

REVIEW OF THE POLICE LIAISON PROGRAM IN THE QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

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Background and Aims

In multicultural societies, police face an array of challenges in policing ethnic communities.

To mitigate these cultural divides, the QPS have created the Queensland’s Police Liaison Officer (PLOs) role.

They are unsworn QPS staff employed to foster better police-ethnic community relations.

Despite the important work PLOs do, their role is contested. Research has found that there is confusion between PLOs and their Officer-in-Charge (OICs) about the legitimacy and purpose of the PLO position.

This project aims to assist the QPS to better understand the issues facing PLOs, by conducting a review of the PLO program.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What challenges do PLOs face in their role cultural engagement and outreach?
2. How does the organizational implementation of the PLO program affect the way PLOs understand and perform their role?
3. Are there contrasting perceptions of the PLO role between the PLOs and the OICs? How does this affect the implementation and efficacy of the PLO program?

Methods

A survey was distributed to all PLOs and OICs across QLD

- Predominantly close-ended questions
 - Compared and tested for statistically significant differences
- Two open-ended questions
 - Allowed participants to share detailed insights
 - Analysed thematically using two-step coding process.
 - Themes and concepts were used to support statistical findings from close-ended question



Coordination

- 39% of PLOs, compared to 5% of OICs, felt that information relevant to their division was not clearly communicated to them
- The statewide coordination of PLOs was identified as a key issue
- One OIC stated that “the work PLOs do varies greatly between stations” and one PLO said “there is no uniform treatment of PLOs across the state”.

PLO ‘Place’ in the QPS

- 44% of PLOs, compared to 77% of OICs, agreed that PLOs were valued members of the QPS
- 49% of PLOs and 85% of OICs agreed that PLOs and sworn QPS staff have a good working relationship
- Many PLOs indicated that they felt a lack of appreciation and respect from sworn QPS staff and felt as outsiders in the QPS

PLO Role Confusion

- OIC and PLO opinions differed considerably in regards to whether the primary focus of the PLO role is engagement or enforcement
- One PLO noted “tasking can often border on operational rather than engagement”
- 45% of PLOs felt that there were discrepancies in how they performed their role and what their supervisor expected of them

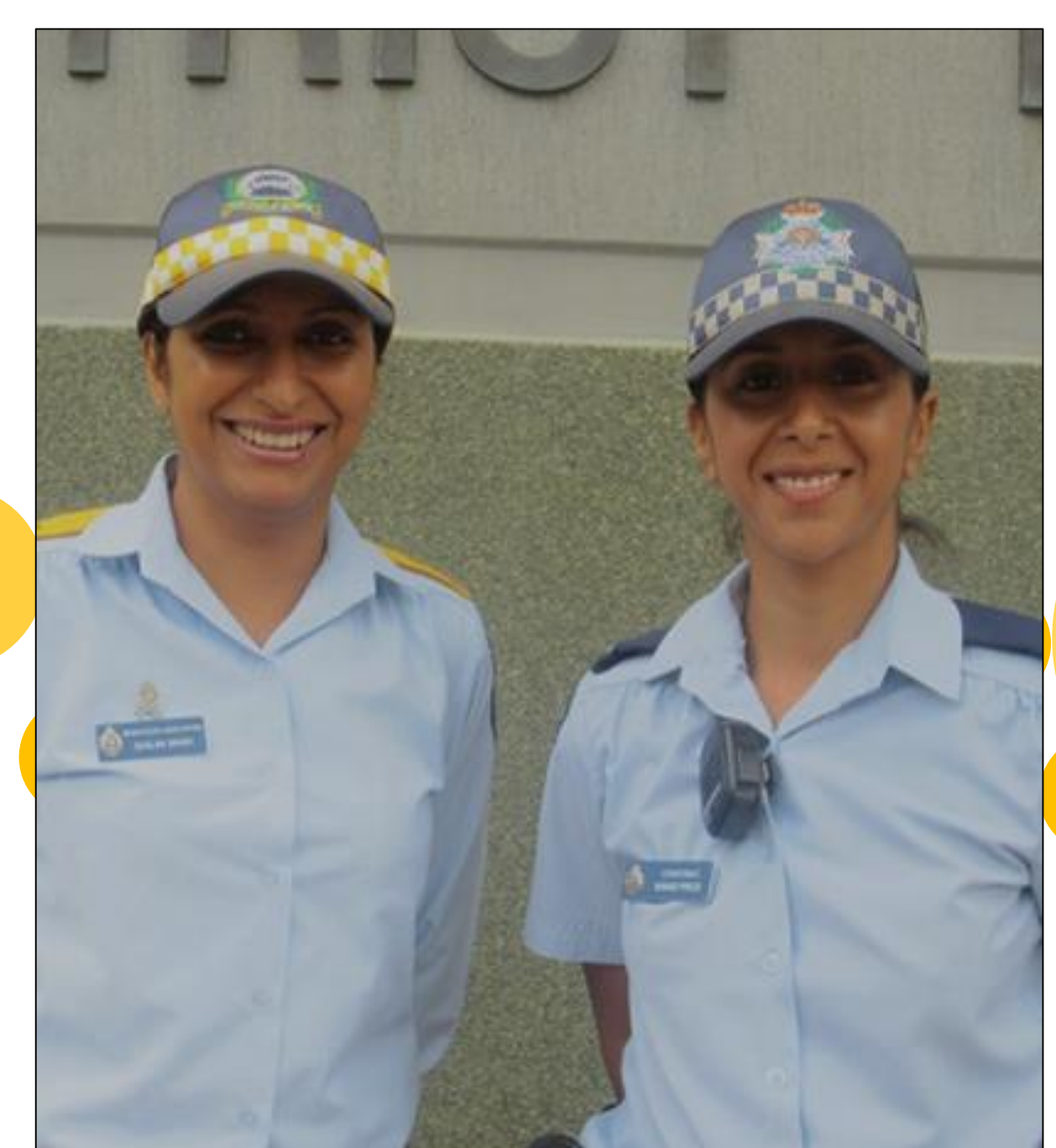
Training and Advancement

- 33% of PLOs and OICs thought that PLOs did not receive adequate pre-employment training
- 61% of PLOs and 45% of OICs did not believe that there was sufficient ongoing training available for PLOs
- 66% of PLOs and 49% of OICs did not believe that adequate promotion opportunities existed for PLOs

Resources

- 94% of PLOs and 71% of OICs agreed that funding for the PLO program should be increased.
- 72% of PLOs and 31% of OICs thought that the number of PLOs employed was too few
- Many PLOs expressed a desire for work rosters to be expanded to include weekends and nights to allow for better community engagement and liaison

Key Findings



Education Role of PLOs

- Many PLOs indicated that they felt unable to perform their duty of educating sworn officers about cultural customs because the organisational culture of the QPS devalued PLOs
- 48% of PLOs, compared to 18% of OICs, considered educating ethnic minorities about their rights to be one of the key duties of a PLO