

Queensland Police Service Promotion and Transfer System

October 2000

Research and Prevention Division

CJC Mission:
To promote integrity in the Queensland Public Sector and an effective, fair and accessible criminal justice system.

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This paper was written by Gabi Hoffmann of the CJC's Research and Prevention Division.

Abbreviations

ADCs	Assessment Development Centres (a new process for selecting officers for promotion to the rank of Inspector)
CJC	Criminal Justice Commission
MDP	Management Development Program (an educational course to prepare officers for the duties of higher ranks)
QPS	Queensland Police Service

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KEY FINDINGS

Background

On 1 May 1998, a number of changes were implemented to the Queensland Police Service (QPS) promotion and transfer system. The main features of these changes were:

- use of panel conveners from outside the region or command to which selections are being made
- use of an independent community member on the selection panel
- generic appointments to rank
- formation of standing regional panels for each generic group advertised.

Prior to the implementation of these changes a baseline survey was conducted measuring applicants' perceptions of the promotion and transfer system (CJC 1998). This survey found high levels of negative perceptions toward the promotion and transfer system.

The current report presents findings from a follow-up survey conducted in May–June 2000. This survey also included new questions on the Management Development Program (MDP) and Assessment Development Centres (ADCs).

Perceptions of the promotions and transfer process

Respondents in 2000 still generally had negative views of the promotion and transfer system. However, for three out of the five statements measuring perceptions of fairness, consistency and bias, respondents to the 2000 survey gave more positive responses than their 1998 counterparts. There were no differences between 1998 and 2000 in responses to any of the statements measuring attitudes to selection policies and procedures and the review system.

The MDP and ADCs

The majority of officers surveyed thought little of the MDP. There were no consistent differences between officers who had, and had not, been involved in the program. However, officers of higher ranks had considerably more positive views of the MDP than lower ranks, with two-thirds of Inspectors and higher considering that completion of the program was an appropriate prerequisite for promotion. It seems that the more officers were exposed to higher management duties, the more positive their attitudes were to the value and importance of the MDP.

Among officers of the rank of Senior Sergeant or higher, more than half agreed that ADCs are appropriate prerequisites for promotion to Inspector, and that these centres provide a good way of identifying training needs prior to promotion. At the same time, however, more than half also agreed that ADCs do not fully identify the knowledge and skills necessary to become a senior officer. Officers who had been involved in the ADC process appeared to have slightly more positive viewpoints than other officers.

Experiences of the promotions and transfer process

More than a third of respondents who had applied for a promotion had worked with a selection panel member and 60 per cent had known of other applicants who had worked with a panel member. Respondents did not generally believe that knowing a panel member themselves helped their application, but they were more likely to believe that other applicants who had worked with a panel member were advantaged.

Most officers sought feedback on their applications; however, most were dissatisfied with the feedback received. Respondents' main criticisms were the lack of detail in their feedback, the time taken to obtain feedback, and their inability sometimes to obtain feedback at all.

Comments

The top six issues most frequently identified as a problem with the QPS promotion and transfer system were:

- cronyism/bias
- problems with the MDP
- no recognition of length of service/experience
- delays
- inconsistencies among panels
- lack of emphasis on work performance.

The most frequent suggestions for improvement of the selection panel process were to implement central panels, or central panel conveners, and to place more weight on work performance.

The most common suggestions on how to improve the review process were to decrease delays and to make the process simpler.

Policy implications

Overview

The general negativity about the selection process is to be expected given the competitiveness of the process and the fact that many officers who consider themselves well qualified are unsuccessful. The changes to the selection process implemented since the 1998 survey have had only a modest impact on perceptions of the process, indicating that these attitudes are clearly hard to change. This raises the issue of whether anything else can, and should, be done to improve these perceptions.

In 1998, the most common suggestion for improvement to the selection process was to include independent panel members. Even though this was implemented in May 1998, officers are still not happy with the process. The second most common suggestion for improvement in 1998 was to have centralised panels. The current proposal of permanent panel conveners was seen as very desirable by two-thirds of the officers surveyed in 2000. However, given recent experience, it would seem that even if permanent panel conveners were implemented there would be no guarantee that perceptions of the process would improve.

Management Development Program

Many of the negative comments regarding the MDP concerned the perceived lack of relevance to the officer's work. It may be that better marketing regarding the purpose of the program would have notable benefits (i.e. emphasising that the purpose of the program is to prepare officers for management/supervision work rather than operational policing).

Assessment Development Centres

Given the overall negative views that police officers have on promotion issues, responses to the ADCs seem fairly positive.

Reviews

Respondents to the 2000 survey had essentially similar opinions to the 1998 survey regarding reviews. The continuing issues were that officers had difficulty understanding the process and felt frustrated about delays.

Feedback

Many respondents criticised the lack of detailed, constructive and timely feedback regarding their applications. Panel member training may be of help in this area. Improved feedback may decrease officers' perceptions of bias, as well as help reduce the number of reviews.

1: Introduction

Purpose of report

This report is a follow-up of a survey conducted in 1998, which measured police officers' perceptions of the promotion and transfer systems prior to the introduction of a new selection panel system. Following the original survey in 1998, a number of changes were made to the QPS promotion and transfer system. The present research was conducted to measure changes in officers' perceptions of the system since the new procedures were implemented.

Background

Before 1990, promotions and transfers in the QPS were generally based on seniority. Following the recommendations of the Fitzgerald Report and the implementation of the *Police Service Administration Act 1990*, appointments were to be made on merit alone. However, the *Report on the Review of the Queensland Police Service* (Bingham Review) in 1996 still found widespread dissatisfaction among police officers with the promotion and transfer system. Specific areas of concern were:

- regional bias in promotion and transfer decisions
- inconsistent decision making by selection panels
- the perception that the role of experience in assessing merit had been devalued
- lack of common competencies required for each rank
- the workload generated for officers on selection panels.

Following the Bingham Review, a number of changes were made to the selection panel process to address the issues of inconsistency and bias in the selection process. These changes were:

- using panel conveners who are external to the region or command for which selections are being made
- having an independent community member on the selection panel
- using generic appointments where appropriate
- constituting standing regional panels for each generic group advertised
- having panels of mixed-gender composition.

These changes were implemented in May 1998. The Bingham Review had recommended that the new selection panel system be monitored by the CJC in conjunction with the QPS. In accordance with this, a survey was designed to measure officers' perceptions of the promotion and transfer systems. The survey was administered prior to the implementation of the new system. It consisted of six sections:

- perceptions of the promotion, transfer and review systems
- involvement in the promotion, transfer and review systems
- personal knowledge
- feedback
- comments
- demographics.

The results of this survey (CJC 1998) indicated that the perceptions of the promotion and transfer system held by police were generally negative.

The survey was re-administered in 2000, with the addition of some questions regarding the changes to the selection panel process, as well as the MDP and ADCs (see chapter 4).

Limitations of study

This study is limited to measuring officers' *perceptions* of the promotion and transfer systems. In any promotion system, there will always be many more unsuccessful applicants than successful applicants. Many unsuccessful applicants may rationalise their lack of success in gaining an appointment by alleging that the selection panel was biased or incompetent. However, this would apply to both surveys equally, so that the results of the surveys conducted in 1998 and 2000 can still provide a good comparison of changes in attitudes over time.

It is not possible to determine to what extent the negative opinions on the surveys are the result of legitimate grievances versus unfounded criticisms. Therefore, this report is limited to describing the results of the Applicants Survey without making recommendations based on these results. The survey has value in helping to ascertain whether there have been any changes in attitudes over time, yet it would not be appropriate to use the survey information on its own to guide decision-making regarding the promotion and transfer system. More objective information would need to be included for this purpose.

Structure of report

This report presents the findings of the 2000 survey under the following headings:

- Methodology and sample characteristics
- Perceptions of the promotion, transfer and review systems
- Management Development Program and Assessment Development Centres
- Experiences of the promotion and transfer process
- Comments.

2: Methodology and sample characteristics

Survey procedure

The sample frame consisted of a randomly generated group of officers across the State. The data were collected by means of a computer-based survey utilising the QPS Bulletin Board and email systems. Officers' responses were automatically downloaded into a secure database.

The officers selected were sent an email message from the Commissioner of Police, endorsed by the presidents of the Queensland Police Union of Employees and the Commissioned Officers Union. The email message requested officers to access the QPS Bulletin Board and complete the questionnaire. Reminder messages were sent to all officers in the sample 14 days following the initial message.

Sample selection and response rate

The initial email message was sent to officers on 8 May 2000, with the closing date for receipt of responses being 5 June 2000 (four weeks later).

To ensure that the officers surveyed had had some experience with the QPS promotion and transfer system, the sample was taken from officers with at least five years' sworn service (Constable pay point 5 and above). The sample construction included a random selection of one in five male officers, one in two female officers of the rank of Sergeant and above, and one in four female officers below the rank of Sergeant. Female officers were over-sampled to ensure that there were sufficient females in the study to test for possible gender differences in responses.

A total of 1,454 officers were sent the email; 695 responses were received. However, only 644 of these responded 'yes' to the question as to whether or not they had received a personal email requesting that they fill out the survey. This represents a response rate of 44.3 per cent, which was somewhat lower than the response rate in 1998. All 695 responses were retained (as per the procedures in 1998).

The survey included a question asking officers whether they had been involved in the Promotion and Transfer system since 1 May 1998. This was the date when the new procedures were implemented. Of the 695 respondents, only officers who responded 'yes' to this question were included in the final sample for analysis. This was comparable to the procedures used in the 1998 report, where officers were only included in the analysis if they had had some involvement with the promotion and transfer system since January 1995. This left a total of 533 officers in the 2000 sample for analysis.¹

Characteristics of sample

Gender of respondents

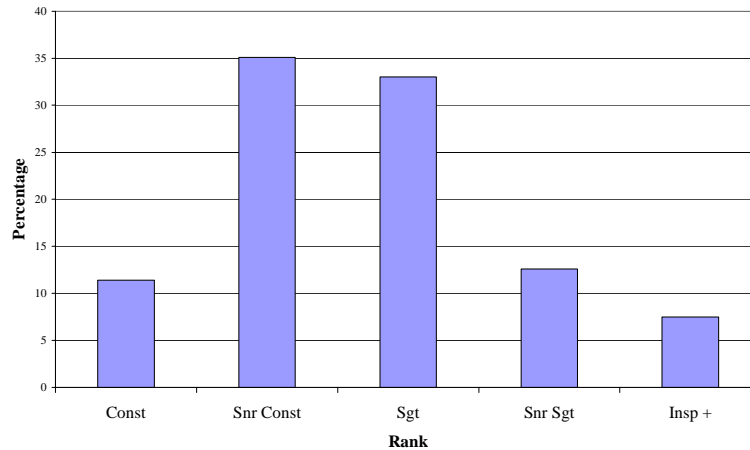
There were substantially more male (84%) than female (16%) respondents, which broadly reflects the overall gender composition of the QPS. Some officers declined to answer this question.

¹ The final dataset contains 15 cases where respondents either did not indicate length of service or indicated that they had had less than five years' experience as a sworn officer. This is due in part to the decision to include respondents who had not received a personal email.

Rank of respondents

The distribution of the rank of respondents is shown in figure 2.1. The majority of respondents were either Senior Constables or Sergeants.

FIGURE 2.1: Rank of respondents – 2000

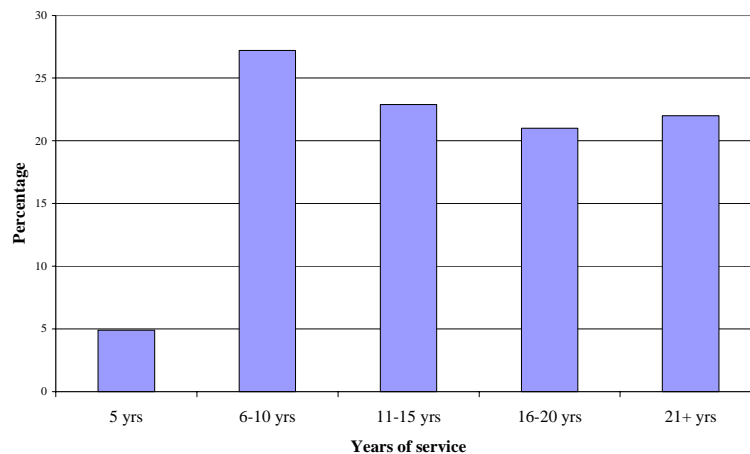


Notes: Const = Constable
 Snr Const = Senior Constable
 Sgt = Sergeant
 Snr Sgt = Senior Sergeant
 Insp+ = Inspector and above
 n = 531. Excludes 2 respondents who did not indicate rank.

Years sworn into QPS

Figure 2.2 shows the sample distribution according to years of service. As stated earlier, only officers with at least five years' service were targeted in the sample, however a small number of officers with less than five years service have been included in the analysis. More than half of the officers had been sworn in for 15 years or less.

FIGURE 2.2: Years sworn to QPS – 2000

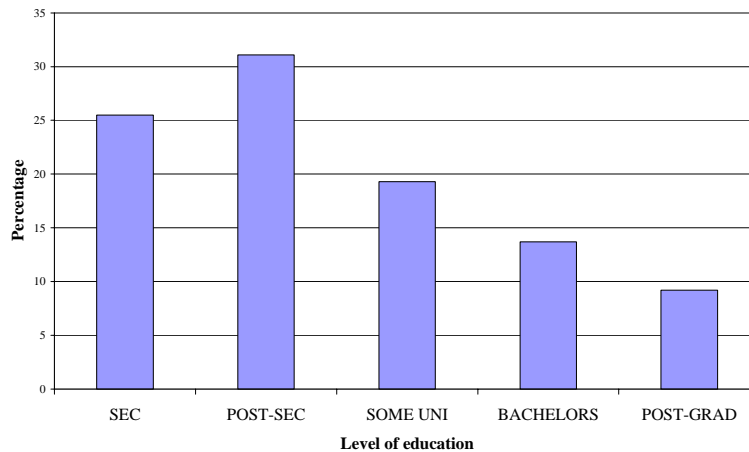


Note: n = 522. Excludes 11 respondents who did not provide years of service.

Level of education

Figure 2.3 shows that around 57 per cent of respondents had not attended university, while 23 per cent had completed one or more degrees. The level of education is higher than that in the 1998 sample, with 43 per cent of officers having attended some university in this sample, compared to only 33 per cent in 1998.

FIGURE 2.3: Level of education – 2000



Notes: SEC = secondary schooling
 POST-SEC = completed post-secondary diploma, TAFE certificate or trade qualification
 SOME UNI = attended some university, no degree
 BACHELORS = completed Bachelors degree
 POST-GRAD = completed postgraduate diploma or degree
 n = 527. Excludes 6 respondents who did not indicate level of education.

Region of respondents

The number of respondents from each region is shown in table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1: Region of respondents – 2000

Region	No.	%
Far Northern	51	9.6
Northern	37	6.9
Central	53	9.9
North Coast	56	10.5
Southern	54	10.1
South Eastern	51	9.6
Metro North	64	12.0
Metro South	37	6.9
State Crime Ops	38	7.1
Ops Support	47	8.8
Other HQ functions	27	5.1
Did not indicate region	18	3.4
Total	533	100.0

Summary

The survey sample had the following characteristics:

- all of those in the final sample had had some experience with the promotion and transfer system since May 1998
- most respondents were male
- most were Senior Constables or Sergeants
- more than half had less than 15 years' service
- more than half had not attended university.

3: Perceptions of the promotions, transfer and review systems

Section A of the survey asked 30 questions designed to measure respondents' perceptions of the promotion, transfer and review systems of the QPS. The first 21 questions had been asked in 1998, with the remainder being new questions. Each question contained a statement to which officers responded on a five-point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

This chapter presents the survey findings from Section A by grouping the responses under the following headings:

- fairness, consistency and bias
- selection panel policies and procedures
- review process.

Fairness, consistency and bias

Table 3.1 presents a summary of officers' responses in 1998 and 2000 to five statements concerning fairness, consistency and bias in the promotion system. Chi-square tests were performed to test for differences between the two years.

The comparisons between 1998 and 2000 show that there has been some change in attitudes in these two years. There were statistically significant differences in responses to three of the statements. Specifically, officers in 2000 were less likely to agree that:

- there is bias towards appointing applicants from within the particular region that the position is located (60% agreed in 2000 compared to 70% in 1998)
- the quality of selection decisions made by QPS panels needs significant improvement (66% agreed in 2000 compared to 73% in 1998)

TABLE 3.1: Responses to statements regarding fairness, consistency and bias – 2000 (comparisons with 1998)

Statement	Agree/Disagree %	1998 n=493	2000 n=533	Significant diff.
A1. The QPS promotion and transfer system is fair.	Agree %	14	20	ns
	Neither %	19	17	
	Disagree %	68	63	
A2. There is bias towards appointing applicants from within the particular region that the position is located.	Agree %	70	60	<.01
	Neither %	18	26	
	Disagree %	12	14	
A3. QPS selection panels are mostly consistent in their approach.	Agree %	18	19	ns
	Neither %	21	20	
	Disagree %	61	61	
A4. Officers located outside regional headquarters have an equal chance of gaining appointments there.	Agree %	10	17	<.01
	Neither %	34	29	
	Disagree %	56	54	
A7. The quality of selection decisions made by QPS panels needs significant improvement.	Agree %	73	66	<.01
	Neither %	20	21	
	Disagree %	7	13	

Note: The categories of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' have been combined for all tables presented in this report. The same applies to 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

Officers in 2000 were also more likely to agree that 'officers located outside regional headquarters have an equal chance of gaining appointments there' (17% compared to 10%).

In response to the statement 'The QPS promotion and transfer system is fair', 20 per cent of officers in 2000 agreed compared to 14 per cent in 1998. However, this difference was not statistically significant. There were no significant differences between the two years in responses to the statement 'QPS selection panels are mostly consistent in their approach'.

While the changes in some of these perceptions are a welcome result, the majority (one half to two-thirds) of officers still had negative opinions regarding the fairness and consistency of the promotion system.

Table 3.2 presents officers' responses to five new statements regarding the fairness of the selection process and the composition of the selection panels since May 1998.

In 1998, having independent members on selection panels was the most commonly cited suggestion for improving the QPS promotion and transfer system. However, in 2000 officers were somewhat divided as to whether the new panels had improved fairness and consistency.

Almost two-thirds (65%) of officers were in favour of the proposed use of permanent panel conveners as a way of enhancing consistency and fairness in selection process.

TABLE 3.2: Responses to new statements about composition of selection panels: total sample – 2000

Statement	% Agree/ Strongly agree	% Neither	% Disagree/ Strongly disagree
A23. The composition of the panels (independent community member, police officer, police officer from outside the region) helps to ensure the selection process is valid and fair.	36	21	43
A24. The use of a police officer from outside the region does NOT improve the validity and fairness of selection panels.	51	23	26
A25. The inclusion of an independent community member on selection panels is an important step toward preventing bias in the decision-making process.	42	16	42
A28. Having an external convenue on the selection panel is an important part of preventing bias in the decision-making process.	48	23	29
A30. The use of permanent panel conveners will enhance consistency and fairness in the selection process.	65	17	18

Note: The categories of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' have been combined. The same applies to 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

Responses by success in gaining an appointment

Table 3.3 presents officers' responses to statements about fairness and consistency according to whether they had been successful in gaining an appointment since May 1998.

As this table shows, successful applicants were more likely to have positive views than were unsuccessful applicants. However, even among successful applicants, a considerable proportion expressed negative perceptions. For example, 51% of the *successful* applicants disagreed with the statement that 'The QPS promotion and transfer system is fair'.

TABLE 3.3: Responses to questions regarding fairness by success in gaining an appointment – 2000 sample

Statement	Agree/Disagree %	Appointment n=222	No appointment n=225	Significant diff.
A1. The QPS promotion and transfer system is fair.	Agree %	27	10	<.001
	Neither %	22	12	
	Disagree %	51	78	
A2. There is bias towards appointing applicants from within the particular region that the position is located.	Agree %	57	66	ns
	Neither %	27	23	
	Disagree %	16	11	
A3. QPS selection panels are mostly consistent in their approach.	Agree %	23	15	<.01
	Neither %	23	14	
	Disagree %	54	71	
A4. Officers located outside regional headquarters have an equal chance of gaining appointments there.	Agree %	20	13	<.05
	Neither %	32	27	
	Disagree %	48	60	
A7. The quality of selection decisions made by QPS panels needs significant improvement.	Agree %	57	77	<.001
	Neither %	27	15	
	Disagree %	16	8	
A23. The composition of the panels (independent community member, police officer, police officer from outside the region) helps to ensure the selection process is valid and fair.	Agree %	46	24	<.001
	Neither %	15	25	
	Disagree %	39	51	
A24. The use of a police officer from outside the region does NOT improve the validity and fairness of selection panels.	Agree %	45	58	<.05
	Neither %	26	21	
	Disagree %	29	20	
A25. The inclusion of an independent community member on selection panels is an important step toward preventing bias in the decision-making process.	Agree %	46	34	<.05
	Neither %	15	20	
	Disagree %	39	46	
A28. Having an external convener on the selection panel is an important part of preventing bias in the decision-making process.	Agree %	50	46	ns
	Neither %	21	25	
	Disagree %	29	29	
A30. The use of permanent panel conveners will enhance consistency and fairness in the selection process.	Agree %	65	61	ns
	Neither %	17	19	
	Disagree %	18	20	

Note: The categories of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' have been combined for all tables presented in this report. The same applies to 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

Responses by rank and gender

There was only one significant gender difference in the responses to the statements regarding fairness, consistency and bias. Specifically, male officers were more likely to agree that there is regional bias than were female officers (62% compared to 48%).

Table 3.4 shows that lower ranks perceived the QPS promotion and transfer system to be less fair than did higher ranks. In particular, the majority (63%) of Inspectors and above perceived the promotion system to be fair, whereas in the lower ranks, the majority of officers did not believe that the system was fair. Officers of higher ranks have done well in the promotion system and could, therefore, be expected to have more favourable perceptions.

TABLE 3.4: Perception of fairness by rank – 2000

Statement	Rank	No.	%			Sig. diff.
			Agree	Neither	Disagree	
A1. The QPS promotion and transfer system is fair.	Constable	61	16	13	71	<.001
	Snr Constable	186	13	18	69	<.001
	Sergeant	176	14	18	68	<.001
	Snr Sergeant	67	30	22	48	<.001
	Inspector or above	40	63	10	27	<.001

Note: The categories of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' have been combined. The same applies to 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

Table excludes one senior constable who declined to answer the question and two respondents who did not provide their rank.

Responses by region

Table 3.5 presents the results of officers' responses to the statements: 'There is a bias towards appointing applicants from within the particular region that the position is located' and 'Officers located outside of regional headquarters have an equal chance of gaining appointments there' by the region in which they were located. It should be noted that respondents' perceptions might have been based on experiences of applying for positions in regions other than the region in which they were currently serving. Due to small numbers in some of the cells chi-square tests were not performed.

In all areas except 'other HQ functions' a clear majority of respondents agreed with the statement that there was a regional bias.

In all areas except 'North Coast', 'other HQ functions' and 'State Crime Ops' a majority of officers also disagreed with the statement that 'Officers located outside of regional headquarters have an equal chance of gaining appointment there'.

TABLE 3.5: Perception of regional bias by region of respondent – 2000

Statement	Region	No.	Agree %	Neither %	Disagree %
A2. There is a bias towards appointing applicants from within the particular region that the position is located.	Far Northern	51	74	14	12
	Northern	37	54	38	8
	Central	53	66	17	17
	North Coast	56	54	29	18
	Southern	54	57	22	20
	South Eastern	51	57	27	16
	Metro North	64	69	27	5
	Metro South	37	51	24	24
	State Crime Ops	38	66	24	10
	Ops Support	47	57	30	13
Other HQ functions	27	41	37	22	
A4. Officers located outside of regional headquarters have an equal chance of gaining appointments there.	Far Northern	51	16	31	53
	Northern	37	22	24	54
	Central	53	15	25	60
	North Coast	55	20	31	49
	Southern	54	17	26	57
	South Eastern	51	8	33	59
	Metro North	64	11	34	55
	Metro South	37	19	24	57
	State Crime Ops	38	26	32	42
	Ops Support	47	13	30	57
Other HQ functions	27	37	37	26	

Selection policies and procedures

Table 3.6 presents a summary of officers' responses in 1998 and 2000 to eleven statements concerning QPS selection policies and procedures. There were no significant differences between the years in responses to any of these statements.

The table shows that the majority of respondents in both years had negative perceptions of QPS selection policies and procedures. In 2000, most respondents agreed with the following negative statements:

- It is difficult for officers to demonstrate their merit in the selection process (69%).
- Length of service should be given more emphasis in the assessment of merit (71%).
- Too much emphasis is placed on the interview process by QPS selection panels (60%).
- An officer's potential to perform a position is rarely given adequate consideration during the selection process (67%).
- QPS selection panels place too much weight on educational qualifications (57%).

TABLE 3.6: Responses to statements regarding selection panel policies and procedures – 2000 (comparisons with 1998)

Statement	Agree/Disagree %	1998 n=493	2000 n=533	Significant diff.
A5. The procedures for QPS selection panels as set out in the HRM Policy and Procedures Manual are clear.	Agree %	43	47	ns
	Neither %	36	34	
	Disagree %	20	19	
A6. It is difficult for officers to demonstrate their merit in the selection process.	Agree %	71	69	ns
	Neither %	12	10	
	Disagree %	17	21	
A8. Length of service should be given more emphasis in the assessment of merit.	Agree %	76	71	ns
	Neither %	9	11	
	Disagree %	15	18	
A9. The pre-qualifying programs for progression to ranks are a positive step. ¹	Agree %	47	44	ns
	Neither %	14	11	
	Disagree %	38	44	
A10. Too much emphasis is placed on the interview process by QPS selection panels.	Agree %	67	60	ns
	Neither %	21	25	
	Disagree %	12	15	
A11. An officer's potential to perform a position is rarely given adequate consideration during the selection process.	Agree %	68	67	ns
	Neither %	18	21	
	Disagree %	14	12	
A12. Since 1 May 1998, the Key Selection Criteria chosen by the QPS have accurately reflected the actual requirements for police officer positions. ²	Agree %	28	34	ns
	Neither %	25	21	
	Disagree %	47	45	
A13. QPS selection panels place too much weight on educational qualifications.	Agree %	55	57	ns
	Neither %	22	20	
	Disagree %	22	23	
A14. Referee checking is important to establish each officer's level of past performance.	Agree %	84	87	ns
	Neither %	7	7	
	Disagree %	9	6	
A15. In practice, QPS selection panels do not closely adhere to the proper processes as laid down in the legislation and HRM policies.	Agree %	33	31	ns
	Neither %	51	47	
	Disagree %	16	22	
A21. All QPS officers should be provided with formalised training in applying for positions.	Agree %	84	79	ns
	Neither %	9	11	
	Disagree %	7	10	

Notes: 1 In 1998, this statement was: 'The pre-qualifying programs as currently proposed for progression ...'

2 In 1998, this statement was: 'Since 1 January 1995 ...'

Table 3.7 summarises responses to three new statements regarding selection panel policies and procedures. Most officers disagreed with the following statements:

- Applicants are provided with sufficient information on how to apply for positions (61%).
- The independent community members who form part of the panel are fully aware of the position being considered (62%).

Opinions were divided as to whether generic appointment to rank was the most appropriate system, with a third (31%) of the officers neither agreeing or disagreeing, 42 per cent disagreeing and 28 per cent agreeing.

TABLE 3.7: Responses to NEW statements regarding selection panel policies and procedures: total sample – 2000

Statement	% Agree/ Strongly agree	% Neither	% Disagree/ Strongly disagree
A22. Applicants are provided with sufficient information on how to apply for positions.	27	12	61
A26. The independent community members who form part of the panel are fully aware of the position being considered.	10	28	62
A27. The generic appointment to rank is the most suitable promotion system for the QPS.	28	31	42

Responses by success in gaining an appointment

Table 3.8 presents responses to statements regarding selection panel policies and procedures according to whether the respondent had been successful in gaining an appointment. This table shows that for 8 out of 14 statements there were significant differences between officers who had, and had not, been successful in gaining an appointment. This was particularly so for the following statements:

- It is difficult for officers to demonstrate their merit in the selection process (81% of unsuccessful applicants agreed compared to 58% of successful applicants).
- An officer's potential to perform a position is rarely given adequate consideration during the selection process (78% of unsuccessful applicants agreed compared to 58% of successful applicants). However, even among successful officers, a considerable proportion held negative perceptions.

TABLE 3.8: Responses to statements regarding selection panel policies and procedures by success in gaining an appointment – 2000 sample

Statement	Agree/Disagree %	Appointment n=222	No appointment n=225	Significant diff.
A5. The procedures for QPS selection panels as set out in the HRM Policy and Procedures Manual are clear.	Agree %	50	45	ns
	Neither %	35	34	
	Disagree %	15	21	
A6. It is difficult for officers to demonstrate their merit in the selection process.	Agree %	58	81	<.001
	Neither %	10	8	
	Disagree %	32	12	
A8. Length of service should be given more emphasis in the assessment of merit.	Agree %	63	77	<.01
	Neither %	13	10	
	Disagree %	24	13	
A9. The pre-qualifying programs for progression to ranks are a positive step.	Agree %	45	43	ns
	Neither %	12	10	
	Disagree %	43	47	
A10. Too much emphasis is placed on the interview process by QPS selection panels.	Agree %	51	66	<.001
	Neither %	28	24	
	Disagree %	21	9	
A11. An officer's potential to perform a position is rarely given adequate consideration during the selection process.	Agree %	58	78	<.001
	Neither %	24	14	
	Disagree %	18	8	
A12. Since 1 May 1998, the Key Selection Criteria chosen by the QPS have accurately reflected the actual requirements for police officer positions.	Agree %	41	30	<.05
	Neither %	19	20	
	Disagree %	40	50	
A13. QPS selection panels place too much weight on educational qualifications.	Agree %	49	60	<.01
	Neither %	22	22	
	Disagree %	30	17	
A14. Referee checking is important to establish each officer's level of past performance.	Agree %	90	84	ns
	Neither %	6	9	
	Disagree %	4	7	
A15. In practice, QPS selection panels do not closely adhere to the proper processes as laid down in the legislation and HRM policies.	Agree %	25	39	<.001
	Neither %	48	48	
	Disagree %	27	13	
A21. All QPS officers should be provided with formalised training in applying for positions.	Agree %	77	77	ns
	Neither %	13	10	
	Disagree %	10	13	
A22. Applicants are provided with sufficient information on how to apply for positions.	Agree %	30	25	ns
	Neither %	10	12	
	Disagree %	60	63	
A26. The independent community members who form part of the panel are fully aware of the position being considered.	Agree %	13	6	<.01
	Neither %	31	21	
	Disagree %	57	72	
A27. The generic appointment to rank is the most suitable promotion system for the QPS.	Agree %	28	28	ns
	Neither %	30	32	
	Disagree %	42	40	

Responses by level of education

Table 3.9 shows that officers with lower levels of education were significantly more likely to agree that QPS selection panels place too much emphasis on educational qualifications.

TABLE 3.9: Perception of the appropriateness of selection panels' emphasis on education by level of education – 2000

Statement	Education	No.	%			Sig. diff.
			Agree	Neither	Disagree	
A13. QPS selection panels place too much weight on educational qualifications.	Secondary	136	74	19	7	<.001
	Post-secondary	166	63	21	16	<.001
	Some university (no degree)	103	58	21	20	<.001
	Bachelor 's degree	73	15	23	62	<.001
	Postgraduate degree	49	39	16	45	<.001

Responses by rank and gender

There were no differences between males and females in responses to the statement 'In practice QPS selection panels do not closely adhere to the proper processes as laid down in the legislation and HRM policies'.

However, there were significant differences to this statement by rank. The higher the rank, the more likely officers were to disagree with this statement. The 1998 data showed the same pattern. This result may be due to the higher ranks being more familiar with selection panels procedures, as officers of higher ranks are more likely to have sat on selection panels themselves. Another explanation may be that these officers have benefited from the promotion system, as mentioned earlier.

TABLE 3.10: Responses to statement A15 by rank – 2000

Statement	Rank	No.	%			Sig. diff.
			Agree	Neither	Disagree	
A15. In practice, QPS selection panels do not closely adhere to the proper processes as laid down in the legislation and HRM policies.	Constable	61	21	71	8	<.001
	Snr Constable	187	30	55	15	<.001
	Sergeant	176	42	39	19	<.001
	Snr Sergeant	67	25	30	45	<.001
	Inspector or above	40	18	35	48	<.001

Review process

Table 3.11 shows how officers responded in 1998 and 2000 to statements regarding the review process. There were no significant differences between the two samples. A large proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with these statements. This may be due to respondents' lack of first-hand experience with the review process.

TABLE 3.11: Perceptions of review process – comparisons between 1998 and 2000 (total sample)

Statement	Agree/Disagree %	1998 n=493	2000 n=533	Significant diff.
A16. The different Commissioners for Police Service Reviews are generally consistent in their recommendations.	Agree	20	20	ns
	Neither	62	63	
	Disagree	18	16	
A17. Commissioners for Police Service Reviews make their recommendations on unreliable information.	Agree	18	21	ns
	Neither	68	63	
	Disagree	15	16	
A18. Applicants who demonstrate a genuine grievance will usually get a favourable recommendation from the Review Commissioner.	Agree	13	14	ns
	Neither	58	55	
	Disagree	29	31	
A19. The review process is confusing and difficult to understand.	Agree	58	54	ns
	Neither	26	27	
	Disagree	17	19	
A20. The review process treats all officers fairly.	Agree	17	17	ns
	Neither	46	45	
	Disagree	36	38	
A29. Applicants who are not initially short listed for a position are more likely to be successful at review when compared to applicants who were interviewed.*	Agree	N/A	13	
	Neither	N/A	48	
	Disagree	N/A	39	

Note: * This question was not asked in 1998.

Table 3.12 presents the results by whether officers had been involved in the review process or not. There were significant differences in the responses to all statements. Officers who had been involved in the process expressed stronger opinions (both positive and negative) than officers who had not been involved in the process.

TABLE 3.12: Perceptions of review process – comparisons between officers involved and not involved in the review process – 2000

Statement	Agree/Disagree %	Involved n=97	Not involved n=264	Significant diff.
A16. The different Commissioners for Police Service Reviews are generally consistent in their recommendations.	Agree	26	18	<.01
	Neither	50	68	
	Disagree	24	14	
A17. Commissioners for Police Service Reviews make their recommendations on unreliable information.	Agree	34	16	<.001
	Neither	44	69	
	Disagree	22	14	
A18. Applicants who demonstrate a genuine grievance will usually get a favourable recommendation from the Review Commissioner.	Agree	20	12	<.001
	Neither	37	64	
	Disagree	43	25	
A19. The review process is confusing and difficult to understand.	Agree	47	56	<.001
	Neither	19	28	
	Disagree	34	16	
A20. The review process treats all officers fairly.	Agree	27	14	<.001
	Neither	28	49	
	Disagree	45	37	
A29. Applicants who are not initially short listed for a position are more likely to be successful at review when compared to applicants who were interviewed.	Agree	21	10	<.01
	Neither	36	51	
	Disagree	43	39	

Table 3.13 shows the responses of involved officers by whether they had been involved as an applicant or an appointee. It was not possible to perform chi-square tests, as the numbers in some cells were too small. As would be expected, applicants for review had more negative views about the process than did appointees.

TABLE 3.13: Perceptions of review process – comparisons between review applicants and appointees – 2000

Statement	Agree/Disagree %	Applicant only n=23	Appointee only n=47
A16. The different Commissioners for Police Service Reviews are generally consistent in their recommendations.	Agree	22	28
	Neither	61	57
	Disagree	17	15
A17. Commissioners for Police Service Reviews make their recommendations on unreliable information.	Agree	41	17
	Neither	45	53
	Disagree	14	30
A18. Applicants who demonstrate a genuine grievance will usually get a favourable recommendation from the Review Commissioner.	Agree	9	32
	Neither	39	45
	Disagree	52	23
A19. The review process is confusing and difficult to understand.	Agree	48	43
	Neither	26	15
	Disagree	26	43
A20. The review process treats all of officers fairly.	Agree	13	43
	Neither	35	32
	Disagree	52	26
A29. Applicants who are not initially short-listed for a position are more likely to be successful at review when compared to applicants who were interviewed.	Agree	13	21
	Neither	44	32
	Disagree	44	47

Summary

Overall, respondents to the 2000 Applicants Survey still held generally negative perceptions of the promotion, transfer and review system. However, comparisons between 1998 and 2000 data show that there was a statistically significant decrease in the number of officers agreeing with the following statements:

- There is bias towards appointing applicants from within the particular region that the position is located.
- The quality of selection decisions made by QPS panels needs significant improvement.

There was also a statistically significant increase in the number of officers agreeing with the statement:

- Officers located outside regional headquarters have an equal chance of gaining appointments there.

There were no changes between 1998 and 2000 in responses to any of the statements regarding selection policies and procedures, and the review system.

Responses regarding the composition of the new selection panels were mixed. In 1998, having independent members on selection panels was the top suggestion for improving the QPS promotion and transfer system. However, in 2000, officers were generally divided on their opinions of the efficacy of the composition of the selection panels in improving fairness and consistency. As well, most officers did not think that the community members were fully aware of the position being considered.

Almost two-thirds of officers (65%) were in favour of the proposal to have a pool of specially trained full-time selection panel conveners.

There were essentially no differences in responses by gender. Officers of higher rank had more positive perceptions of the fairness of the promotion and transfer system than lower ranked officers.

As would be expected, officers who had been successful in gaining an appointment had more positive views than unsuccessful officers. However, even among successful officers negative perceptions were common.

4: Management Development Program and Assessment Development Centres

Management Development Program

The MDP is an educational course to develop officers to perform the duties of higher ranks. The program has three levels, for Senior Constables, Sergeants, and Senior Sergeants. Each particular level is designed to prepare officers for the next rank. The MDP is done in the officer's own time.

The survey asked all officers to indicate their level of agreement with four statements regarding the MDP. The results are presented in table 4.1. The majority of officers expressed negative opinions on all statements regarding the MDP. That is, officers did not believe the MDP to be an appropriate prerequisite for promotion, nor to provide the training necessary for the duties of higher ranks or corporate and management duties.

TABLE 4.1: Responses to Management Development Program statements
(total sample) – 2000

Statement	% Agree/ strongly agree	% Neither	% Disagree/ strongly disagree
E1. The requirement to complete the Management Development Program is an appropriate prerequisite for promotion.	29	9	62
E2. The Management Development Program provides the training necessary to prepare an officer for higher ranks.	15	13	72
E3. The Management Development Program is a critical step in preparing officers to undertake corporate and management duties.	21	17	62
E4. Completion of the Management Development Program should not be a prerequisite for promotion if an officer can show suitability through other work experience and/or studies.	79	7	14

Table 4.2 presents the results of responses to these statements by whether officers had been involved in the MDP or not. There were no consistent differences between officers who had been involved in the MDP and officers who had not been involved.

TABLE 4.2: Responses to Management Development Program by involvement in the MDP – 2000

Statement	Agree/Disagree %	Involved n=432	Not involved n=98	Significant diff.
E1. The requirement to complete the Management Development Program is an appropriate prerequisite for promotion.	Agree % Neither % Disagree %	32 8 60	20 11 69	<.05
E2. The Management Development Program provides the training necessary to prepare an officer for higher ranks.	Agree % Neither % Disagree %	16 11 73	12 22 66	<.05
E3. The Management Development Program is a critical step in preparing officers to undertake corporate and management duties.	Agree % Neither % Disagree %	21 15 64	21 25 54	ns
E4. Completion of the Management Development Program should not be a prerequisite for promotion if an officer can show suitability through other work experience and/or studies.	Agree % Neither % Disagree %	78 7 15	83 8 9	ns

Table 4.3 presents the results of responses to MDP statements by rank. Higher ranks (Senior Sergeant or higher, and in particular Inspectors and higher) gave considerably more positive responses to all MDP statements. For example, 70 per cent of Inspectors or higher thought that the MDP was an appropriate prerequisite for promotion compared to around 20 per cent of officers of the rank of Sergeant or lower. Senior Sergeants were in-between, with a 52 per cent agreement rate.

It is important to note that the MDP is designed to prepare officers for duties at the *next* rank. The program is not designed to provide skills for officers at their existing rank. Many officers may not be aware of this, which may contribute to the strong negative perceptions.

TABLE 4.3: Responses to MDP statements by rank – 2000

Statement	Rank	No.	%			Sig. diff.
			Agree	Neither	Disagree	
E1. The requirement to complete the Management Development Program is an appropriate prerequisite for promotion.	Constable	61	18	13	69	<.001
	Snr Constable	186	24	9	68	
	Sergeant	174	22	9	69	
	Snr Sergeant	66	52	6	42	
	Inspector or above	40	70	8	23	
E2. The Management Development Program provides the training necessary to prepare an officer for higher ranks.	Constable	60	13	15	72	<.001
	Senior Constable	186	9	11	80	
	Sergeant	174	13	7	80	
	Senior Sergeant	67	28	19	52	
	Inspector or above	40	35	38	28	
E3. The Management Development Program is a critical step in preparing officers to undertake corporate and management duties.	Constable	60	15	25	60	<.001
	Senior Constable	187	13	17	70	
	Sergeant	174	18	14	68	
	Senior Sergeant	66	33	17	50	
	Inspector or above	40	55	23	23	
E4. Completion of the Management Development Program should not be a prerequisite for promotion if an officer can show suitability through other work experience and/or studies.	Constable	60	85	5	10	<.01
	Senior Constable	187	82	5	12	
	Sergeant	174	82	6	12	
	Senior Sergeant	66	67	11	23	
	Inspector or above	40	55	18	28	

Note: Chi-square analyses for statements E1 and E4 were conducted without the 'neither' category, as in these cases there were insufficient numbers to allow analysis.

Assessment Development Centres

These centres are a prerequisite for promotion to Inspector. ADCs consist of group and individual exercises held over a three-day period, where trained assessors observe and record candidates' performances. Assessors meet to evaluate and discuss candidates.

Table 4.4 summarises the responses of officers of the rank of Senior Sergeants, or higher, to five statements concerning ADCs.

More than half of the officers agreed with the following positive statements:

- The requirement to complete an ADC is an appropriate prerequisite for promotion to Inspector (54%)
- Identification of training needs through the ADC is a good way of identifying areas for improvement before promotion (59%).

However, half of the officers also agreed that 'The ADC does not fully identify the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to become a senior officer of the QPS' (53%).

Opinions were divided on the following statements:

- The ADC is a reliable and fair system for assessing officers prior to being considered for promotion to Inspector (34% agreed, 43% disagreed)
- Although the ADC is appropriate for identifying training needs, it should not be a prerequisite for promotion to Inspector (43% agreed, 38% disagreed).

TABLE 4.4: Responses to Assessment Development Centres statements – Senior Sergeants or higher (n=107) – 2000

Statement	% Agree/ strongly agree	% Neither	% Disagree/ strongly disagree
E5. The requirement to complete an Assessment Development Centre is an appropriate prerequisite for promotion to Inspector.	54	19	27
E6. Identification of training needs through the Assessment Development Centre is a good way of identifying areas for improvement before promotion.	59	13	28
E7. The Assessment Development Centre does not fully identify the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to become a senior officer of the QPS.	53	33	14
E8. The Assessment Development Centre is a reliable and fair system for assessing officers prior to being considered for promotion to Inspector.	34	23	43
E9. Although the Assessment Development Centre is appropriate for identifying training needs, it should not be a prerequisite for promotion to Inspector.	43	19	38

Table 4.5 presents responses to the ADC statements by whether officers had attended an ADC or not. There were insufficient numbers to allow for statistical analysis. However, involved officers appeared generally to have more positive opinions than non-involved officers.

TABLE 4.5: Responses to Assessment Development Centre by involvement in ADCs – Senior Sergeants or higher – 2000

Statement	Agree/ Disagree %	Involved n=26	Not involved n=81
E5. The requirement to complete an Assessment Development Centre is an appropriate prerequisite for promotion to Inspector.	Agree % Neither % Disagree %	65 12 23	51 21 28
E6. Identification of training needs through the Assessment Development Centre is a good way of identifying areas for improvement before promotion.	Agree % Neither % Disagree %	62 4 35	58 16 26
E7. The Assessment Development Centre does not fully identify the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to become a senior officer of the QPS.	Agree % Neither % Disagree %	58 19 23	52 37 11
E8. The Assessment Development Centre is a reliable and fair system for assessing officers prior to being considered for promotion to Inspector.	Agree % Neither % Disagree %	52 16 32	28 25 47
E9. Although the Assessment Development Centre is appropriate for identifying training needs, it should not be a prerequisite for promotion to Inspector.	Agree % Neither % Disagree %	31 12 58	47 21 32

Summary

Most officers in the sample had a poor opinion of the MDP. While there was no consistent pattern of differences between officers who had, and had not, been involved in the program, officers of higher ranks tended to hold a better opinion. Most Inspectors and above considered the program to be an appropriate prerequisite for promotion.

Of officers of the rank of Senior Sergeant or higher, more than half agreed that ADCs were appropriate prerequisites for promotion to Inspector and that the centres provided a good way of identifying training needs prior to promotion. However, ADCs were seen as not fully identifying the knowledge and skills necessary to become a senior officer.

Only 26 officers in the sample had participated in an ADC. These officers appeared to have a more positive viewpoint than officers who had not participated.

5: Experiences of the promotion and transfer process

Personal knowledge

Frequency of personal knowledge

Officers were asked whether, on their last job application, they had ever worked with a member of the selection panel. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents indicated that they had. As well, 60 per cent said that they had applied for a position since May 1998 where they believed that another applicant had worked with a panel member.

Influence of personal knowledge

Respondents who had worked with a panel member were asked whether they believed that this was an advantage or disadvantage to their application (see figure 5.1). Most officers who responded stated that they believed this either had no influence (29%) on the selection decision or they did not know (35%) if it had an effect. Only 19 per cent thought that it had worked to their advantage. These results are similar to those in 1998.

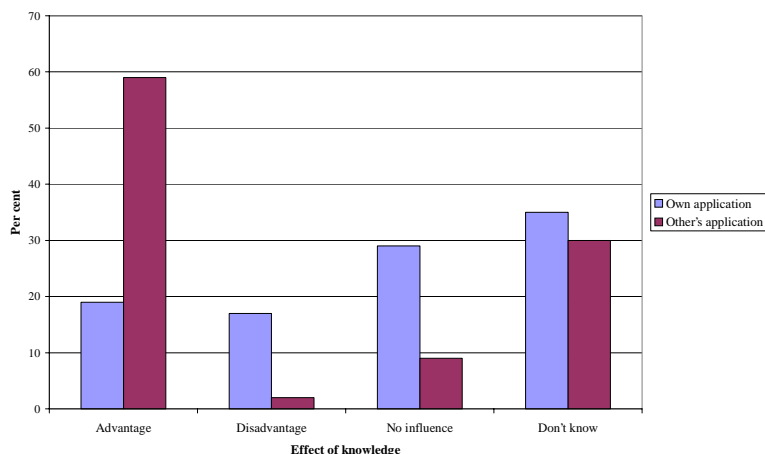
Respondents were also asked whether they believed a panel member's knowledge of another applicant was to that applicant's advantage, or disadvantage, or had no influence (see figure 5.1). In this case, the majority (59%) of respondents felt that this knowledge had worked in the other applicant's favour. This is also comparable to the 1998 data.

These perceptions can easily lead to allegations of cronyism, even where unbiased selection decisions were made.

Influence of regional member

Respondents who had applied for a job since May 1998 were asked whether they believed that the external and independent panel members were unduly influenced by the regional member on the selection panel. Of the 326 officers who answered this question, one-third (33%) believed that the external and independent panel members were unduly influenced, 50 per cent said that they did not know, and 17 per cent disagreed.

FIGURE 5.1: Panel members' previous personal knowledge of applicants – respondents' perceptions of influence on own application versus another's – 2000



Feedback

Of those officers who had been unsuccessful at their last application (n=245), 60 per cent said that they had sought feedback from a selection panel member. When asked whether they were satisfied with the feedback received, two-thirds (66%) of respondents who answered said that they were not. Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with two statements concerning the timeliness and constructiveness of feedback received (see table 5.1). Almost half of the respondents who answered this question considered that the feedback they received was neither constructive nor timely.

Unsuccessful applicants who had not requested feedback were asked to comment on why they had chosen not to seek feedback. Table 5.2 presents a summary of their comments. Almost a quarter of respondents stated that there was no point in seeking feedback or that they had no faith in the process, such as:

I considered it a waste of time. I have been in the job long enough to know if 'they' want you your previous history doesn't matter. If 'they' don't want you it doesn't matter how good you are, 'they' will find an excuse.

An additional 8 per cent specifically mentioned that they believed the successful applicant had been chosen in advance of the selection process. Almost 20 per cent stated that they had either received poor feedback in the past or had difficulty in contacting the convener to get any feedback at all. Sixteen per cent commented on the fact that they had not yet been advised of a decision from the selection panel. Some of these respondents had had their interview quite some time ago (e.g. six weeks) and expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the fact that they had not yet been contacted.

For example:

I didn't even receive notice that I didn't get the position. The other person that I knew who got the position told me that he got it a week after the interview. If the panel can't be bothered informing me of the outcome of the interview why should I bother them. Obviously they have more important things to do with their time and they wouldn't want me to bother them with asking for feedback.

TABLE 5.1: Perceptions regarding feedback – 2000

Statement	% Agree/ strongly agree	% Neither	% Disagree/ strongly disagree
D4b. The feedback I received was timely.	33	21	46
D4c. The feedback I received was constructive.	26	24	49

TABLE 5.2: Unsuccessful applicants' main reasons for not seeking feedback – 2000

Reasons for not seeking feedback	% (n=89)
No point/no faith in selection process	22
Not yet advised of result officially	16
Received sub-standard/inconsistent feedback in past	9
Difficulty contacting convener/convener did not respond	9
Not necessary/accepted decision	9
Believed that position had been decided in advance	8
Circumstances altered such that no longer necessary	8
Withdrew application	4
Did not have necessary pre-qualifications (e.g. MDP)	3
Other	11
Total	100

Respondents were also asked how the provision of feedback could be improved. Table 5.3 summarises the comments received. More than a third of all respondents stated that feedback needed to be more specific (28%) or honest (10%), so that officers could know exactly where to improve. For example:

The very limited information provided was very vague and I could not be certain that the panel convener was actually referring to me.

Feedback should be truthful, not what they think you want to hear or not trying to make an applicant feel better. Feedback should include why the applicant was not graded higher in better detail.

An additional 10 per cent of respondents stated that their greatest concern was being able to obtain any feedback at all and some suggested that feedback be made mandatory to ensure it is provided. Time delays were a concern for 13 per cent of the officers.

Giving feedback presents an opportunity to explain aspects of the selection decision to unsuccessful applicants. If this were to be done well, it has the potential to significantly minimise perceptions of unfairness and bias by the unsuccessful applicants. Of course it will never be possible to completely eliminate perceptions of bias. However, clear detailed explanations of how selection decisions were reached may be of great benefit in this area. As well, if panel members are aware that they will be required to provide detailed feedback from the outset, this may help them to structure their decision-making appropriately to ensure the best result.

Therefore, more emphasis could be placed on the provision of detailed, constructive feedback for applicants. Panel members may benefit from more specific training in this area. Feedback should also be provided in a timely manner so that applicants are not left 'in limbo' with the resulting feelings of disenchantment with the system.

As one officer put it:

If feedback was timely, honest, and constructive, reviews would be basically nonexistent.

TABLE 5.3: Main suggestions for improving feedback – 2000

Suggestions	% (n=137)
Providers be more specific as to where applicant could improve	28
Feedback be provided faster	13
More frank/honest in feedback	10
Make it mandatory/ensure that it is given	10
Improve consistency from panel to panel	9
Not make up feedback to try to justify a bad selection decision	6
More training for providers	4
Feedback in writing	4
More positive/constructive	4
Happy with feedback received	3
Other	7
Total	100

Summary

Many respondents (37%) had worked with a panel member on their last job application or who knew of other applicants who had worked with a panel member (60%). Respondents did not generally believe that knowing a panel member themselves helped their application; however, they did believe that other applicants who had worked with a panel member were advantaged (59%).

The majority of officers (60%) sought feedback on their applications, but most of these (66%) were not satisfied with the feedback received. Their main criticisms were the lack of detail in their feedback, the length of time taken to obtain feedback, and the inability sometimes to obtain feedback at all.

6: Comments

Survey recipients were asked to respond to the following three open-ended questions.

- What do you see as the major problems, if any, with the current QPS promotions, transfer and review systems?
- In which ways, if at all, could the selection panel process currently employed by the QPS be improved?
- In which ways, if at all, could the review process be improved?

What are the major problems with the current QPS promotion, transfer and review systems?

Four hundred and thirty-eight officers responded to this question. The top three problems listed by each respondent were coded. Responses are shown in table 6.1. The six most common problems were:

- cronyism/corruption/bias
- problems with the MDP and other pre-qualifying programs
- lack of recognition of length of service/experience
- time delays
- inconsistencies among panels
- lack of emphasis on work performance.

TABLE 6.1: Problems identified with the QPS promotion, transfer and review systems – 2000

Type of problem identified	No.	Total % of respondents who identified problem in their top three (n= 438)
Cronyism/corruption/bias	128	29.2
Problems with pre-qualifying programs (MDP, CDP)	121	27.6
No recognition of length of service/experience	62	14.2
Delays	61	13.9
Inconsistencies among selection panels	60	13.7
Lack of emphasis on work performance	55	12.6
Inappropriate emphasis on academic qualifications	31	7.1
Problems with review process	28	6.4
Regional bias	27	6.2
Inappropriate reliance on interview	25	5.7
System favours people who can sell themselves with résumé or interview	21	4.8
System favours non-operational police	20	4.6
Problems with panel composition	19	4.3

Cronyism/corruption/bias

The most commonly mentioned problem was cronyism and bias of the selection panel. Twenty-nine per cent of respondents mentioned this as a problem. Some typical responses were:

The problem with promotion is that it is decided by persons who either know one or some of the applicants and therefore can't help but be subjective, display bias, and demonstrate nepotism towards those they know.

Jobs for the boys is more popular now than it's ever been. If you know the panel members then you're laughing all the way. But if you don't know them then you're in trouble. Merit rarely comes into it if you ask me.

Problems with MDP and other pre-qualifying programs

A similar proportion of respondents (28%) criticised the MDP and other pre-qualifying programs. A large number of these officers said that they thought the MDP was irrelevant to the work that they did. Many officers had the perception that the MDP favoured non-operational officers who were able to complete assignments during work time, whereas officers who were on the street had to do MDP work in their own time, which took a considerable toll on their family lives. Some officers with academic qualifications also commented that there should be more exemptions from the MDP, as there seemed to be no point to having studied for the degrees that they had. For example:

MDP has no significant benefit to operational policing. It is a complete academic exercise in writing essays to fulfil an academic program which does not prepare an officer on the street.

Some operational officers are too busy working to complete MDP. Administrative officers are using their own and departmental time to complete MDP, thus achieving promotion over more worthy operational officers.

Lack of recognition of length of service/experience

Fourteen per cent of respondents mentioned lack of recognition for length of service/experience as a major problem. For example:

The system does not identify or acknowledge the years of service, the expertise or knowledge of an officer who has been working in a particular field for an extended period of time. The system places too much emphasis on the academic skills of a person rather than the ability to do the job competently.

The main problem with the current system is that length of service is not considered as an integral part of the selection process. It is almost as if panels are afraid to take it into consideration. It should be a reflection of experience, and as such, assessable.

More consideration should be given to experience/length of service than to tertiary qualifications.

Delays

The time taken to finalise positions was of concern to 14 per cent of respondents.

The time to obtain a decision in relation to promotion, including review, can and does take over 12 months. This is not acceptable.

The process is very slow — by the time a panel convener is appointed and a panel is formed a number of months seem to pass and the vacancy remains unfilled for very lengthy periods of time.

Inconsistencies among panels

Fourteen per cent of respondents nominated inconsistencies among panels as a major problem.

There seems to be inconsistency in being able to be short-listed. Whilst this doesn't apply to me personally, I have seen other officers submit the same résumé to approximately six different positions and are only short-listed for a few positions. Where is the consistency?

Standards from one panel to the next differ greatly.

Lack of emphasis on work performance

Lack of emphasis on actual work performance was nominated by 13 per cent of respondents as a problem.

Far too much importance is placed on the résumé rather than work performance and recommendations.

Past performance as determined in the workplace and work output are the best indicators of officer performance.

You might be real good at doing your job and have plenty of experience and ability to perform duties at a higher rank but if you cannot put it down well into words on an application form then you stand no chance.

There was no change since 1998 in the percentage of officers listing cronyism/bias as a problem with the QPS promotion and transfer system. In 1998, officers' main concerns were also lack of recognition of length of service, delays, inconsistencies between selection panels and inappropriate emphasis on academic qualification.

Ways to improve QPS selection processes

Three hundred and forty-eight officers responded to the question asking in which ways the selection panel process could be improved. The top three suggestions listed by each respondent were coded. The results of the most frequent suggestions are summarised in table 6.2. The most common suggestions for improvement were: having permanent central panels, or at least panel conveners, putting more weight on work performance and improving the selection panels' competence, training and understanding of the jobs being selected for.

For example:

The movement to permanent panels will go some considerable way towards forming a basis for consistent selection and remove again any possibility for external influence of panel's selections.

I think the centralised panel convener concept is excellent and quite a few years overdue.

More emphasis placed on the work performance of the applicant and the ability they show.

In 1998, the most common suggestion for improvement was to have independent panel members. This effectively was implemented in May 1998 through the new panel composition (independent community member, panel convener external to the region).

TABLE 6.2: Suggestions of how to improve the selection panel processes – 2000

Ways to improve selection panel processes	No.	% of respondents who nominated the suggested improvement in their top three (n= 348)
Centralised panel	94	27.0
Central panel conveners	38	10.9
More weight on work performance	37	10.6
Improve selection panel competence/training/ understanding of jobs	29	8.3
Other processes to reduce bias (e.g. general comments, not allow panel member who knows applicant)	28	8.0
Reduce time taken in process	25	7.2
Make length of service/experience a criterion	23	6.6
Change selection panel composition (e.g. no community member, no regional member)	23	6.6
Improve consistency among panels	21	6.0
Reduce emphasis on interview	16	4.6

However, officers are still clearly not happy with the selection process. The second most popular suggestion in 1998 was the use of central permanent panels. This is now at top of the list of suggestions.

It is obvious that no promotion system will ever satisfy all officers. There will always be many more unsuccessful than successful applicants for each job. However, what many officers are saying is that they think panels can frequently be biased and frequently not have enough training in how to go about making appropriate, consistent selection decisions. Many officers want specially trained people who are dedicated to and competent at the task of personnel selection. Permanent, specially trained, central panels, or at least central panel conveners, are seen to provide the best way of meeting these needs.

As reported earlier (see chapter 3), 65 per cent of officers agreed with the statement: 'The use of permanent panel conveners will enhance consistency and fairness in the selection process.' The above suggestions for improvement further emphasise that this proposal has the potential to increase perceptions of fairness.

Ways to improve the review process

One hundred and ninety-nine officers responded to the question asking them to specify in which ways the review process could be improved. The top three suggestions listed by each respondent were coded. A summary of the most common suggestions are shown in table 6.3.

The most frequently suggested improvement was to decrease delays. The next most commonly suggested improvements were to simplify reviews, prevent frivolous reviews and to get rid of reviews altogether. Some officers suggested the payment of a bond to attempt to eliminate frivolous reviews:

... Possible introduction of bond payment by review to eliminate half-baked insincere reviews, refundable after commencement of review being conducted ...

Although not presented as a suggestion for improvement, numerous officers commented on the fact that selection panel decisions are very rarely overturned.

The review process within the service has lost a great deal of credibility among its members. The lack of applicants actually succeeding in reviews is a deterrent to officers who believe they may have a genuine case worthy of review.

TABLE 6.3: Suggestions of how to improve the review system – 2000

Ways to improve selection panel processes	No.	% of respondents who nominated the suggested improvement in their top three (n=199)
Decrease time delays	40	20.1
Simplify it/make it clearer	17	8.5
Prevent frivolous appeals	12	6.0
Get rid of it altogether	12	6.0
Give more authority/power to Review Commissioners	11	5.5
Have the commissioners examine more material/information	10	5.0
Explain the process to applicants more	9	4.5
Have a panel not just one person	9	4.5
Not be influenced by QPS	8	4.0
Process is OK the way it is	9	4.5

From my observations though, it appears that once a panel selection has been made then it is almost impossible to be successful in the review process. It's common knowledge that the Review Commissioners support the panel selection choice. This is apparent even when it is blatant that an incompetent person is fulfilling the position.

A number of officers commented that reviews would be unnecessary if the selection panel process were considered fair and competent, and that some officers review simply in order to get feedback on their application.

If the selection process was improved then there would not be much need for the review system.

On many occasions the only reason for the review is so that the reviewer can obtain a copy of the preferred applicant's résumé. A system which allowed the reviewer to have immediate access to the preferred applicant's résumé might result in a reduction of reviews and less time for the preferred applicant to wait for the all clear.

Once again this highlights the importance of giving specific, constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants. It also appears that some officers are not aware that the successful applicant's résumé is available to unsuccessful applicants, as outlined in the QPS Human Resource Management Manual. It may be useful to have panel conveners remind applicants of this.

Summary

The top six problems with the promotion and transfer system identified were:

- cronyism/bias
- problems with the MDP
- no recognition of length of service/experience
- delays
- inconsistencies between panels
- lack of emphasis on work performance.

The most frequent suggestions for improvement of the selection panel process were to implement central panels or central panel conveners, and to place more weight on work performance.

The most common suggestions on how to improve the review process were to decrease delays and to make the process simpler.

REFERENCES

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