

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION
RESEARCH & CO-ORDINATION DIVISION**

**Briefing Note:
Key Findings of Post-Academy Training Survey
(January 1994 Recruit Intake)**

In January 1994 the Queensland Police Service (QPS) commenced a revised recruit training program, known as 'P.R.O.V.E.'. The 61 recruits in the initial intake of this program were surveyed by the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) prior to the commencement of their training. The results of the survey were published in *Summary Report #3*.

This briefing note summarises the key findings of a second survey of the recruits administered in July 1994 at the end of their Academy training. The questionnaire was designed to examine the recruits' views on, and satisfaction with, the new training program. Fifty-six recruits (92%) responded to the questionnaire.

Of those who responded, 27 per cent were female and 73 per cent were male. Ninety-eight per cent reported having some exposure to post-secondary education.

Career Plans

Recruits reported a high level of satisfaction with their careers as police officers, with 95 per cent stating that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'. No respondent indicated being 'very dissatisfied' or 'dissatisfied'. The great majority (89%) of recruits 'never' considered resigning from the QPS during the six months at the Academy. Of the small number of recruits who had considered resigning, the reasons cited included: stress, peer pressure and difficulties in adjustment.

Table 1 shows how the recruits projected their career plans five years after completing recruit training. The largest proportion of recruits (45%) indicated that they wanted to be working in criminal investigation. Other common career choices were: to work in general operational policing (14%) and to work in special response units (14%). Around 14 per cent were undecided.

Table 1: Expected Career Plans of Recruits

Type of Work	% of Recruits who Mentioned as a Career Aspiration
Working in criminal investigation	45
Working in general operational policing	14
Working in special response units	14
Working on social problems	2
Working in traffic	2
Working in education and training	2
Other	7
Not decided	14
Total	100%

Source: Police Recruit Survey 2, July 1994.

- Notes:
1. n=56.
 2. Recruits were asked: 'As far as your career plans are concerned, what type of work do you want to be doing five years after completing your recruit training?'
 3. Percentages have been rounded.

These responses are similar to the career plans that the recruits reported when surveyed at the commencement of training. Working in criminal investigations remains the dominant career choice of recruits before and after Academy training. At the beginning of the training program, 46 per cent of recruits said that they would like to work in criminal investigation. However, there has been a drop in the proportion of recruits wanting to work on social problems such as domestic violence and child abuse. In January 1994 before commencing training, 15 per cent (n=9) of recruits reported wanting to work on social problems; in July 1994 after completing their training at the Academy, around two per cent (n=1) chose 'working on social problems'.

Educational Plans

There has been no substantial change in the recruits' commitment to further study. Both before and after the Academy training, the large majority of recruits expressed an interest in undertaking further study: 84 per cent in January 1994; 80 per cent in July 1994.

At the end of the Academy program, 13 per cent of those expecting to undertake further study indicated they would like to study toward an Associate Diploma/TAFE course, 60 per cent said a Bachelor's degree and 20 per cent said a postgraduate qualification. The main area of interest was justice studies/administration, an area where 24 per cent of recruits were interested in further study. Other areas of interest specified by the recruits included: science/forensic (18%); education (11%); and law (11%).

Assessment of the Training Program

Recruits were asked to assess the Academy training program. Their assessments can be divided into three main categories:

- the positive and negative features of the Academy program
- views on specific issues relating to the program
- the usefulness of various teaching methods used in the program.

Positive and Negative Features of the Program

The recruits were asked '*what was the best part of your training?*'. Their responses were unprompted. Ninety-eight per cent of recruits identified one or more positive features of their training (see Table 2). The 'best parts' specified included: various skills courses such as driver training, firearms, survival techniques and arrest procedures (51% of recruits); practical exercises and role-playing (27%); and station duty (27%).

Table 2: Selected 'Best Parts' of the Academy Training Identified by Recruits (Unprompted)

Feature	% of Recruits Identifying as 'Best Part'
Operational/skills courses	51
Practical exercises	27
Station duty	27
Physical education	9
Learning about police powers and procedures	7
Social aspects	6
Computer skills	4
Feeling confident at the end of the program	4
Leaving the Academy	4

Source: Police Recruit Survey 2, July 1994.

- Notes:
1. n=55.
 2. Recruits were asked: 'Thinking back over the last six months at the Academy, what was the best part of your training?'.
best
 3. Some recruits nominated more than one feature, and therefore percentages will not add to 100%. Percentages have been rounded.
 4. Table only shows selected responses of the recruits. Features identified by under two per cent of recruits were not included.

Seventy-three per cent of recruits also indicated that they would like to make changes to the Academy program (see Table 3). Unprompted, the most common responses were: less sociological, cultural and inter-personal content (15%); and more practical courses (15%). Other suggestions were: more role-plays and practical exercises (10%); reduce the number of case-studies (7%); lessen the overlap in course content (7%); and improve the standard of driver training (7%).

Table 3: Selected Changes to Program Suggested by Recruits (Unprompted)

Suggested Change	% of Recruits Nominating
Less sociological/cultural/inter-personal content	15
More practical/skills courses	15
More role plays and practical exercises	10
Less case-studies	7
More physical education/team building	7
Improve the standard of driver training	7
Fewer lectures out of hours	7
More law and procedures	5
More station duty	5
Shorten the foundation component of program	5
More consistent assessment in driver training	5
Less rigorous physical testing	5
Better resources, such as library resources	5
Give recruits the option to 'live out'	5

Source: Police Recruit Survey 2, July 1994.

- Notes:
1. n=42.
 2. Recruits were asked: "What would be the one feature of the Academy training program that you would change?".
 3. Some recruits nominated more than one change, and therefore percentages will not add to 100%. Percentages have been rounded.
 4. Table only shows selected responses of the recruits. Changes suggested by under three per cent of recruits were not included.

Overall, the recruits favoured an operational focus to the training program. They generally preferred skills-based and practical components of the program, and many wanted to increase the amount of training in areas they perceived as relevant to operational policing, such as more skills training, station duty, and law and procedures. Interestingly, recruits who completed the previous (that is, pre-P.R.O.V.E. program) also preferred training that was perceived as 'operationally' relevant.

Specific Training Issues

The recruits were asked to indicate whether they agreed with specific statements regarding their training at the Academy (see Table 4). In general, the assessment of the program was positive. Virtually all of the recruits (93%) said that they were challenged by the course. The great majority (84%) agreed that the staff were willing to listen to them. Most recruits felt prepared for Field Training (70%) and agreed that 'critical thinking was encouraged by the course' (70%).

On the negative side, over one-third (39%) of the recruits felt that they had not been given sufficient information about Field Training, the next stage in their training. Around one-fifth of respondents also assessed the workload of the program as 'too great'.

Table 4: Assessment of the Academy Program

	Agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Disagree (%)
Overall, I felt prepared for Field Training	70	29	2
I have <u>not</u> been given enough information about Field Training	39	18	43
Critical thinking was encouraged by the course	70	16	14
The workload was too great	21	21	57
The course did not challenge me	5	2	93
The staff listened to me when I expressed an opinion	84	9	7
The course provided me with an awareness of the differing lifestyles in Queensland today	63	25	13

Source: Police Recruit Survey 2, July 1994.

- Notes:
1. n=56.
 2. Recruits were asked: 'Listed below are some statements about your recruit training at the Academy. Do you agree or disagree with each of them?'
 3. Percentages have been rounded.

Living at the Academy

One particular concern about the program has been the impact of the compulsory residential component of the program. The majority of recruits were happy to live-in at the Academy. In the open-ended question asking recruits to suggest possible changes to the program, only five percent mentioned the compulsory live-in requirement. When asked explicitly whether they would 'have preferred not to have "lived-in" at the Academy', about 34 per cent (n=19) of the recruits said 'yes'. The main reasons for preferring to live-out included: the strain living-in caused for the recruit's family (39%); the financial burden caused by living-in (39%); and unhappiness with the quality and cost of the food (11%).

Teaching Methods

Table 5 indicates how useful the recruits found various methods of training. Overall, the recruits found methods of teaching with a practical emphasis to be more useful. For example, most recruits reported that the following methods were 'very useful' or 'useful':

- lectures from experienced police officers (100%)
- skills practice (100%)
- role plays (98%)
- station duty (98%)
- class discussion and debate (96%)
- case investigation (80%).

In contrast, when asked to assess a less 'hands-on' or practical teaching method, the assessments were more varied. For instance, 63 per cent of recruits stated that lectures from academics were useful, 23 per cent were unsure, and 16 per cent said such lectures were useless. Seventy-seven per cent reported audio-visual presentations useful, 14 per cent said unsure, and nine per cent described the presentations as useless.

When the recruits were surveyed before commencing the program, they were asked about the emphasis that should be given to various teaching methods. The recruits generally favoured teaching methods that emphasised the practical application of knowledge and skills. The survey at the end of the Academy program showed that recruits assessed these types of teaching methods as 'very useful' or 'useful'.

Table 5: Usefulness of Various Teaching Methods

Teaching Method	Useful (%)	Not sure (%)	Useless (%)
Lectures from experienced police officers*	100	---	---
Class discussion and debate*	97	4	---
Role plays**	98	2	---
Lectures from academic experts on policing and law*	61	23	16
Case investigation**	80	11	9
Skills practice**	100	---	---
Assignments*	48	16	36
Audio-visual presentations*	77	14	9
Research sessions*	77	16	7
Station duty*	98	2	---

Source: Police Recruit Survey 2, July 1994.

Notes: 1. * n=56; ** n=55.

2. Recruits were asked: 'Based on your experiences in the last six months, how useful did you find each of these methods?'

3. Percentages have been rounded.

Summary

After completing approximately six months in the new recruit training program, the overwhelming majority of recruits (95%) reported that they were satisfied with their career choice as a police officer and were generally satisfied with the training program. The following positive assessments of the training were provided:

- 93 per cent found the six-month Academy training to be challenging
- 84 per cent agreed that program staff were willing to listen to them
- 70 per cent felt prepared for Field Training
- 70 per cent said that critical thinking was encouraged in the program.

Seventy-three per cent of the recruits made suggestions for changes to the recruit training program. The predominant responses were for a greater emphasis on practical policing issues and exercises, and less theoretical orientation.

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