

Recruitment, promotion and leadership: The experience of women police in the Australian context

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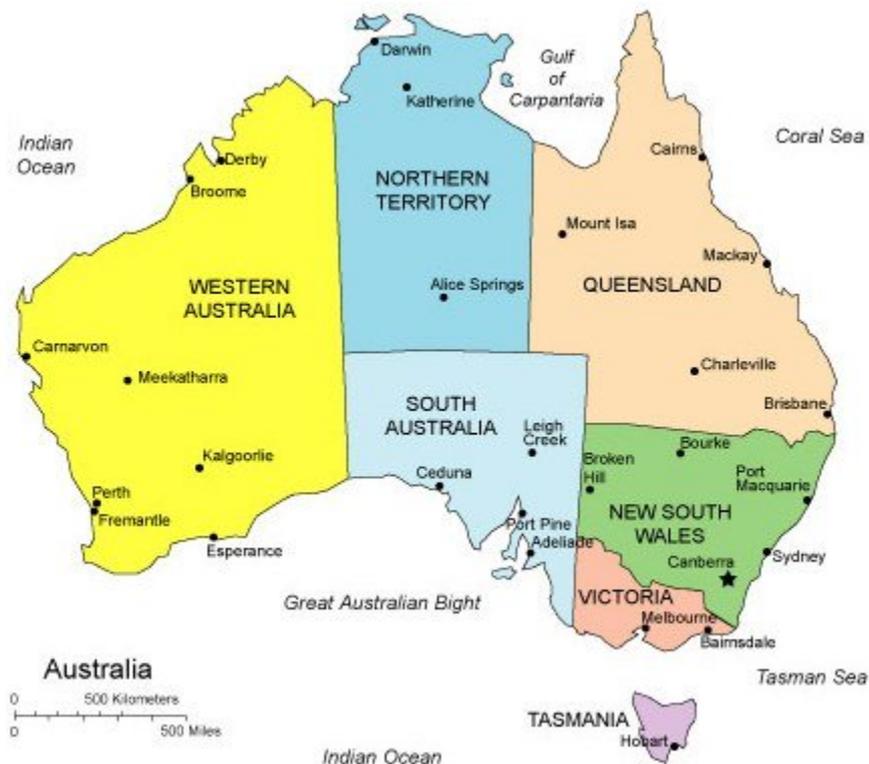
Program of Research

- The program of research pursued over the previous decade include a number of key themes relating to women police in Australian police agencies
 - Monitoring the gender profile of women police across Australia
 - Reviewing recruitment policies and initiatives aimed at increasing female officer numbers
 - The progress of female police moving into senior leadership positions
 - Monitoring how increased maturity of gender equity approaches are impacting on modern police organisations – successes and unintended consequences

Context - Australia

Australia is comprised of 6 states and 2 territories with 8 police agencies

- New South Wales Police Force
- Queensland Police
- South Australia Police
- Tasmania Police
- Victoria Police
- Western Australia Police
- Northern Territory Police
- Australian Federal Police (incl. Australian Capital Territory)



Queensland Police Service – approx. 11 800 sworn personnel policing, policing 1.8 million sq kms (694,984 sq miles) and a resident population of over 4 800 000 people

Statistics over time – The journey from then to now

- Female representation hovers around mid-to-high 20% representation; with Tasmania over 30%
- Recruitment has tended to level off over recent times, typically around 1/3 of recruit intakes (where data is available)
- Between 2015 and 2018 we have seen the following % (per annum) increases in representation

	TasPol	QldPol	VicPol	WAPol	SAPol	NTPol	AFP
Avg (%) Yearly Increase	0.45	0.23	0.40	0.29	0.97	0.48	0.44

Source: Ward, Prenzler & Drew

- Critical issues at senior ranks - Queensland Police Service, despite recruiting for almost 20 years, 30% female recruits; women occupying senior leadership positions still fails to reach 10% (Drew & Saunders)

Statistics over time – The journey from then to now

- Queensland Police has just appointed first female police commissioner
- Commissioner Elect Katarina Carroll
- Only second female in Australian policing history



Policies and Initiatives

- What is lacking is a rigorous evaluation framework on which to assess relative merit of actions and strategies to promote gender representation and equity - much less attention has been given to '**what works**' in practice
- This has led across Australia to the introduction of programs, innovations and initiatives to both recruit and promote female police
 - **but** we are left with the issue that progress is excruciating slow and we simply do not know which programs are promising and which are ineffective

Policies and Initiatives

- Across our research, my colleagues and I would broadly conclude
 - a. Apparent benefits of removing discriminatory barriers
 - *Physical agility testing, all male selection panels*
 - b. Probable/possible benefits of supportive mechanisms
 - *Flexible employment, maternity leave, women's networks, targets*
 - c. Uncertain/unlikely sustainable benefits
 - *Quotas*

Current Policies and Initiatives

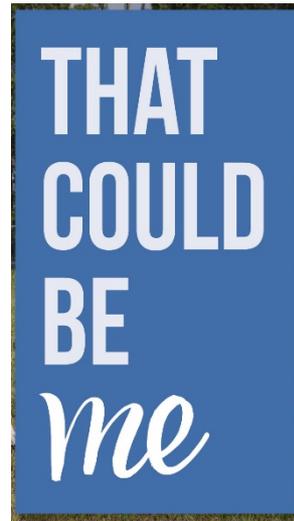
A recent wave of initiatives have focused on increasing recruitment of female officers

- 4 out of 8 Australian police agencies have stated 50-50 recruitment objectives, with the earliest introduced in 2015 (Ward, Prenzler & Drew)

This comes after the wave of supportive policies and strategies (eg. women's networks, mentoring, gender representative selection panels etc) that Australian police organizations have introduced

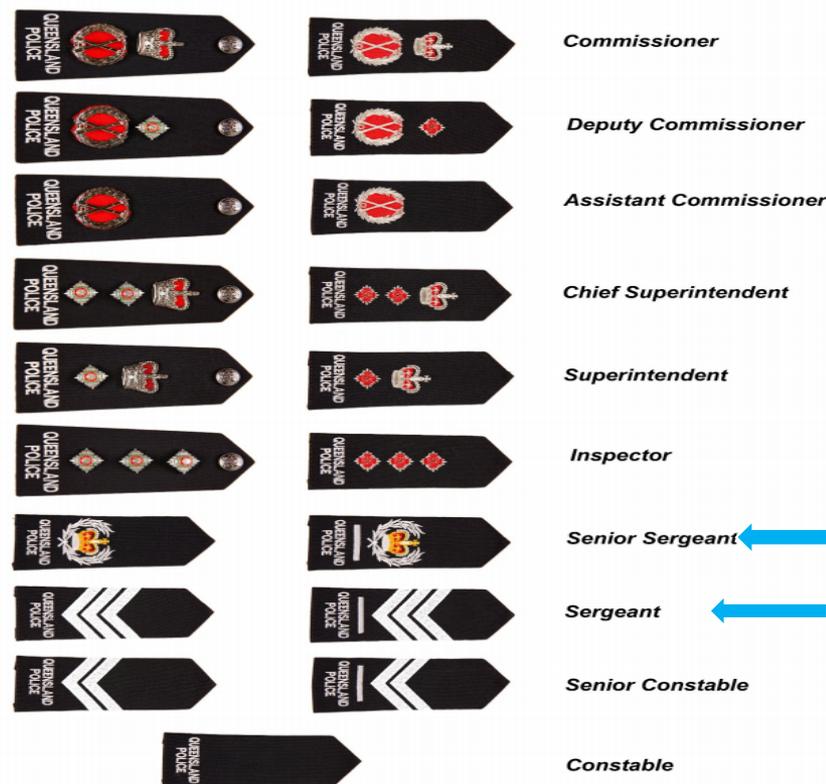
Example of Queensland Police Service Campaign

- "That could be me" campaign to raise female recruitment to 50 per cent



Current Research

- Officers included if attended in-service management development leadership training within a five year sample frame
- A final sample of 324 officers was obtained, representing a response rate of 46.43%. The final sample included 194 sergeants (24.7% female) and 130 senior sergeants (29.2% female)



Current Research

- The Queensland Police Service represents an agency that was strongly pushing for increased recruitment of female officers (50-50 intakes) and a strong push to promote female officers (articulated org support)
- We conceptualised the Queensland Police Service as a equity supportive environment
 - Stage 1: We wanted to gather evidence, in such a context, to assess whether gender differences still existed between male and female officers engaging with the promotion system (push and pull factors)
 - establishing a baseline or evaluation of whether proactive policies were reducing female officer perceptions and experiences of discrimination in applying and gaining promotion
 - what success was Queensland Police achieving through their strategies?

Current Research

- Stage 2: Antidotal evidence suggested that the ‘push’ for more gender equitable intakes and promotion of female police was producing negative perceptions in Queensland Police, particularly among male officers
 - Moving on from our understanding of the ‘objective’ factors that influence engagement in the promotion system, we were interested in understanding the nature and impact of perceptions of male and female officers regarding female leadership
 - In turn, given organizationally it was an equity supportive environment, we were studying other impacts (if any) on female officer engagement with promotion? The ‘intangible’ factors

Implications

- The research suggests that careful consideration needs to be given to how we promote and support female officers in the promotion system
 - ***Organisational policies may have good intentions but lead to poor outcomes***
 - In the case of the Queensland Police Service we posit that organisational policy has disincentivised promotion
 - not through ***objective factors*** as we saw few gender differences in push and pull factors for promotion – the organisation is doing well by reducing barriers for female officers
 - but potentially as a result of the very policies that were designed to support female officers; the impact of ***intangibles*** - PERCEPTIONS
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- So what is the answer?

Why Equity Programs Fail?

- Executives, particularly in policing, favor a classic command-and-control approach to diversity because it boils down to expected behaviors of ‘dos and don’ts’ that are easy to understand and defend
- The big stick approach is not going to work; ***it reinforces negative perceptions of gender equity policies*** and flies in the face of nearly everything we know about how to motivate people to make changes
- Decades of social science research point to a simple truth: You won’t get leaders on board by blaming and shaming them with rules; we need to get them to believe in the efficacy of the gender equity approach

Conclusions

How do you best 'sell' gender equity in your agency and achieve outcomes?

Two important conclusions from our research....

1. Should we be focused on promoting 'gender-focused' strategies?
 - Even policies, traditionally seen as gender-focused policies will address concerns of male officers (little gender differences in push and pull factors of promotion), albeit perhaps not to the same degree, as their female counterparts
 - To disregard the importance of unification, has the strong potential to negatively impact on female officers, with female officers actually becoming more segregated, isolated, marginalised and disincentivised to pursue promotion

Conclusions

How do you best 'sell' gender equity in your agency and achieve outcomes?

2. How to overcome negativity and focus on merit of female officers?

- The goal of contemporary policy development in policing agencies should be one of unification, *where justified*, rather than division to avoid unintended, negative consequences
- Our research, in the agency we studied, calls for perception management of female officer promotions not more programs and initiatives – it's the intangible factors that can be used to support or undermine the most effective practices

The Way Forward – What our research suggests!

Our evidence suggests that many policies that may assist your agency to

- achieve gender equity; increase female officers in senior ranks; and,
 - unite rather than divide your workforce

may be more effectively achieved by simply
developing, implementing and framing policies

as ***good organisational practice rather than focus on equity initiatives***

and they will benefit ALL in the agency!

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