domestic and family violence
Primary source material provided by the QPS in response to NTP 2.057, Item 8.

Case Study 8

In 2019, a female Senior Constable made a complaint to the Ethical Standards Command about a male Detective Senior Sergeant, who, as the Officer in Charge of the Criminal Investigation Branch of her station, was her supervisor.

The investigation was assigned to Juniper who identified 26 QPS staff members who had been harassed or bullied by the Detective Senior Sergeant. Of the 84 allegations that were made in the course of the Investigation, 80 of the allegations were substantiated. The vast majority of behaviour constituted sexual harassment, sexual assault or predatory behaviour directed at junior female members. The majority of the women were under the supervision of the Detective Senior Sergeant when they were targeted.

The conduct occurred primarily over a three-year period between 2016 and 2018 however also included historical complaints, the earliest occurring in 2002. The conduct included the Detective Senior Sergeant committing nine sexual assaults, one attempted sexual assault, sexualised communications over messaging platforms, and sexualised comments being made by him within the workplace. It included the Detective Senior Sergeant touching and invading the personal space of the women he supervised, giving them unwanted shoulder massages, touching them regularly by placing his hand on their shoulders, arms or waist, playing with their hair, hugging and kissing them. In all instances the conduct was unsolicited, unwanted and initiated by the Detective Senior Sergeant. Most of the women were under his direct supervision. Some of the conduct occurred when the Detective Senior Sergeant was acting as a Commissioned Officer.

Examples of the conduct included:

- on a nightshift, following a female officer into the women's bathroom. He stood behind her while she was in the cubicle. She asked him, *"what the fuck are you doing in her?"* He winked at her, laughed, and said, *"Don't be like that I thought you told me to come in here for a blow job."* The officer yelled at him and he left. She was shaking but returned to work and finished her shift.
- Approaching a female Senior Constable that he was about to interview, standing next to her and sliding his hand over her bottom, up her back, and onto the bottom of her bra. During the interview, another male officer who was on the panel passed a note to the Detective Senior Sergeant with the word, *"loose"* written on it.
- Walking up behind a female police officer who was under his supervision, hugging her from behind and cupping her breast.
- Telling a female officer he supervised, *"Fuck you look so hot right now, I'd love to slam you into those cabinets, what I could do to you."*
- Referring to a female administration officer as, *"baby"* and telling her that her *"body"* looked good in the clothes that she was wearing. On one occasion, while she was talking to another person in the reception area, he stopped and put his hand around her waist. When he left he moved his hand and brushed it across her bottom.
- After a panel interview with a female administration officer, he told another officer, *"go up and have a look at the AO2 in District Office, she has great tits and great ass."*
- Attempting to have a junior female Constable he had targeted second to his unit. The officer did not want him to be her direct supervisor and she told her current supervisor of the communications she had received from him. Communications included. As a result, the Constable was not released for the secondment however she was advised that her professional development would be delayed by 6 to 12 months.

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The investigation found that the Detective Senior Sergeant's behaviour and management style was well known in the District. In relation to the extent of the knowledge of Senior Management, witnesses indicated that the Detective Senior Sergeant's behaviour was so well known in the District that *"it seemed impossible senior management did not know of his actions"*. This belief was supported by an incident on a District training day where the Assistant Commissioner asked the Detective Senior Sergeant to leave the room and then addressed officers regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. The relevant Assistant Commissioner denied having any knowledge of the behaviour when he was asked in the course of the Investigation.

The investigation also revealed that numerous witnesses did not report the Detective Senior Sergeant's conduct as they feared reprisal from him or that the matter would not be appropriately investigated. The Detective Senior Sergeant inferred to his staff that he had a connection to commissioner officers which created a culture of fear and a perception that he would be protected from all disciplinary matters. It was noted in the investigation report that:

"...Despite QPS policies regarding victimisation, the officers believed they would be disadvantaged and targeted by the [Detective Senior Sergeant] for making a complaint. Staff were more willing to disclose after [he] was removed from the office under a Management Action Plan..."

The investigation also found that the Detective Senior Sergeant was promoted to leadership positions for which he lacked the appropriate skills or experience:

"There is no justification or accountability provided in relation to the [Detective Senior Sergeant] possessing the required leadership skills to supervise a District Office of over 30 staff. The [Detective Senior Sergeant] previously worked in significantly smaller work units within [Command names] and managed limited numbers of staff. It would be reasonable to state the [Detective Senior Sergeant] lacked general leadership and supervision experience."

In finding that 80 of the 84 allegations could be substantiated, the investigator commented that,

"the [officer]'s rank and position allowed him to have unfettered access to junior and vulnerable subordinate staff. Some of the sexual harassment and predatory behaviour allegations appeared opportunistic, but the [officer] always targeted junior female members."

Shortly after being informed of the allegations the Detective Senior Sergeant went on medical leave, and medically retired in 2019. In 2021, a post-separation disciplinary declaration of dismissal was made against the Detective Senior Sergeant.