



Policewomen and Queensland

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Introduction

Queensland was a late starter in the employment of policewomen and, apart from a brief period in the early 1970s, has lagged behind other jurisdictions in utilising women. The aberrant history of policewomen in Queensland suggests additional evidence for the characterisation of Queensland as 'the deep north'. Apart from the influence of general cultural and political factors, fluctuations in the fortunes of policewomen relate specifically to the discretionary powers held by police commissioners in personnel policies; problems of corruption and lack of accountability in particular have had a gender dimension, but close scrutiny of recent reforms has tended to ignore the impact of the Fitzgerald Report on women in the police force. Seismic changes have occurred at the level of policies and procedures and, although cultural change is limping behind, Queensland is now a leading State for access of women to a career in policing.

Pre-1931

There is some disagreement over the site of the appointment of the world's first policewoman. Some were appointed in England during World War One but were only properly attested in 1923. The first woman with full police powers is usually said to have been in Los Angeles in 1910. In Australia, two women were appointed in New South Wales in 1915, followed later in the year by two in South Australia. The first appointee in South Australia, Kate Cocks, was the first woman in Australia with full police powers. Agitation for the establishment of policewomen who could perform work with female suspects and female victims of crime came from various women's political and philanthropic associations.

By 1917 all States had policewomen except Queensland. Following the appointment of policewomen in other States in 1915 Queensland Police received numerous letters of enquiry from aspiring policewomen (Stone, 1981:2). The police union strongly opposed the employment of women and Commissioner Cahill stated that 'attempts to incur unnecessary expenditure of this character should be sternly repressed'. In reply to an inquiry from a member of Cabinet, Cahill stated:

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I am quite unable to indicate how women could be advantageously employed in the Police Force of Queensland ...The Police Force is getting along all right, and I have no inclination to follow the lead set by certain other Police Forces, even though such a course has the support of a scurrilous section of the Press. In any event, I can assure you that we have old women in sufficient numbers in the Police Force already (Commissioners' Correspondence: Letter to John Huxham, 14 September 1915).

Some justice has been seen in the fact that Cahill was injured after being thrown from his horse during a tramway workers' strike when the horse was pricked by a disgruntled woman wielding a hat pin.

From 1911 The National Council of Women of Queensland lobbied for the idea of 'trained social workers [to be] ... given the status of public officers ... experienced and educated women to deal with girls in difficulty or danger, and to patrol parks and beaches' (Stone, 1981:1). The Council used survey data from Australia and other countries in support of their case. Like the *Argus* in Victoria, the Brisbane *Daily Mail* supported the employment of policewomen, albeit in small numbers and in a narrow welfare role. Cahill was castigated for his alleged philistinism and arrogance toward the issue. The paper argued that

the example of London and Glasgow, of leading American cities and, coming nearer home, of places like Melbourne and Sydney, ought to be sufficient to create in Major Cahill a spirit of inquiry, or at any rate of that attitude of open mind which any reasonable person would adopt to a proposal for which a good deal may be said. There is nothing in the female Robert to conflict with rigid adherence to the conventional police system. Her work would be supplementary to rather than coincide with, the duties of the male force. The woman policeman would essentially guard the interests of women and children. Every city has its waifs and strays of child life, boys and girls with no homes at all, or parents whose notions of guardianship and parental care are below those of the savage. Then there is the problem of juvenile crime, the decoying of little girls for immoral purposes, the supervision of young women who are dazzled by the lure of the street, and are rapidly reaching the 'fast' stage, the protection of women who have fallen victim to drink or who are at the mercy of brutal husbands. No doubt the evils of the alleged slave traffic have been greatly exaggerated; but the repulsive harpy, who procures young girls to gratify the passions of well-dressed blackguards, often plys her trade unchecked because the patrolman has not the instinct to scent her nefarious game. (24 June, 1915)

The Home Secretary supported the idea but decided to watch events in the other States before committing Queensland to such a course of action. Despite favourable reports, the idea languished, probably due in part to Cahill's defiance of cabinet. As an alternative, female inspectors were appointed under the Infant Life Protection Act (Johnston, 1992: 216).

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1931 to World War II

Two women were appointed as policewomen on 16 March 1931, 71 years after the formation of the Queensland Police in 1860. The appointments were made by the conservative government of A.E. Moore. In parliament, Mrs Irene Longman, the Member for Bulimba, argued passionately in favour of the move:

Queensland is very much behind in this respect. This is the only State in the Commonwealth that has not yet appointed women police. We are behind the world in this matter: and there is no need to explain here what women police should be and should do. In this Chamber we do not expect to hear those foolish comments which we hear from time to time from people who have not had the opportunity of reading and learning about what is going on in world affairs such as hon. members have. It has got past that stage. However, we do hear occasionally facetious remarks about masculine women, hard-faced, hard-voiced women, and perhaps of the big-footed women who may join our police force. Some people look on them as female 'John Hops.' That is not the idea at all. It is not only time that we had women police in Queensland, but it is an absolute necessity. New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria, Western Australia, and Tasmania have women in the police force. (*Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. CLVII, 1930: 2168)

Mrs Longman went on to elaborate on a role for policewomen protecting women. The opposition was much more interested in debating cuts to police salaries, but agreed with the introduction of policewomen 'to a certain extent ... provided the work is confined to women and girls'.(2176)

There were 60 applicants for the two positions which were replacements for two retiring policemen. The appointees were Zara Dare (aged 44) and Eileen O'Donnell (aged 34). Zara Dare had been an organiser in the Women's Christian Temperance Union and served with the Salvation Army in China where her work included rescuing women from the white slave trade. Ms Dare worked for nine years before retiring when she married. Eileen O'Donnell retired in 1962. She held a record for catching 120 shoplifters in one year:

Once, to trap one of Australia's most notorious handbag thieves, Miss O'Donnell spent hours posing as a customer in a city store and trying on scores of hats. She left her own handbag nearby and caught the woman red-handed as she snatched the handbag (*Courier-Mail*, 9 March 1963).

Ms Dare was similarly engaged at times with shoplifters and has left behind a brief description of some aspects of her work:

I have been trying to teach the things I taught in China to the women and children who come in off the streets to the police courts. Every year police women in this city are responsible for bringing in hundreds of children from the streets who have been sent out to 'lift' goods from the chain stores. We bring them into the station, talk to them and take them home. We patrol the gardens and parks, the department stores and places of

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amusement. We try to be kind as well as just. Sometimes kindness is mistaken for weakness. I have taken many a 'hiding' in my time, but if I have helped to lift a few people to their feet, given them any sort of incentive to run straight, it has all been in a very good cause (*Courier-Mail*, 2 March 1940)

The two women were posted to Roma Street Station, Brisbane. One task they had was escorting female prisoners, often on long train journeys. They were also required to search female prisoners, engage in other duties associated with women, and provide shorthand and typing services. Married women could not join the Force and policewomen had to resign when they married. A male constable started on 15s 1d. per day. Ms Dare and Ms O'Donnell worked for 9s. per day (Johnston, 1992: 216).

The women lacked full police powers, although it was intended that they would be sworn in after a trial of one year. Commissioner Ryan evinced some equivocation on the issue. In a memo to the Home Secretary in 1932 he recommended re-appointing women on a yearly basis, as opposed to swearing them in, saying that he would 'much prefer to have two male constables', but concluding that 'the two Women Police are doing the work now allotted to them satisfactorily, and ... being well paid for so doing, in my opinion' (Memo to Home Secretary, 15 February 1932). It appears that Ryan's recommendations were accepted and the women were never sworn in. 'Police Woman' remained an honorary title (Hazel, 1981:1).

World War II to 1970

By 1940 the number of policewomen had grown from two to four and by 1943 there were ten. Women were attached to the Criminal Investigation Branch in 1941 and this constituted the chief location of policewomen's work. There was no formal training. The main selection criterion was competency in shorthand and typing (Hazel, 1981:1). The police restricted the use of civilians for clerical duties because of concerns about confidentiality (Johnston, 1992:217). A letter from the Commissioner in 1940 regarding the appointment of two new policewomen makes it clear that the women's role was envisaged as a dual role of operational police officer and stenographer to male investigators. The excessive typing load of detectives appears to have been the main rationale for employing more women (Commissioners' Correspondence, 16 April 1940). Added pressures were placed on policewomen in Brisbane during World War II when the large influx of US servicemen contributed to an escalation in domestic disputes and elopements by young women with servicemen. The Brisbane Women's Club, for example, made a request for additional policewomen 'to restrain the conduct of young women towards the members of the fighting forces on leave in the city' (Johnston, 1992:217).

Despite the expanded role given to many women in the War, policewomen remained in the narrow band of responsibilities originally assigned to them. Patricia Hazel describes some of the tasks performed by policewomen in the post-War period:

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we worked with all ... sections of police in many kinds of investigations and detections in relation to sexual offences and crimes against women and children, matters of false pretences and stealing, fortune telling, persons illegally selling liquor, drug peddlers, and all persons who conducted nefarious practices and preyed on unsuspecting people.

We dealt constantly with young women and girls who came to our attention through official channels and we had a long list of many of those girls who we helped. We looked for missing women and girls and cared for lost children. We assisted Detectives with the taking of statements in murder and other serious crimes; commissioned officers with departmental investigations and acted as depositions clerks in departmental hearings. As well, we attended courts of Justice — Supreme, Magistrates and Children's — with female witnesses, and committed to writing statements given by female complainants and witnesses (Hazel, 1981:1).

Women in the CIB worked in plain clothes. They were on duty from 8.30am-5pm with one woman on call at night and the weekend. Women on call stayed in their homes and would be picked up by car if needed. They were able to make their own investigations, but prosecutions were handed over to male detectives. Numbers declined somewhat after the War and wages fell further behind those of policemen. It has been estimated that at this time the women attached to the CIB spent 40 per cent of their time typing and the rest working with women (Johnston, 1992:217).

Policewomen received full powers in 1965, 50 years behind South Australia, 41 years behind Victoria and one year behind New South Wales. The decision was taken by the Nicklin government at the end of 1964, the Minister for Labour and Industry informing the Parliament that

The advantages that can accrue to the police force by the employment of properly trained policewomen have been recognised by this Government for some time, and since assuming my portfolio the duties of policewomen have been discussed on a number of occasions with the Commissioner of Police (*Q.P.D.*, Vol. 239, 1964:1946).

The New South Wales example was followed in providing for pension rights, and though the Opposition argued for equal pay, it was unsuccessful in amending the Bill. The annual Commissioner's Report recommended increasing the number of policewomen to work with women, to give school traffic lectures and to supervise school crossings (Parliamentary Reports, 1965:3).

Eight women were sworn in at the Petrie Terrace Depot: one sergeant and seven constables. Women were given uniforms for the first time and four new female probationers were recruited. Segregation into separate units continued, such as the 'Policewomen's Office' in the CIB, and women were also on a lower superannuation rate. A reply to an inquiry from Victoria shows that by the mid-1960s women were still overwhelmingly engaged in working with women and children, mainly cautioning and advising, although policewomen did at times make arrests. By 1966 there were four women police in uniform and nine in plain clothes.

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The Whitrod Years: 1970 to 1976

Up until 1972, women made up less than 1 per cent of sworn personnel, slightly below the national average. During the six years when Ray Whitrod was Commissioner numbers increased dramatically to a peak of 8.5 per cent in 1976. Whitrod was brought in from outside Queensland to clean up the image of the Force. His ideas for reform, his view of the independence of the office of Commissioner, and his own brand of authoritarianism, rapidly put him at odds with the Coalition government. The growth in women police numbers in this period has been attributed to a drop off in suitable male applicants (Midgley, 1978:12). One report stated that in a six month period from 1972-73 there were 127 male applicants and 95 female applicants (*The Australian*, 17 March 1973). Whitrod did more than simply allow market forces to work in favour of women, but his actions were nonetheless somewhat ambivalent. For instance, he denied that women were being employed at the expense of men and he began a recruitment drive aimed primarily at men, including the introduction of adult entry which, initially at least, was exclusive to men. At the same time, he vigorously defended the expanded recruitment of women, especially in his fortnightly newsletter where he reported on overseas studies of the effectiveness of policewomen and developments in the employment of policewomen in Australia and overseas. He frequently congratulated policewomen whenever they excelled in various aspects of police work, using the cases as examples of the equal capability of women (Commissioner's Newsletter, 1973-74, Nos. 61, 77, 87, 98, 121, 133).

Whitrod also disbanded the Policewomen's Section, integrated women into regular squads and into the one seniority list, and allowed women to train at the Academy as cadets. He had a strong interest in victimology and established a rape squad staffed by women to provide a more sympathetic response to rape victims. He claimed that in 1976 women were 10 per cent of police personnel (a figure that probably included recruits) and that this was the highest percentage in the Western world. He appears to have seen the employment of women as a crucial strategy in breaking down philistine traditions in the Force and he later expressed regret that he had not given more encouragement to senior policewomen:

The Old Guard set of values remained largely unchallenged except for a few exceptional women officers who were prepared to buck the system. It may have been my fault in that I did not have enough time to give to their personal development, and they had no role model to follow (Whitrod, 1988:40).

Despite the ambivalence of his support, the Whitrod years represent a major departure point in the status of women police, not only in terms of numbers recruited, but also in terms of an overt commitment from the top.

The Lewis Years: 1976 to 1987

In 1991, former Commissioner Terry Lewis was sentenced to 14 years jail for participation in a protection racket. The years of Lewis's administration (1976-87) are now seen as dark years in Queensland's history, a period when corruption became entrenched in the top echelons of the police. Corruption in the police force in this period has been linked to the National Party's monopoly of power in the 1980s, achieved in part through its manipulation of electoral boundaries, and critics have argued that the corruption coincided with an intensified politicisation of the police (Coaldrake, 1989:81-85; Fitzgerald, 1989, ch. 3). A relationship of mutual benefit developed between police and government that breached the nebulous boundaries drawn by the principle of the separation of powers in the Westminster system. In bald terms, the government largely left the police alone in return for political support. The police were largely unaccountable and the government benefited from ideological support and police operational action against political dissenters. This relationship was cultivated by Lewis while climbing through the ranks and securing his position as Commissioner. The alleged victims in this period of both police and governmental corruption are various, but one frequently overlooked group of victims of the Lewis regime was policewomen and women who aspired to be policewomen.

A number of factors led to Whitrod's resignation, but the appointment of Lewis as Assistant Commissioner, against Whitrod's wishes, was the final frustration for him. Whitrod had earlier banished Lewis to a country town because of the latter's suspected corruption. It is natural that Lewis would have seen the employment of policewomen as part of the philosophy of his rival, and when Lewis promised a new era in policing in Queensland it was certainly the pre-Whitrod male-dominated model of policing that he had in mind. Lewis was evidently something of a misogynist in any case. One of his more notorious actions was a 'terror campaign' in 1978 involving the interrogation of policewomen about alleged lesbian inclinations and affairs. Former Assistant Commissioner Tony Murphy and another senior officer were ordered by Lewis to investigate an alleged 'lesbian cell' of policewomen who supposedly displayed their homosexuality in Brisbane nightclubs.

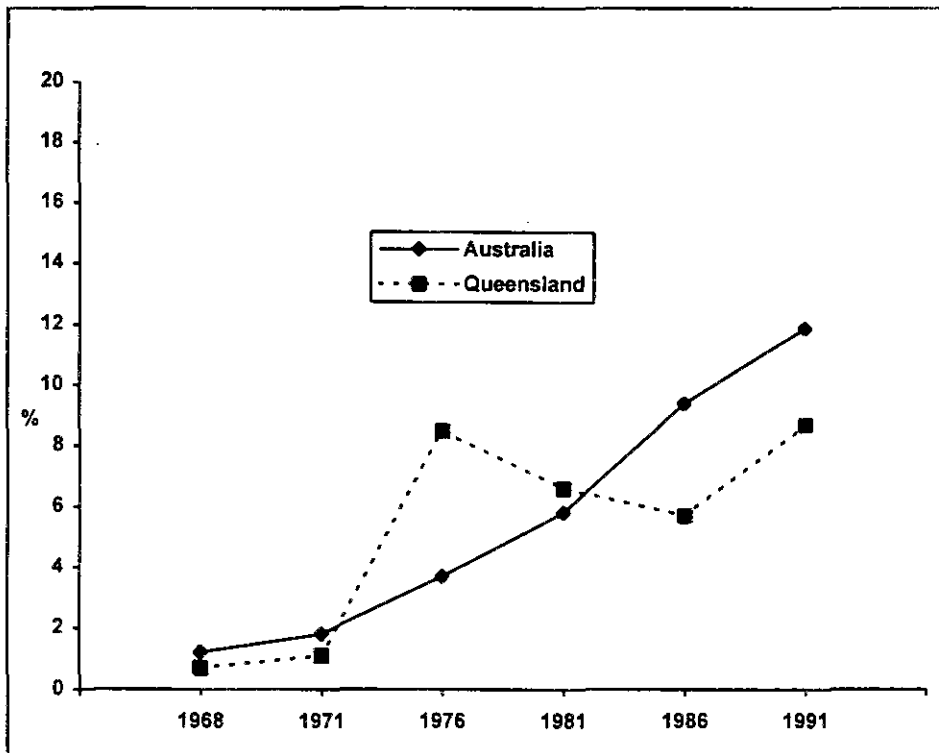
During the Lewis years there was no formal policy of discriminatory deployment other than the exclusion of women — 'for safety reasons' — from the Public Safety Response Team and from small isolated stations. Women served in the CIB, Traffic Branch, Prosecutions, Training and Mobile Patrols, but were typically not found in small, elite, squads such as Water Police, Stock Squad and Air Wing. For a period in the mid-1980s women were disproportionately deployed at the City Station and Watchhouse, which meant that those who wanted to 'go country' were being disadvantaged. For most of the 1980s applications were not accepted from married women or women with children. Not only did a marriage bar apply to women, but it has been claimed that selection criteria for both males and females were biased against divorcees and people either separated or in de facto relationships. Following a 'media furore' in early 1987 applications were accepted by married women. However,

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the Past and Present Policewomen's Association claimed that biased selection criteria were still employed (*Past and Present Policewomen's Association of Queensland Magazine*, 1989:7; *Courier-Mail*, 22 May 1987; *Daily Sun*, 22 May 1987). During debate on the issue, federal Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commissioner Quentin Bryce suggested that, apart from Tasmania, 'This must be the last pocket of deep-seated discrimination against women in Australia' (*Courier-Mail*, 21 May 1987). (Queensland had no anti-discrimination legislation and federal legislation did not apply to State agencies).

The main damage done in the Lewis years was the decimation of policewomen numbers by drastic cutbacks in recruitment. Figure 1 shows the change in the percentage of policewomen from well above the Australian average in the first half of the 1970s to well below the Australian average a decade later.

Figure 1. Percentage of Women in Australian Police Forces and in the Queensland Police: 1968-91.



Sources:

1968: D Chappell and P. Wilson. 'Police in Australia' in Chappell and Wilson, eds., *The Australian Criminal Justice System* (Sydney: Butterworths, 1977), p. 254.

1971-86: C. Lidgard, 'Women in Policing'. Paper presented to Annual Conference of the Sociological Association of Australia and New Zealand, (Canberra: 1988)

1991: Correspondence with Police Personnel Sections.

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At the time, two categories of trainees were recruited: probationers and cadets. Probationers were over 18 years of age and completed a short training program. Cadets were recruited directly from school and completed between one and three years of training depending on when they left School. In 1980 the recruitment of female cadets was halted. A quota of about 20 per cent females was applied to probationary entry. The Planning and Research Branch produced a report on policewomen (circa 1978) which showed high dropout rates, and it is claimed that this was used as a rationale for reducing numbers. It has also been claimed however, that Lewis retained a certain minimum number of policewomen to carry out body searches. For most of the 1980s the number of female probationers allowed remained at about two per squad of 25 males, but in 1986 there was an increase in the female quota from two to three. Lewis did allow women to be promoted. For example there were no female sergeants second class in 1976 (down from three in 1970) but by 1983 there were six. In 1985 Lewis appointed one of the highest ranking policewomen to Sergeant 2/c, second-in-charge of the busy Beenleigh-Woodridge division. Sergeant Campbell fought off three male challengers.

The Fitzgerald Inquiry: 1987 to 1989

In 1987, following media reports of police corruption, the Fitzgerald Inquiry was established to investigate the allegations. Two years later Fitzgerald produced a wide ranging report that associated high level police corruption with maladministration and inefficiency in both the police and government. In his comments on personnel issues Fitzgerald made it clear that discrimination against women was part of the norm of insularity and cynicism that he identified in the Force. He noted that

an informal process has operated to keep the number of female police officers selected in any intake to between 5 and 12 percent although women comprise 25 percent of applicants (Fitzgerald, 1989:246)

Fitzgerald suggested that any assumption that training policewomen was a poor investment because of high dropout rates was no longer relevant. In the five years prior to 1989 a higher proportion of men resigned than women. Fitzgerald recommended that quotas be abandoned in favour of recruitment by merit and, like Whitrod, saw an increase in the number of women as part of positive cultural change within the police (Fitzgerald, 1989:246).

The Past and Present Policewomen's Association made a submission to the Inquiry which may have had some influence on Fitzgerald's comments. However, the focus of the submission was less on the situation of women than on general administrative issues. The nature of the Association's submission indicates a high level of informed interest in policy by the usually fairly conservative Association. Christine Lidgard appears to have taken the lead in developing its submission and raising its profile. The Association's comments on the status of women in the Queensland Police are indicative of an ambivalence about gender

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equity observed amongst policewomen in other agencies (Anderson, et al.1993). The submission strongly recommended promotion by merit, the removal of discriminatory barriers in recruitment and the introduction of non-sexist language. It noted that research indicated a stronger service orientation on the part of women police and that this was in line with the more desirable philosophy of community policing. In the context of corruption allegations, it noted that women appeared to be much less susceptible to misconduct and corruption, and it dismissed the idea that women police were less physically capable than their male counterparts. At the same time, the submission recommended an increase in the number of women police to a mere 20 per cent, a figure it claimed was 'both desirable and sustainable'. No explanation is provided for this seemingly arbitrary percentage.

Post-Fitzgerald: 1989 to 1993

All political parties at the time of the Fitzgerald Inquiry gave unqualified support to the implementation of Fitzgerald's reforms. A new Labor government swept into power on a reformist platform in 1989 as the previous National Party government fell into disarray. Fitzgerald's recommendations for appointment by merit were reflected in the new Police Service Administration Act 1990 which prohibits sex discrimination (amongst other forms of discrimination). The Act predates anti-discrimination legislation introduced into Queensland in 1992. The first female inspector had been appointed in 1989. There was a dramatic increase in the number of female recruits around 1990; five policewomen quickly received promotions to inspector level in 1992.

Queensland is now approaching the national average of 12.4 per cent of women police. Women are 11.4 per cent of sworn personnel. In the 1991/92 period, women made up 28.7 per cent of applicants and 35.4 per cent of recruits — well above the national average of 22 per cent female recruits. At present the Human Resource Management Branch is unable to explain this difference in favour of women. It is possible that the typically higher qualifications of female applicants to police services may account for it, given the recent emphasis on educational criteria in selection. Whatever the reason, the disproportionate recruitment of women appears to be an unintended by-product of anti-discrimination provisions rather than a direct outcome of affirmative action.¹

The Service became subject to the Queensland Equal Opportunity in Employment Act in 1992, which requires more active measures to encourage equality. The Service created an Equal Employment Opportunity Joint Management/Union Consultative Committee in late-1991 and has an EEO Co-ordinator. Apart from developing an EEO management plan, achievements include:

- the promotion of EEO principles in Service journals, information sessions and an information kit
- the development of in-service Competency Acquisition Program modules *Equity and Sexual Harassment*

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- selection and training of Sexual Harassment Referral Officers
- sexual harassment awareness sessions
- the inclusion of an EEO component in the Executive Development Program,
- the development of a non-discriminatory language guide and gradual removal of all discriminatory language from Service documents,
- the creation of part-time work (eight of 10 police who took up part-time work were women).

Under the Equal Opportunity Act the Service is required to provide an evaluation of its management plan. The first evaluation Report is not publicly available, indicating some residual secrecy. The focus of the evaluation is on awareness of EEO principles. 35 per cent of female police and 31 per cent of male police had received some training in EEO and anti-discrimination, and 44 per cent of respondents were aware of the existence of EEO Contact Officers. Sexual harassment awareness sessions occurred unevenly in different regions. Overall, 16-17 per cent of work units had received sessions; 10 per cent of survey respondents had approached a Sexual Harassment Referral Officer to obtain advice; 48 per cent of female police and 21 per cent of male police thought that sexual harassment existed in their workplace. The Report indicates that the promotion of women has been accelerated slightly. From 1992 to 1993 the percentage of female senior sergeants increased from 2.45 per cent to 3.8 per cent. The percentage of female sergeants increased by 0.04 per cent. A view commonly expressed by female police was that a clearer commitment to equality should be made by managers, that there should be greater gender balance on selection panels, and that more career planning support should be provided.

The Report is progressive in its attempts to improve the position of women in the Service. In particular, a commitment is made to put greater effort into encouraging women into management training and supervision. The Report mentions resource limitations which might have restricted further evaluation. However, there is no acknowledgment that far more detailed analysis is needed to determine the impact of EEO policies and develop strategies to remedy inequities. There is little or no mention of recruitment patterns, Academy dropout rates, levels and types of sexual harassment or sex discrimination in deployment and promotion. Separation rates and reasons for separations are ignored — despite a report that half of all female separations from 1988 to 1990 were for child-care reasons (*Courier-Mail*, 9 June 1992:5). One strategy in the 1992/93 Management Plan was targeted recruitment. Because of cutbacks in recruitment and high application rates this strategy was abandoned.

One independent survey suggests that major changes have occurred in the Service since the Fitzgerald Inquiry, but that some significant problems remain. Hotchkiss (1992) found that younger males were more accepting of female police and that both male and female police felt that working conditions for women had greatly improved in recent years. Beliefs about sex discrimination in promotion indicated that women felt only slightly less able to benefit from inside contacts than men and that women's chances of promotion by merit were

fairly good. Hotchkiss's study shows a typical lag between organisational culture and administrative policy, and the persistence of equivocal attitudes on the part of policewomen themselves.

At the end of 1993 the Queensland Police Service introduced a pre-entry agility test for applicants. Previously, the only physical tests were a run, a medical check and a firearms-handling test. Despite evidence from other States that such tests tell significantly against women, the test was defended as simulating a backyard chase that could be faced by any operational police officer (despite the fact that this was an entry test not a training test). Applicants were expected to complete the obstacle course in under four minutes. After a large number of women failed the test the time limit was abandoned and the time taken recorded instead. Deputy Commissioner Greg Early, responsible for introducing the test, appeared surprised by the female failure rate. He stated that 'it's conceded that some females have less upper body strength than males and that's why the four minute requirement has been amended' (*Courier-Mail*, 19 November 1993:3; *Courier Mail*, 21 October 1993:16). It may be that the Service was concerned about formal complaints of discrimination. Recently the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Tribunal ordered the Service to employ an applicant who was highly rated but rejected because he required contact lenses. The Tribunal rejected the Service's claim that the physical requirements of policing precluded wearing contact lenses (*Flannery v. O'Sullivan*, No. 1, 1993, Anti-Discrimination Tribunal: 1-15). The pre-entry agility test represents something of a rearguard action by adherents of a street crime control model of policing that has traditionally marginalised policewomen. As a major criterion its introduction has been defeated, but it remains part of the entry requirement and features in applicants' evaluations.

The question of the physical requirements of policing has been a vexed issue. Despite research evidence that policewomen are in fact better at managing or preventing violence (Prenzler, 1992:5-6), claims of women's inferior ability remain a major source of resistance to the utilisation of women in certain areas of police work. Recently, for example, Police Union President John O'Gorman called for the reintroduction of height and weight restrictions following a number of attacks on police officers. O'Gorman claimed that some officers were concerned for their own safety when working with 'smaller officers, especially women', who were seen as an 'easy target for aggressive louts'. O'Gorman admitted he did not know whether more women officers were assaulted than male officers, nor did he know of a case where weaker partners had failed to provide assistance (*Courier Mail*, 19 January 1993:5). Commissioner O'Sullivan came out in support of women, stating that the Service would remain an equal opportunity employer.

In August 1993 Queensland's highest ranking policewoman, Chief Superintendent Jill Bolen, resigned from the Service; but the true significance of this action is by no means clear. In an interview she expressed the view that policing was a difficult occupation for women, especially if they had career aspirations: 'It's a masculine organisation that is all about conformity'. But although a cartoon in the *Sunday Mail* suggested that chauvinism was one of the factors pushing her out, Bolen attributed her decision to her sister's illness and her own wish to do further study (*Sunday Mail*, 22 August 1993:1,-5).

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A State Apart?

The fate of policewomen appears to be one barometer of the peculiarity of Queensland. The status of policewomen has varied widely in different agencies since 1915. Marginalisation and reversals of fortune have not been unique to Queensland. As late as 1977, for example, the percentage of policewomen in New South Wales was 1.5 per cent, when the national average was 4 per cent. Queensland, however, has tended to be well behind other States, especially South Australia and Victoria, in employing, swearing in, and promoting women, and in lifting the marriage bar. The Whitrod years are an anomaly and many of the gains made in advance of other agencies were subsequently reversed. A delayed start, quixotic fluctuations in numbers, doors suddenly opening and suddenly closing, lesbian witch hunts: the aberrant history of policewomen in Queensland should not be surprising in the 'deep north' and the experience lends support to the idea of Queensland as 'different'. Queensland's allegedly distinctive conservatism has been linked to its strong rural bias, decentralisation, ethnic homogeneity, suspicion of federal government and sense of vulnerability to invasion from Asia. Writers on the subject have focused their discussion on such features as autocratic government, underfunded education, parochialism, racism, hostility to conservation and some occasionally quirky experimentation. The neglect of gender issues in this list is itself indicative of the pronounced sexism that has also, arguably, been part of the Queensland tradition.

At first glance, the recent disproportionate surge in recruitment of women in Queensland, matched only by the Australian Federal Police and New South Wales, would indicate something verging on radicalism. But recent changes may only be indicative of a new climate of less traditional conservatism. The inadvertent nature of the disproportionate recruitment, the introduction of a pre-entry agility test, and the introduction of only limited EEO measures and limited evaluation of their impact suggest that Queensland is merely shadowing the more advanced States. Only New South Wales has targeted recruitment and affirmative action. Demographic change, and electoral and administrative reform, may mean that Queensland is rapidly throwing off its image as the Hillbilly State. But despite the ascendancy of conservative governments elsewhere, Queensland under Labor is unlikely to become a showcase for restructuring society, particularly in the area of gender equity. Government opposition to the legalisation of abortion is perhaps the most telling example. The police case provides further evidence. Overall, the situation for women is well expressed by Clare Burton, who recently resigned in frustration from her position as Commissioner for Public Sector Equity:

It struck me very early that the intention was to keep things at a reasonably slow pace and not upset expectations about the rate and type of change.... It also appeared to me that if it was going to cost anything, it wasn't going to happen (Roberts, 1993:37).

Great steps forward have been taken to reduce discrimination but a more innovative political climate will be required before equality is achieved in the

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Queensland Police. Despite rapid change in the last few years, it is likely that Queensland will keep to its tradition of extreme caution.

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Note

¹ Figures supplied by personnel section, Queensland Police Service, Brisbane.

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