

Report into interviews conducted with police officers and civilian officers in relation to the Independent Commission of Inquiry into the Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence.

Introduction

1. My full name is Mark William Ainsworth and I am a former Queensland Police Service (QPS) officer with 38 years of service, resigning from the QPS in May 2018 to accept a position with the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission as the Deputy Commissioner from May 2018 until July 2021 when I retired.
2. During my police service I performed duties as a general duties officer, surveillance officer, investigator, District Duty Officer, Detective Inspector, Crime Services, Detective Superintendent, Regional Duty Officer and Director of Corruption Operations at the Crime and Corruption Commission. I performed external roles at the Australian Crime Commission as the Queensland Manager and also the National Head of Determination for the High-Risk Crime Groups. I also had the opportunity to work on the Fitzgerald Commission of Inquiry, the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry and the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption.
3. During my policing career I attended numerous Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) incidents as well as investigating and overseeing DFV murders.

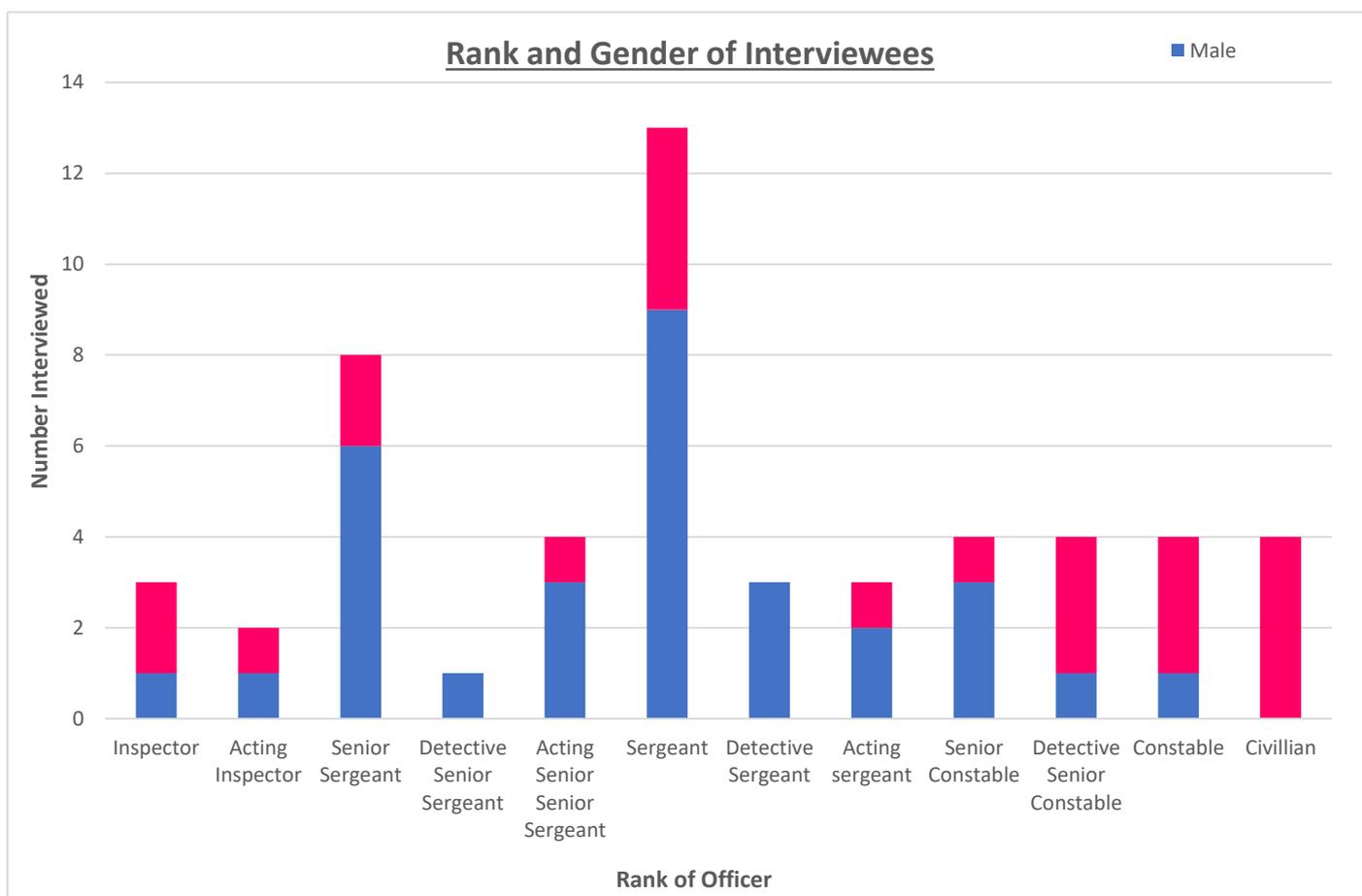
Engagement by the Commission of Inquiry

4. On 18 June 2022 I was engaged by the Commission of Inquiry into the QPS responses to DFV (COI) as a contract investigator. My role was to provide assistance in relation to the Terms of Reference titled, 'Whether there are any cultural issues within the QPS that negatively affect police investigations of DFV.' **Annexure 'A'** is a copy of the engagement requirements from the COI in relation to the role I undertook. **Annexure 'B'** is a copy of the suggested questions asked of interviewees. It should be noted other questions were also asked of interviewees dependent on their roles in the QPS.
5. In order to fulfill the engagement requirements, initially I made contact with officers known to me within the QPS to determine their interest in being interviewed. Throughout the process these officers also advised me of other officers they felt maybe interested in speaking with me. The process was for these officers to contact them and provide those officers with my contact details should they wish to be interviewed. In addition to this I did have some officers contact me off their own volition seeking interview.

6. Interview appointments were made with 58 officers, however due to a variety of reasons five officers withdrew from being interviewed. The reasons included officer sickness, court commitments and a change of mind in wanting to be interviewed. The cooperation level by officers interviewed was exceptional and clearly highlighted their willingness to speak about their experiences in dealing with DFV, what the challenges were, what they considered needed reviewing regarding process, policy, resourcing, training and recruitment. These issues impacted on the QPS culture in dealing with DFV. Officers also provided their views regarding referral services and early intervention strategies to try and reduce DFV in the community.
7. The officers interviewed appeared genuine in their responses and did not openly go out of their way to criticise the QPS, but to offer honest suggestions on what needed to change in order to benefit front line officers, DFV affected persons and the ability to deal more effectively with DFV matters.
8. It was made clear from the outset that there was no compulsion for any officer to be interviewed and it was purely voluntary on their behalf. It was explained to all officers that the Commission were happy to proceed on a confidential basis, in that the officers' names were not to be mentioned in any document forwarded by me to the Commission. **Annexure 'C' refers**. It was explained to officers if they wished to provide their names they could and their names would be provided to the Commission. In total five officers out of the 53 interviewed were happy to provide their names.
9. In order to maintain confidentiality, officers were allocated a Person Number and that was the only reference to officers. The person number and associated officers name was retained by myself and not passed to any third party. At the commencement of the interview some antecedent type questions were asked including the officers age, years of service, rank, Region/District, roles undertaken during their policing career including any remote or regional service. At the conclusion of asking these particulars, officers were asked if they consented to the digital recording of their responses to my questions. If officers consented then the digital recording commenced after the antecedent details were obtained.
10. Interviews were conducted of officers from across the state in order to obtain the various geographical challenges relating to DFV. In doing so officers from one and two person stations, First Nations communities, transient communities e.g., tourist regions, all ranges of socio-economic areas, regional centres, major cities, multi-cultural communities, stations located on the border with New South Wales and the Northern Territory. Staff from the following Regions were interviewed, Brisbane, South Eastern, Southern, North Coast, Central and Northern. Staff from the following areas were also spoken to; State Crime and Intelligence Command, Communications Culture and Engagement Division, the Legal Division (Prosecutors) and the Road

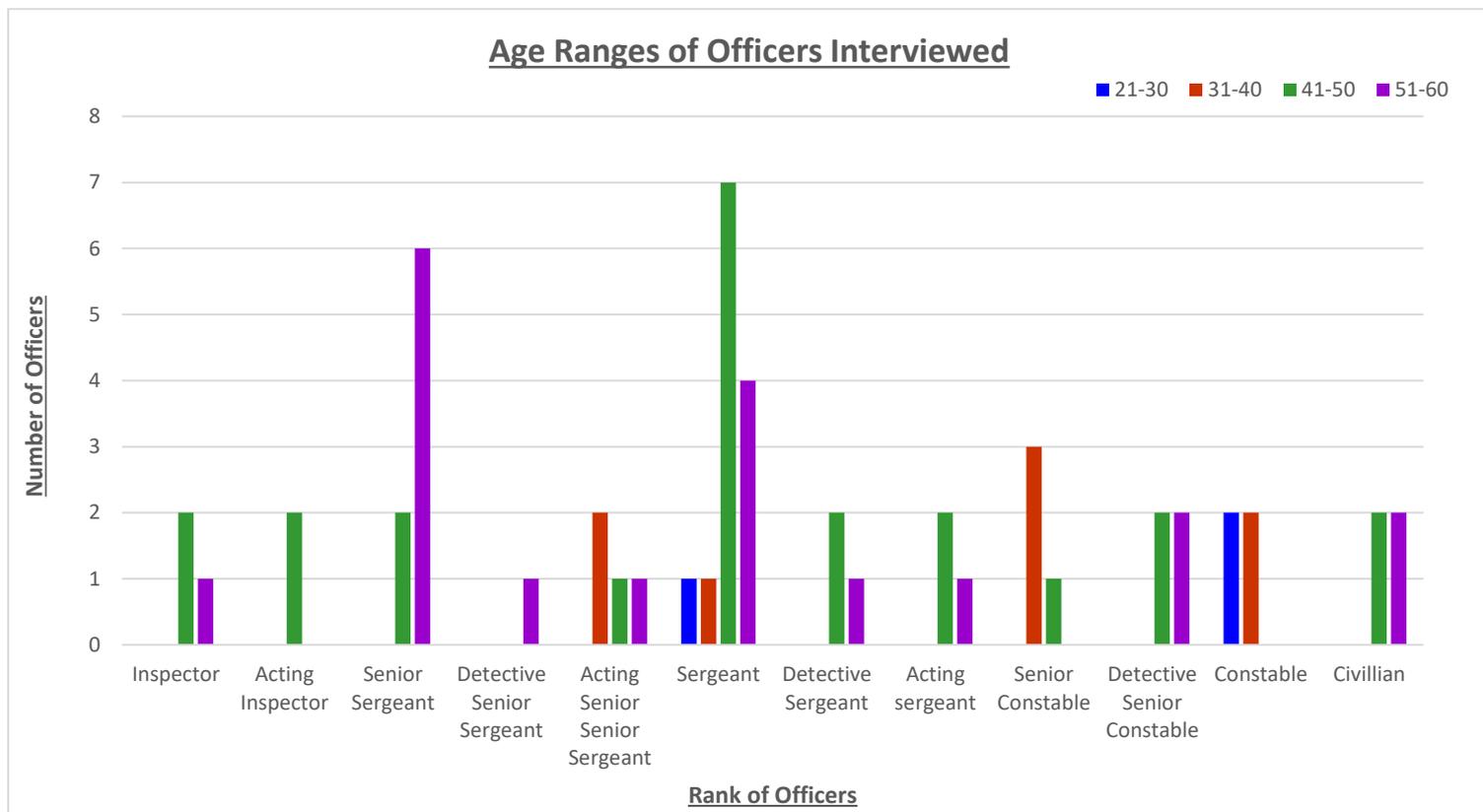
Policing and Regional Support Command (Policelink staff). Annexures ‘D’ to ‘Y’ contain a summary of the interviews I conducted.

11. A focus of the interviews was largely on front line officers dealing with DFV ranging from general duty officers to shift supervisors, officers in charge of stations, District Duty Officers, Patrol Services Inspectors, Regional Duty Officers, Detectives from the Criminal Investigation Branches and Child Protection Investigation Units, Prosecutors, Intelligence Officers, Vulnerable Persons Unit staff, High Risk Teams staff, civilian counter officers, policelink staff, Domestic Violence Liaison Officers, and Domestic and Family Violence Coordinators.
12. Graph 12.1 depicts the ranks and gender of officers interviewed. Consistency in numbers across genders was attempted to be maintained, however the five withdrawals of interviews impacted on the balance. Years of service ranged from five months (as a member joining from another police service undertaking the three-month bridging course at the Academy), to officers having up to 37 years in service.



Graph 12.1 – Rank and gender of interviewees.

13. Graph 13.1 depicts the number of officers at each rank that were interviewed across the state.



Graph 13.1 – Age ranges of the officers interviewed.

Cultural issues

14. The investigation of cultural issues that may negatively impact on QPS officers dealing with DFV was explored through the asking of nine questions specific to culture. A wide range of responses were provided covering a variety of issues. Officers were asked whether or not DFV is a priority for the QPS and about 98% believed it definitely was, as seen by recent media reporting, coronial reporting, emails from the Commissioner of Police and the scrutiny placed on officers to deal with DFV appropriately. Most officers believed the current focus on DFV is at the detriment of other policing activities including pro-active policing activities to reduce crime, road policing and the provision of a safe environment for the community.

15. Whilst officers mostly embraced the focus on DFV, a number of concerns were raised which included the need to resource the frontline services appropriately to deal with the focus of DFV, including an honest and open review of Demand Management and the actual numbers of front-line officers

to effectively respond to the ever-increasing DFV jobs. Officers commented on the perceived lack of support from the Senior Executive of the Service relating to appropriate resourcing, lack of adequate training in relation to DFV and the lack of serious consultation with front line officers when developing policy, procedures and training packages with respect to DFV and other policing matters. Many officers feel the policy makers have little to no operational experience in DFV and the impact policy has on resources is not considered.

16. In line with the current DFV focus by the QPS many stations now have DFV as a standing agenda item at shift briefings where they discuss DFV matters from previous shifts and are briefed on high risk DFV persons and addresses as well as outstanding DFV breaches. In addition to the focus of the QPS, a number of officers queried the response by other Government agencies, Non-Government agencies and the Community in dealing with this critical community issue. Comments were made regarding most other agencies working business hours only and leaving the QPS to deal with the issue 24/7.
17. The question of lack of respect towards women (DFV aggrieved) was asked. More than half of the officers interviewed had not seen this occur in their stations or during their service. Conversely, some officers have seen this type of behaviour directed at female aggrieved particularly when the aggrieved will not disclose information at DFV jobs, the withdrawing of DFV applications or lodging DFV complaints out of vengeance. The comments made are believed largely to be made out of frustration however the comments do not stop the police from doing their job to the best of their ability. It appears from the interviews conducted this is not a wide spread issue and probably more relates to a case-by-case situation.
18. The influence of police culture and practises relating to DFV provided a pretty standard response in that it was the Officer in Charge, Shift Supervisors and District Duty Officers who set the culture. A number of officers said it was up to the officers themselves to contribute towards the culture of the station in order to provide the best response to the community.
19. Many officers said there is currently a culture of fearfulness by officers attending DFV that they are making the right decisions. This culture takes away the confidence of some police officers in making a call that the matter is not DFV. Some front-line police and supervisors just take the necessary DFV action to cover themselves without undertaking proper investigations, which may support the fact that the matter is not DFV. There appears to be a strong ideology currently with police to take out an order to 'protect yourself', which is not healthy and contributes to DV fatigue of officers. Several areas within the State provided examples of where fellow officers are currently facing disciplinary action over alleged lack of action at DFV matters, and this has a significant impact on other officers in the manner in which they deal with DFV.

20. The majority of officers interviewed believe the culture of police officers towards DFV is worsening over time. Some police will try and avoid DFV at all costs largely due to process from start to finish, including convoluted paperwork and data entry, service of notices, scanning of documents for court and the belief of officers that the QPS is the dumping ground for DFV from other agencies. This combined with the sheer and increasing number of DFV jobs is causing officer fatigue and frustration. Combined with the high level of scrutiny over front line officers attending DFV, affecting officer decision-making abilities and confidence leads to a negative culture. Other officers believed the culture is improving with a better understanding of DFV legislation, policies and procedures, the seriousness of DFV leading to an enhanced understanding of DFV and improving the response provided by front line officers.
21. The culture towards DFV by older police officers compared to younger officers was explored with the officers interviewed. Overwhelmingly, these officers believed the older officers are more risk averse in dealing with DFV and have a better ability to see the bigger picture than the younger officers. It is mostly the older officers scrutinising DFV work completed by the younger officers and some concerns were raised about younger officers attending DFV with preconceived ideas and wanting to complete the job in order to get to the next job. A lot of this was put down to lack of adequate training in DFV and the heavy DFV workload facing officers. Whilst the younger officers are mostly enthusiastic, sometimes their ability to thoroughly investigate DFV is lacking and the older officer's step in to ensure the process is completed to the best level they can achieve.
22. During the course of the interviews with front-line officers the most common issues they believe impact on the culture of police dealing with DFV is listed as follows:
- DFV Fatigue – affected by the volume of DFV matters officers are attending. This impacts on officers taking shortcuts and not investigating matters thoroughly to establish the elements of a DFV matter.
 - Convoluted legislation, policies and procedures pertaining to reporting, data entry, documentation service on DFV aggrieved and respondents, which is perceived to increase the timeliness of completing a DFV matter and impacts on resources. The taking of written statements/affidavits, completion of PPN's in writing then typing the same and serving on both DFV parties, the scanning of documents then emailing to relevant courts all impact on police. The duplicitous process is overbearing.

- Officer emotional burnout from attending voluminous DFV matters is not assisted by the negativity in the media and social media directed towards officers in dealing with DFV.
- DFV of Convenience – where it is perceived by many officers that some reported DFV matters pertain to custody matters for pending Family Law Court or property settlements and are not considered genuine DFV matters, which can have impact on genuine DFV matters.
- The current oversight and scrutiny on front line officers attending DFV matters, is impacting on officers' ability to make informed decisions, impacting on their confidence levels and also creating an environment of fear of making a mistake. The fear is not only the consequences they could face, but also consideration for the aggrieved person if the officer has not made the correct decision.
- Repeat Calls for Service – where officers are regularly returning to DFV matters involving the same aggrieved and respondent, they do all of the required paperwork then both parties are back together calling police again. This, associated with withdrawal of complaints by the aggrieved causes frustration for many frontline officers.
- Incorrect coding of jobs – Police may receive a call from a neighbour reporting an argument occurring at the next-door residence. Officers stated that more times than not the job will be coded as a 312 (DFV matter) and on arriving at the job address they find there is no evidence to support the DV Legislation; it could be two friends arguing. To change the job code back to a 313 (disturbance) an authorisation process is required and on some occasions reporting is also required.
- Resources – insufficient operational resources to meet the demand of reported DFV matters. This issue is not common for all locations but certainly is an issue for at least 80% of the officers interviewed in their respective areas.
- Aggrieved and Respondent behaviour at DFV matters – police get extremely frustrated when attending DFV matters where the aggrieved and/or the respondent will not provide details or disclosure to police, particularly in the case of a neighbour calling the matter into police.
- Court Process – frustrations where deals are agreed upon by the Prosecutors and lawyers representing the respondent relating to removal of certain conditions in order to have a matter settled, without consultation with the applicant officer. Frustrations at court penalties imposed on respondents which do not act as a deterrent for respondents.

23. Officers spoke further about challenges facing them in dealing with DFV. Some officers stated that DFV is becoming so complex it is difficult to keep up with changing legislation, policy and procedure and urgent adequate and regular training is needed to be provided to front line staff. The increase in DFV matters is such in some areas that DFV matters are queuing up for the oncoming shift to attend and consequently are not being dealt with in a timely fashion. In some areas District Duty Officers are responding to Code 2 DFV matters due to the fact other crews are already attending other DFV matters, this particularly occurs on the night work shifts. Officer safety is a concern across the state where sometimes single officers are attending DFV matters particularly in country areas and also in larger Regional areas as outlined above. Whilst some stations have a policy of no single officer to attend DFV other areas do not have that luxury.
24. The current cost of living crisis affecting many Queenslanders is a concern to front line officers in particular how this will impact on calls for service for DFV matters. The use of Body Worn Video (BWV) is seen as a positive by almost all officers, but they are frustrated that most courts will not accept body worn video statements from aggrieved, witnesses or respondents. Officers believe the BWV would provide the court with the emotions at the scene of the DFV incident and would also provide statements made at the time of the incident of an aggrieved who may later show some reluctance to continue with a matter. The use of BWV is seen as a positive way in reducing police time in dealing with DFV matters if accepted by the Courts.
25. In general, officers feel very well supported by their Officers in Charge, Shift Supervisors and DDOs when it comes to dealing with DFV. A number of officers were interviewed from the Moreton Police District and feel the SDRP model in that area needs urgent review. Officers stated they do not feel supported by the new model and seem to have less police on the road for peak periods to deal with DFV than what they did pre the new model. Officer safety is a concern particularly on the nightwork shift where officer numbers seem to be at the lowest.
26. Most officers provided suggestions on how they believe the cultural attitude towards DFV could be improved. Overwhelmingly police linked the challenges in dealing with DFV from start to finish as the greatest issue that needed review in order to enhance the culture. This included red tape reduction in the associated paperwork, data entry and other processes in dealing with DFV, enhanced training in DFV, further and greater support from Domestic Violence Liaison Officers, VPU, HRT with a more operational focus. A number of officers said a greater joint agency response to DFV could also enhance the culture of dealing with DFV where solutions and pro-activity in reducing DFV may occur.

Vulnerable Persons Unit/High Risk Teams/DVLO/DFVC

27. Many officers stated that the QPS has recently commenced Vulnerable Persons Units (VPU) in various locations along with 15 High Risk Teams (HRT) throughout the state. There appears to be no consistency in staffing in the VPU teams and front-line officers have demonstrated through interview, little understanding of what the VPU and HRT actually do. A number of officers said the marketing of these units within the QPS needs to be enhanced in order for front line officers to understand what these areas could do to assist and to also enhance the level of respect by front line officers to staff within these units. Most officers believe the VPU needs to be more operational focussed to assist front line officers attending DFV matters, which would require 24/7 staffing. Several officers stated that the modelling for these units needs to be focussed on staff with specialist DFV skills, passion and knowledge of DFV.
28. Nearly all interviews stated the concept of the HRT is good but again it needs to be marketed to front line officers. Officers believe the concept of having partner agencies sit at the table regularly with QPS representatives to address High Risk offenders is a step in the right direction.
29. The Domestic Violence Liaison Officer (DVLO) role appears to have no consistency in operation across the state. Some areas do have a standalone DVLO whilst other areas have a police officer performing the DVLO role more as a portfolio role in addition to their general duties' role. Some DVLO's were put into the role without any training or desire to be in the role. Nearly all officers believe the DVLO position needs reviewing with consideration given to making the position a 24/7 position with sufficient staffing to assist operational policing in dealing with DFV. Obviously, consideration would need to be given to appropriate locations of DVLOs when considering the tyranny of distance in some regional and remote areas as well as a new role description.
30. Most officers stated there is a disconnect between DVLOs and front-line officers as they do not seem to have an operational focus. Officers see the role of the DVLO currently as an auditing and checking of front-line officer DFV applications and associated paperwork. Challenges exist for portfolio DVLOs in meeting requirements for the role as well as meeting requirements for their general duties' role. One area has a policy for all DFV matters to be checked by the portfolio DVLO within 24 to 48 hours of the DFV. Currently that officer cannot meet the time frames and when they go on leave there is no replacement to take over the role, hence a huge backlog of matters to be checked on returning from leave.
31. Several DFVC officers feel undervalued by front line officers and management alike and some believe their roles are not well marketed within the service. One area described a situation where First Year Constables undergo an induction session and the DFVC is not included as part of that session, missing an opportunity on marketing what the DFVC role undertakes

and assistance it can provide to new officers. The DFVC liaises and supports stations DVLO's. The DFVC position also checks DFV paperwork and in one area the DFVC has concerns about the proper identification by front line officers of the aggrieved and respondents. The officer put this down to lack of training and understanding by officers of DFV legislation, going from DFV to DFV, not investigating matters sufficiently and nominating an aggrieved person in order for action to be taken, and for the officers to cover their backsides.

32. Some DFVC officers attend DFV Court to follow up with aggrieved persons and also attend management meetings between Magistrates and prosecutors but again there is no consistency in this approach.
33. A review is needed on the DVLO, DFVC, VPU and HRT units to ensure consistent role descriptions and approach and to ensure the right people with the right qualifications are in those positions.

DVF Support Services/Referrals

34. Most areas in the State have DFV Support Services and again most of these services operate business hours only. There are some services who operate 24/7 and 99% of the police interviewed are aware of the support services in their areas. Most of the officers interviewed were satisfied with the services offered by these groups however some officers relayed accounts of a lack of support for aggrieved persons and respondents.
35. A number of concerns were raised by officers with the performance of some DV Support Services after hours where police have sought assistance in obtaining emergency accommodation. Several officers have commented that they have been told by DV Support Services staff that they do not provide emergency shelter for male aggrieved, leaving male aggrieved feeling they are not supported in being DFV aggrieved persons. Some officers were of the view that some DV Support Services operate in silos instead of working together, often driven by funding competitiveness.
36. One officer who volunteers for a DV Support Service said there needs to be a review of Government funding to 'DV support 'groups. She said different DV support groups do not know what other groups do and sometimes they compete against one another. She said she would like to see the QPS run an Expo where these groups attended and provided information on what they do – this would assist people in knowing what is available out there for DV assistance and could also lead to development of a refedex of services across the state.
37. A number of the police interviewed commented about the DFV referral process utilised after attending a DFV. Police cited some referral agencies will attempt to contact aggrieved persons on a couple of occasions. If they do not contact them, they will just send out brochures to the aggrieved and the

referral is then closed. Officers are not sure this is the correct process in order to support the aggrieved. Proper follow up could reduce calls for service in the future. Some police believe the referral system is broken and needs urgent review. Officers were also realistic in that they said it could be the agency funding/resources but whatever it is it needs urgent attention.

38. First Nations and rural and remote communities have different challenges pertaining to DV Support Services and Referral Agencies where some police believe staff at these agencies are not familiar with the First Nations Culture or the tyranny of distance. One common issue regarding referrals in First Nations communities is locating the aggrieved/respondent who can be very transient. Many people do not have phones or emails and live rough, making the only workable form of contact is to have boots on the ground. This can be a challenge at times and disadvantage the people concerned.

Training

39. 98% of interviewees stated that training in regards to DFV was inadequate, with little face to face training. Officers believe online learning has been the focus of a lot of police training over the years and DFV is no exception. Some officer supported the concept of online learning whilst others stated it was more of a tick the box exercise for the QPS to say that training had been provided. Conversely most officers interviewed said the latest Coercive Control online training was very good in that it contained material relevant to first response officers. The only negative comments were that it would have been better to have been delivered face to face to allow officers to ask questions and engage in discussions.
40. Several junior officers interviewed stated they did not think the Academy training in relation to DFV was adequate and it did not prepare them for real life DFV scenarios. The officers believed more scenarios-based training delivered by experienced front-line officers who could talk about DFV experiences and challenges would be more beneficial. An officer who completed the three-month bridging course at the Academy earlier this year, spoke on behalf of his colleagues who also attended the same bridging training, stated that the only DFV training they received was the completion of an online learning product. He stated whilst there was no difference in attending a DFV matter, the legislation, policies and procedures in Queensland were different. He felt the training in DFV was definitely inadequate for officers in his situation.
41. Officers provided a number of recommendations in relation to DFV training:
- DFV training needs to be conducted face to face with the content of the training being developed with the assistance of front-line officers who attend DFV matters.

- Training should be provided by officers with recency in dealing with DFV matters to provide more credibility to the process.
- DFV training should be done in conjunction with Firearms/OST training (refresher training).
- DFV training should be scenario based utilising BWV to demonstrate a good response to a DFV matter and then a poor response where open discussions can be entered into.
- The review of recent Coronial Findings should be included, as should an aggrieved/respondent to discuss their views on police response and their stories of being involved in DFV.
- Presentations from DV Prosecutors and DV Support Services would also be a good inclusion.
- Consideration of inclusion of communication skills, empathy, how to conduct a proper investigation at DFV jobs.
- Scenario based role play assessment of officers attending training.
- Sensitivity training for police working in First Nations Communities – how to understand their culture – challenges of an aggrieved reporting a DFV – shame, fear and the culture of all are family in the First Nations communities.

Recruitment

42. Some officers believed the recruitment process is not working well, with beliefs the wrong people are getting into the job. Some older officers interviewed believe policing is now treated as a job not a career. Older recruits who have previously held two or three jobs are reluctant to take advice from senior officers. Some officers believe a review on recruiting is required in order to recruit people who want to make policing a career not just a job.
43. One officer has previously sat on recruitment panels as a civilian panel member. She believes people selected to work in the QPS should have life experiences and believes people aged 18 years and younger should not be considered. She believes on some occasions people were recruited just to make up the numbers and in doing so the right people were sometimes not selected. She believes the questions at interview for possible new recruits need revisiting – instead of asking operational questions e.g., a scenario-based question involving use of a firearm, more of a focus should be placed upon communication skills, empathy, general knowledge and what life skills they have. She believes the scenario-based questions can be addressed during training if the person is selected.

First Nations Communities/Multi-Cultural communities

44. A number of officers from First Nations communities were interviewed. All of the officers interviewed stated working in a First Nations Community was a great policing experience however most said they were not prepared for the culture. None of the officers had ever received any cultural training regarding the community perception to DFV. Several officers stated violence in their respective communities is a way of life and reporting rates of First Nations people is low due to their culture of normality pertaining to violence.
45. A female officer stated she spoke to a nurse in the community who told her that most DFV victims she sees at hospital will not report the DFV as it is assumed to be a way of life. She said the First Nations policing experience was more of a learn as you go experience.
46. Interviewees who worked in First Nations Communities and multi-cultural communities provided information on some of the challenges they face in dealing with diverse cultures:
- Many officers stated the police response to DFV in the First Nations Communities is different to what occurs in regional or City centres. If the violence is a 'fair fight' generally no DFV will be taken out. There is a big reluctance of people involved to report DFV to police or to even communicate with police regarding this issue. The usual response on attending DFV matters in the First Nations Community is 'Nothing happened, don't want to talk to police.'
 - Another officer stated his area is very multi-cultural and has a low socio-economic population which impacts on their DFV calls for service. He said it is not unusual to have one aggrieved who may have four orders out against four different respondents. His staff utilise interpreters to break down language barriers several times a day and this resource is working well in breaking down communication between parties.
 - He said they never hear from the Cultural Diversity Unit and that this unit could assist operational police greatly with education of police and the various cultural communities about DFV.
 - Several officers said education to various cultural communities including First Nations and other communities was urgently required to ensure they are aware of legislation in Queensland pertaining to DFV.
 - Several officers said a lot of cultures have no idea of the legislative requirements and are happy to continue to behave in relationships as per their cultural norms.

- Most officers stated a challenge in their areas is the First Nations Culture where some members still see females as property and they can be dealt with accordingly by males. Community education is also required to change this mindset.
- One officer said as an OIC of a First Nations community it is critical to get to know the elders in the community and other community members, get to know their culture and become involved in their culture to ensure people in the community know who you are and your willingness to learn about their culture. He said you become part of the community and you work together to rectify problems in the community.
- One officer provided an example of a DFV training day in his area recently whereby supervisors were trying to encourage officers to listen more carefully to the aggrieved to break down the police-v- them barriers and talk to the aggrieved about other occurrences in their relationship. The training demonstrates through a live case of what can be done if you take the time to sit down and chat with the aggrieved. E.g., Remote First Nations Community where the culture of treating women badly seemed to be a part of the culture and accepted by a lot of female aggrieved.
- The officer was called by the Queensland Ambulance Service about an incident at the local hotel where the aggrieved was assaulted by the respondent by throwing a mobile phone at her head causing a serious head wound. The officer attended the hospital and the aggrieved was very anti-police and did not wish to make any complaint. The officer persisted and spoke to her for about 25 minutes where he interrogated her about issues behind the scenes in their relationship. She opened up about being burnt with a blowtorch on several occasions by the respondent, numerous assaults, robbery and other criminal offences. During this time, she was visibly shaken and kept stating she was very scared of the respondent but could not do anything to the point where she said: 'I love him, I know he will kill me someday, but I love him.'
- The whole conversation was recorded on BWV which clearly showed the demeanour of the aggrieved including her immense fear of the respondent and her version of previous incidents were recorded. The officer returned to the station and worked back through dates to find previously reported DFV calls to police where due to the lack of cooperation by the aggrieved, matters were recorded as a DV other or No DV. He was able to pull these together then went and arrested the respondent on several DV related charges.
- The Criminal matters were referred to the CIB who preferred multiple serious criminal charges sometime later. The Magistrate gave bail to the respondent in relation to his DV charges. The aggrieved was furious at the police officer for doing this and approached the officer the following day and abused him for arresting the respondent, she then threatened

to cut her throat. The officer took out an EEO and had the aggrieved assessed. Several days later the aggrieved contacted the officer and provided a 25-page written statement covering off on issues in her marriage for the previous two years.

- The police officer then relocated the aggrieved to a local Women's shelter for her own protection, this shelter was well utilised by police for relocation purposes. On this occasion some of the workers at this shelter were friends with the respondent and tried to convince the aggrieved to withdraw her charges against him.
- Police were informed and contacted another DV Support Service for assistance to fly the aggrieved to Adelaide to be with her mother to ensure her safety. The DV Support Service refused the request and even refused to spend \$300 to send the aggrieved to Cairns or Townsville, to enhance her safety.
- Eventually through intervention by police and the local hospital the Royal Flying Doctors Service flew the aggrieved to Cairns.
- This example was provided to highlight some of the difficulties in remote First Nations Communities pertaining to culture, the close-knit community who can be related to one another or know one another, the difficulty in relocating aggrieved persons, and the lack of understanding by some DV support services of culture and community life in these areas. He stated education of these support agencies is required to ensure all people are treated equally.

47. One officer said there should be specific training for police about to work in First Nations Communities to prepare them for what they will encounter. Such training could prevent turnover of staff who transfer to an Indigenous community not knowing what to expect, not liking it then leaving, which is an issue in some of those areas.

48. He said training in First Nations Cultures needs to be undertaken by the elders of the community conjointly with the OIC of the station. He believes there needs to be consideration of a new vacancy filling mechanism where applicants for positions can be told exactly what to expect, the change to their and their family lifestyles as well as the positives to ensure the right person is a candidate for the job. This would save the service money.

Media

49. One officer said she is concerned regarding the negativity in the media about the QPS and their response to DV. She believes the media run articles without all the information and their negativity is impacting on front-line officers. She said police are human and do make mistakes, however the

media sometimes portray police were lazy or did not want to do anything pertaining to DFV.

50. A more senior front-line officer believes in current times the QPS officers get DFV right 99 times out of 100 but for the 1 % they get wrong the media castigate the service, sometimes unfairly. Police are fed up with this when the real issue with DFV is the people involved in the DFV themselves.
51. Several officers commented that recent negative media reports of police also impacts on police who are doing a good job. Calls for DFV service are increasing and this officer sometimes wonders if the media attention is correlated to this increase.

Police Communications Centre

52. A number of officers supported the initiative of having a DFV coordinator located at the Police Communications Centre. It provides a go to place for police seeking advice out of daytime officer hours. Several officers interviewed in Northern Region, Central Region and Remote communities have used the services of this person and all spoke highly of the initiative and suggested it could be rolled out across the state to all Police Communication Centres.

Prosecutions

53. Several Police Prosecutors were interviewed and a couple stated there is no lack of enthusiasm by police but more a lack of competence in properly completing what is required. They said in relation to DFV and associated paperwork they see the lack of training of front-line officers is obvious.
54. They see documentation where elements of offences have not been adequately covered. One officer said in his view whilst police in the location he works at are very keen, they are let down by a lack of knowledge and appropriate training. E.g., AOBH is the common linked criminal offence in DFV and when he receives the brief of evidence where elements are not covered which are pretty basic, he gets frustrated. He said as a prosecutor he does discuss deficiencies in briefs with the relevant officers and the OIC to try and rectify issues. He stated there is no failed prosecution committee in the area he works.
55. As a prosecutor in his current area, he stated 65 – 85% of Court matters he deal with is DFV related which include predominantly police applications and breaches. Challenges for him in prosecuting DFV matters are:
 - i. Poor standard of paperwork coming through to him to prosecute on; and
 - ii. Obvious lack of training in the completion of DFV paperwork.

56. He stated plea bargaining regarding DFV does not occur in his area. He said he has the authority to drop or alter charges or conditions but is reluctant to do so with DFV. He said he will not enter into plea bargaining where a request to drop conditions is made in order to plead guilty.
57. Civilian Prosecutors are being used to prosecute DFV matters where police officers are respondent/aggrieved because senior police prosecutors are not prepared to do the job so delegate to civilians who in some instances have had no exposure/training in DFV matters.
58. One prosecutor said there needs to be enhancements to police prosecutions in that they have more timely discussions with arresting officers regarding charge amendments so there can be consistency in decision making and consideration regarding possible outcomes for aggrieved persons if matters of DFV are neto'ed or conditions watered down.
59. The prosecutor believes there is a need for specialist DV prosecutors and they certainly do not have one in her area. The prosecutor noted:
- i. There is no consistency in Magistrates considering DV matters – differing views on what constitutes DV and what does not – acceptance of oral evidence of aggrieved in Court.
 - ii. Magistrates will not accept anything other than written affidavits or statements – impacts on police time- interpretation of legislation e.g., what is a DV and what is not.
60. Frustrations in dealing with various Magistrates relating to DFV due to a lack of understanding of the DFV legislation process e.g. The officer provided an example of a Magistrate in her area that would not decide on applying full conditions on a DFV as sought by the police officer and as stated by the Prosecutor in Court. This Magistrate would demand a full brief of evidence including the requesting police officer to attend Court and provide evidence pertaining to the conditions. She stated this was occurring up to 3 to 4 times a day and officers would become angry that they had to spend more time completing a brief and giving evidence when the request for conditions was already there in writing. She said different Magistrates have different nuances which can sometimes impact on the already heavy workload of police in dealing with DFV.

Courts

61. A large percentage of officers interviewed believe that DFV should be considered as a crime where police attend, identify the respondent, arrest the respondent, complete the QP9 and forward the QP9 with the BWV to prosecutions to assist the court making decisions. First appearance at the Court the Magistrate makes conditions to the respondent which remain in place to either plea of guilty or contested matter is concluded.

62. Several officers believe negative attitudes by some Magistrates towards cross-orders removes fairness of police in dealing with DFV's where there is evidence both parties have committed DFV breaches.
63. They also commented that Courts need to deal with DFV matters more expediently instead of granting mention after mention. Mentions are handed out too lightly. If the respondent does not appear in Court, the Magistrates tend to mention the matter, police then have to locate the respondent to issue them with a Notice of Adjournment and continue to do so until they appear in Court. This further increases the workload of police in serving Notices of Adjournment. The officer queried whether service acknowledged email be considered.
64. Deals done between Prosecutors and Defence lawyers' water down orders. Deals are usually done in relation to watering down conditions to avoid a trial and provide less court time. Why are such deals permitted when front line police do the hard work to address the DFV then matters are watered down for the purposes of expediting the Court Process? Does this provide a safe environment for the Aggrieved?
65. Several officers stated the Courts could be more supportive in dealing with DV matters. One officer said his area has a Magistrate who will strike out matters for the simplest of errors e.g., Officers ticking the wrong box on service of applications.
66. He said their court will not accept BWV as statements of the aggrieved/witnesses or the respondent – full type written affidavits or statements are required.
67. Several officers raised there should be a system similar to dealing with Children in Court, Section 93A, in aggrieved giving evidence in Court. This would prevent angst for victims facing their perpetrator in Court and may result in less withdrawals.

DFV Rhetoric

68. Many police officers including female officers said they are frustrated with the DFV focus on woman and children at the expense of males and same sex couples. They stated woman are not always the aggrieved and the gender of the person should not be a consideration when dealing with DFV. Each case has to be treated on its merit. Police are now seeing a more males reporting DFV. People believe males, females and same sex couples are now finding their voice re DFV reporting. People feel they are being listened to and not judged. Whilst it is accepted more females are aggrieved in DFV, there are also males and same sex couples who deserve the same recognition as an aggrieved person. Several senior officers were concerned that this rhetoric influences the judgement of first response officers who attend DFV and automatically assume the aggrieved is the female. This can impact on their investigation initially.

69. A lot of officers are frustrated with the community, Government Ministers, Government Agencies and DFV support agencies referring to Violence against Women when talking about DFV. There is little to no reference of male aggrieved and definitely not enough about same sex DFV matters. Police believe this rhetoric does not encourage males or same sex couples to make DFV complaints and believe this rhetoric needs to change ASAP.
70. One officer said people of the same sex orientation are reluctant to report DFV and he believes that the community perception of these sort of individuals has continued on from what occurred many years ago. He said community and police education is required to have these people treated equally and to allow them to have a voice when it comes to DFV complaints.
71. The same officer believes male aggrieved is very much under reported and the rhetoric around females mostly being aggrieved is not helping anyone. Police do not really care what the gender of the aggrieved is, they will treat them equally. He said there are some bad men out there but equally there are some bad women out there. He is a firm believer that if the community is going to make steps forward regarding DFV, the female rhetoric must cease. He said respondents need consideration and for someone to listen to them to try and step out their negative behaviour and perhaps prevent further DFV. He said these conversations are not occurring enough. Take the gender out of the argument and see what really causes DFV.
72. Many officers believe there needs to be a language change in relation to DFV, forget the gender and refer to people as Aggrieved and Respondents. Whilst women are mostly aggrieved in this day and age some police believe gender needs to be removed in order to remove any bias and enhance a more integrated approach for both males, females and same sex couples.

Other matters

73. Quite a few officers spoke about ramping at hospitals by the Queensland Ambulance Service impacting on police staff, in that if they convey an injured person to hospital they also join the ramping queue again losing a car on the road. It is becoming prevalent that police officers attending DFV matters are required to convey an injured party to hospital, where if they join the ramping queue then the relevant area is down one car crew and another crew has to take over the DFV matter.
74. A Senior officer said a serious area of concern pertaining to DFV is officer well-being. She said she is constantly worried about the effects on police officers who spend the shift going from DV to DV trying to intervene on arguing parties, sorting out issues with people who have been married 20 years, sometimes seeing extreme violence, then going home to their families. She said whilst that is their job, and she knows there are Human Support

Officers, Police Chaplains, and other resources to assist police there is definitely not enough of a focus on this area of police stress/vulnerabilities.

75. She said police are battle weary and fatigued from DFV response and appropriate support is needed urgently. She said she realises this will require extra specialist resources and will cost money, but it is needed and needed now. She stated she speaks personally to crews to try and de-brief them prior to the officers going home. She said the stress and fear of doing the wrong thing by officers involved in DFV matters is quite a worry.
76. She said 9 out of 10 DFV's she has been to have had an element of drugs/alcohol involved and this is another area which needs looking at particularly pertaining to DFV and prevention and early intervention.
77. One officer spoke about the Blue Wall of Arrogance, which she said refers to the DFV and Vulnerable Persons unit in Police Headquarters. She said they have the view they are always right and keep punching out policies and procedures for DFV. She said more recently these policies and procedures are knee jerk reactions to negative publicity about DFV. She said in putting out these new policies and procedures regarding DFV there is no consideration on the impact to front line officers and no consideration for resource availability to deal with matters. Several officers believe the current DFV and Vulnerable Persons unit operated out of headquarters should not be in charge of DFV. She believes there is insufficient knowledge with the team currently there and it is a worry when they are heavily involved in developing curriculums for training in DFV.
78. Several officers alluded to DFV being a minefield that is a whole of community problem and currently police are being held out as the scapegoats for what is occurring in the DFV area. One officer believes DFV is a whole of community problem and the community need to start accepting ownership of the problem. He said education of the community is in need of enhancement and the development of community education is critical.
79. He spoke about generational DFV where children who live in a family who have been subject to this behaviour for a long time, know no better on expected behaviours and that this then rolls on into their adult life. He said we need as a community to break this cycle.
80. This officer stated the current DFV Command is a bit laughable without intending to cause any insult to people attached to it. He said with the extreme focus on DFV this command should be a proper command staffed appropriately and take responsibility for DFV state-wide including policy making in conjunction with front line officers, procedures in line with front line officers, training – preparation of training modules and delivery of DFV training state wide in conjunction with consultation and use of experienced front line officers, have a legal unit that manages DFV Prosecutors, relevant other units as deemed necessary to provide leadership, direction and support of front line officers to deal with DFV. People in the unit should be passionate

about DFV and should be carefully selected based on DFV experience and expertise and should not be an area for people to hide from on road activities.

81. Several officers believes the DFV and Vulnerable Persons Command has never really provided a guiding light to operational police, and they do not really provide much direction for front line officers. Some said DVLO's don't fall under this unit and consideration should be given to the fact that they should. Some officers said the unit needs to be staffed by people passionate in DFV, who have experience in dealing with DFV and it should not be a dumping ground for broken down police or promotion seekers. She said the command does not have to be all police and should contain civilian DFV experts. Some officers believe the current DFV Command is just a tick the box exercise by the QPS and their contribution towards reducing or responding to DFV is questionable.
82. An experienced DFV officer interviewed believes 'Any police intervention at DFV will always prevent some DFV.' The issue of DFV is more than a police problem, it is a society problem where something in society has been majorly damaged. We need to identify the causal society affects contributing to DFV – alcohol, drugs, financial pressures, sense of entitlement and Cultures that do not accept DFV. She said there needs to be an integrated approach from schools, parenting, society and the individuals themselves. She said everyone in the QPS is trying but DFV is a real struggle for police- General Duties Officers have to be good at everything that other Government departments won't deal with.
83. Several officers raised a concern about competing orders. They said that the Family Law Court may have a custody order on children then a Magistrate may make another order with respect to children under the DFV legislation and it gets very confusing for police to understand who trumps who.
84. Ownership/administration of the DFV legislation should be retained by the police not another Government agency if they want police to enforce the Act. Some police believe ownership of the legislation by another government agency impedes legislative change and impacts on policy and procedures in enforcing the legislation. If they want police to police the legislation then police must own the legislation.
85. Several offices stated the QPS is responsible for safety and security of the community. They are not social workers and are not trained mediators. So, police do not get involved in applying for DFV orders. They simply investigate criminal offences and let another organisation who has social workers, trained counsellors apply for the orders, like child safety apply for child protection order. Police get involved in investigating criminal offences with aggravation of DFV and breaches of DFV orders.
86. What follows are various recommendations made by the interviewees.

Recommendations from officers interviewed

87. Almost 100% of interviewees, both sworn and civilian staff feel the whole police response to DFV needs to be reviewed and streamlined including the creation of criminal DFV related offences, simplification of the Bail Act and other Acts to enable police to clearly understand their powers and operate more efficiently.
88. Most officers recommend a review of the requirement of police attending DFV Court to give evidence in contested matters – very resource intensive when basically the issue is between the aggrieved and respondent. DFV Prosecutors could present in evidence the BWV of the incident which includes conversations with the aggrieved and respondent. This, if produced by the prosecutor would provide sufficient evidence of the police actions undertaken.
89. Almost all officers want a review of the current process of attending and completing DFV's by police to make it simpler and more efficient. They say currently have multiple orders to choose from which make it difficult for police and quite often wrong orders are used which require correcting and cost more policing time in doing the same.
90. Several officers want to see more input into DFV strategies from the Intelligence units – e.g., securing prisoner release dates for prisoners who have been subject to domestic violence matters in order for police to be aware of their pending return to the community. Would allow police to initiate prevention strategies with the aggrieved in preparation for the release of the respondent. Intelligence officers could also have the carriage of identifying high risk DFV offenders, high risk DFV locations to assist operational police. Intelligence officers should work closely with VPU, HRT and DVLO's to develop high risk DFV holdings.
91. A large percentage of officers interviewed feel there appears to be little consideration for respondents in providing education, counselling to turn their behaviour around which may reduce calls for service. Suggest a hub approach where the hub is staffed 24/7 by police, counsellors, medical staff, DFV experts where an aggrieved or respondent can attend to receive appropriate support.
92. Several officers stated rostering and the SDRP concept (Moreton District) needs reviewing. Rostering needs to accurately and honestly reflect peak calls for service in order to attempt to have sufficient officers on duty at those times.
93. Two officers want more support for people with disabilities and mental health impediments who are sometimes treated as respondents at DFV matters where they are obviously affected by serious disabilities. Why should they be

put in the DFV system when it is a disability they suffer from that has caused them to punch a hole in the wall.

94. A large percentage of interviewees would like to see the introduction of DFV specific teams working 24/7 in each Police District to assist operational police in responding to DFV.
95. Streamlining of police response to DFV matters e.g., paperwork, coding, data, document service, remove duplicity from the process e.g., PPN -handwritten then type written. Several officers believe one way to reduce the burden on police at DFV's is once the respondent is identified, they are arrested and taken to the watchhouse where they remain until attending Court at the next earliest opportunity. Police do the QP9 (and attach the BWV to the QP9 for the Magistrate to deal with).
96. QPS resourcing level needs immediate attention – some stations are really struggling with limited staff and it is impacting on morale, frustrations and officer safety and the ability to respond to jobs.
97. Some officers believe the service needs to start again in relation to VPU/HRT and the DVLO's after a whole new framework is established including adequate training for all officers, careful selection of officers to work in these units and consistency in strength across the state.
98. A number of officers said consideration should be given to aligning and placing Government funded DV Support Services to the 15 police Districts to ensure the appropriate level of support for DVF aggrieved and respondents. This would allow for a better response due to the locality of the services, understanding of local issues, understanding of cultures and nuances in those areas and hopefully provide a more efficient and effective referral service. The current referral system and funding to DV Support Services requires overview particularly relating to duplicity, mostly being South East Queensland located. The inability to provide a 24/7 service may change if consideration for relocation of services in alignment with the police districts. Whilst this a whole project in itself it may be a positive step to affect early intervention and support to DFV victims.
99. A couple of officers said urgent review on funding to DFV support agencies needs to occur. In one officer's experience some agencies are funded but do not really contribute to the DFV issue. He said the police are the one stop shop for everything particularly after 4pm each day and 4pm on Fridays. - There are few Government agencies or support services available after this time. If Government is serious about DFV a review of DFV support services and Government agencies is needed to ensure an appropriated 24/7 coordinated response to DFV occurs.
100. Many of the officers mentioned the need for development of a 'Whole of Community' education process similar to the drink driving education pieces that have been running for the past 20 years. They said the community has

to come on board as it is not just a policing problem. Officers believe there needs to be a language change in relation to DFV – get rid of the gender rhetoric and refer to people as Aggrieved and Respondents whilst women are mostly aggrieved in this day and age officers consider gender needs to be removed in order to remove any bias and enhance a more comprehensive approach for both males, females and same sex couples. Some officers said the current DFV focus is on police and DFV's needs to change to a whole of Community response – appropriate community education forums and promotions need to be conducted and produced to try and address this community problem. More money and time needs to be spent on the education of respondents as a preventative and intervention strategy.

101. One officer would like to see the establishment of DFV Specialist Units in the same manner as a CIB/CPIU. She said staff in the team need to be very well trained have a full understanding of legislation, policies and procedures and have a high investigative ability to investigate DFV matters thoroughly. She believes the staffing for such a team should consist of Investigators, General Duties staff on a rotational basis, DVLO's DFV support services staff and other relevant agencies where a specialist response can be provided for DFV. She said this model would supersede the VPU/HRT model.

The process undertaken in interviewing these officers hopefully will provide the Commission with an insight into the culture of QPS officers in responding to DFV matters. Thank you for the opportunity to undertake these interviews.

Mark Ainsworth

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