

*Police for the Future:
Review of Recruitment and Selection for the
Queensland Police Service*

August 1998

Police Education Advisory Council



Queensland Police Service

QPS Vision Statement:

We are determined to be a professional police service, dedicated to excellence and committed to working in partnership with the people of Queensland to enhance the safety and security of our community.

QPS Mission Statement:

To serve the people in Queensland by protecting life and property, preserving peace and safety, preventing crime and upholding law in a manner which has regard for the public good and rights of individuals.

CJC Mission Statement:

Criminal Justice Commission

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

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Preface

In July 1996, the Police Education Advisory Council (PEAC) considered a Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) report examining the extent to which police applicants' performance on key selection devices predicts success in the Queensland Police Service (QPS) recruit training program. The CJC report concluded that the results of the panel interview of recruits, undertaken as part of the recruitment and selection process for admission to the QPS, had poor validity in predicting their performance in the recruit-training program. As the panel interview is one of the key processes used for the selection of suitable recruits, the CJC's research raised a matter of great concern for PEAC.

As a result, PEAC decided that it should review the whole of the QPS recruit selection process so that the Commissioner of Police and the CJC would be better equipped to take the necessary decisions to enhance the selection of recruits. To facilitate the review, PEAC decided to establish a subcommittee to conduct the review and make recommendations for the consideration of PEAC. The subcommittee, which I convened, had representation from various areas of the QPS (e.g. Human Resource Management, Recruiting Section, operational policing), the CJC, and PEAC. The subcommittee was also fortunate to have the services of Mr Barrie Ffrench whose management skills and expertise are well known. Mr Ffrench, when a part-time CJC Commissioner, made a significant contribution to the work of PEAC. All members of the subcommittee (listed below) are recognised for the hard work and expertise they contributed over the twenty months taken to complete this report. The subcommittee was formed in September 1996 and met regularly till April 1998 when the draft report was presented to PEAC for consideration. Over this period, the QPS and the CJC contributed substantial resources to conduct the work necessary, and it would be remiss of me to fail to record the contributions made by both organisations.

The Director of the Research and Prevention Division of the CJC, Dr David Brereton, and the Director of Human Resource Management of the QPS, Mr David Gill — both members of PEAC and the subcommittee — made available the expertise of their staff and considerable resources to facilitate the work of the subcommittee. Current and former Research and Prevention staff who contributed to the report are Ms Linda Waugh and Janet Ransley (principal authors), Julie Butner, Margot Ffrench, Kelly Maddren and Bronwyn Springer (research officers) and Tracey Stenzel (desktop publisher).

Particular thanks are extended to Ms Linda Waugh and Ms Janet Ransley who prepared many of the drafts and wrote the final chapters. The completion of a document this size is an onerous task, and they both worked tirelessly to ensure the final report was professional and in accordance with the structure and content requested by subcommittee and PEAC members. I would like to add here that it is decidedly unlikely that the work of the subcommittee and of PEAC, and this report, could have been completed so thoroughly were it not for the personal effort, dedication and professional expertise of Ms Linda Waugh, who had primary responsibility for the management of the review and the preparation of the final report. Linda prepared meeting agendas, carried out literature reviews, prepared draft chapters, facilitated discussions at meetings, held numerous private meetings with members of the subcommittee on a wide range of issues, and spent many hours in consultations with me and others. It is fair to say that she became the focal point for the whole process. She has rightly earned the respect of all of us who worked with her.

The contributions made by the QPS Human Resource Division and Recruiting Section personnel, particularly Inspectors Roger Lewis and Denise Burke, are much appreciated. A general thanks is extended to staff of the QPS whose cooperation and assistance were required to ensure the report was comprehensive. Particular thanks are due to the QPS recruitment interviewers and Selection Committee members who participated in the observation sessions and who provided valuable information and advice for the report. Participants in the focus groups, which were conducted to provide information for chapter 3, also assisted the review process. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the staff of the Ethical Standards Command who proffered advice and comments on draft chapters.

The draft report prepared by the subcommittee was considered at three meetings of PEAC held on 5, 8 and 14 May 1998. My fellow members of PEAC are recognised for the enormous effort required firstly to prepare for the meetings and then to discuss, at length, the issues and recommendations contained in that substantial and lengthy document. What follows is the result of the intensive and often robust consideration of the many issues involved in the recruitment and selection of police applicants for the QPS. The final report submitted here is the ultimate result of PEAC's deliberations. However, it should be recorded that it also reflects a long process of close cooperation between the QPS and CJC and should be considered the result of a successful collaborative effort.

PEAC and its subcommittee undertook this groundbreaking initiative for the sole purpose of further enhancing the life of the QPS in the longer term. A moment's reflection makes it obvious that any respected police service should endeavour to recruit the most suitable applicants possible. In this day and age there is considerable competition in business and elsewhere for the talents of men and women. The QPS therefore must maximise its recruitment and selection strategies so as to ensure not only that it attracts high-quality applicants, but also that its processes for selection ensure the recruitment of only those who will enhance the well-being and performance of the Service.

I need only add that I believe the time is right for the QPS and its management to consider seriously the adoption of the many recommendations in this report. So much has been achieved by the QPS in the recent past. The adoption of these recommendations will greatly assist the recruitment into the Service of the best available men and women, and contribute to the further development of the Queensland Police Service.

Honourable W J Carter, QC
Chairperson, Police Education Advisory Council

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Abbreviations

APESC	Australasian Police Education Standards Council
ASLPRS	Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council
BAC	Blood Alcohol Concentration
BCI	Bureau of Criminal Intelligence
BMI	body mass index
CAQ	Clinical Analysis Questionnaire
CJC	Criminal Justice Commission
CPR	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
Dsp	Digit Span
Dsy	Digit Symbol
EAR	Expired Air Resuscitation
EEO	equal employment opportunity
EOC	Equal Opportunity Cases
ESC	Ethical Standards Command
FOST	Firearms Operational Skills Training
FYC	First Year Constable
GMO	Government Medical Officer
HRD	Human Resources Division
HRDB	Human Resource Development Branch
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRMB	Human Resource Management Branch
ISP	Initial Services Program
KSAs	knowledge, skills and abilities
MMPI-2	Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory
MR	Mechanical Reasoning
NA	Numerical Ability
NESB	non–English-speaking background
NPRU	National Police Research Unit
Ombudsman	Queensland Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations
OPS	Office of the Public Service
PCT	physical competency test(ing)
PEAC	Police Education Advisory Council
POCC	Police Operational Conversion Course
PROVE	Police Recruit Operational Vocational Education

PSA Act	<i>Police Service Administration Act 1990</i>
PSE	physical skills education
PSU	Professional Standards Unit
QPS	Queensland Police Service
QTAC	Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre
SAPOL	South Australian Police Service
SPM	Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices
SR	Space Relations
WGCTA	Watson–Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal
16PF	Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire

FREQUENTLY CITED PUBLICATIONS

Circelli & Wilson	Circelli, M & Wilson, C, in press, <i>A Physical Activity Profile of General Duties Constables: Implications for Applicant Selection</i> , NPRU, Adelaide.
CJC 1996a	<i>Police Recruit Selection: Predictors of Academy Performance</i> , CJC, Brisbane.
CJC 1997	<i>Police and Drugs: A Report of an Investigation of Cases Involving Queensland Police Officers</i> (Report by Honourable W J Carter, QC), CJC, Brisbane.
CJC–QPS 1998	<i>The Physical Requirements of General Duties Policing</i> , CJC and QPS, Brisbane.
Fitzgerald Report	<i>Report of a Commission of Inquiry Pursuant to Orders in Council</i> [Fitzgerald Report] 1989, Government Printer, Brisbane. Title of Inquiry: Commission of Inquiry into Possible Illegal Activities and Associated Police Misconduct [Fitzgerald Inquiry] 1987–1989, Chaired by G E Fitzgerald, QC.
Kaczmarek & Packer 1996	Kaczmarek, A & Packer, J 1996, <i>Defining the Role of the General Duties Constable: A Job Analysis</i> , NPRU, South Australia.
Kaczmarek & Packer 1997	Kaczmarek, A & Packer, J 1997, <i>Determination of a Job-Related Test Battery for the Psychological Screening of Police Applicants</i> , NPRU, South Australia.
QPS Review 1996	<i>Report on the Review of the Queensland Police Service</i> [Bingham Review], Prepared for the Honourable Russell Cooper MLA, Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Racing, QPS Review Committee, Kingswood Press, Brisbane.

LEGISLATION CITED

Queensland

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
Criminal Code
Criminal Justice Act 1989
Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986
Drugs Misuse Act
Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act 1992
Freedom of Information Act 1992
Invasion of Privacy Act 1971
Judicial Review Act 1991
Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974

Police Service Administration Act 1990
Public Service Act 1996
Regulatory Offences Act 1985
Traffic Act 1949
Vagrants, Gaming and Other Offences Act
Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995

Commonwealth

Privacy Act 1988
Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Executive summary

Focus of the report

This report of the Police Education Advisory Council (PEAC) reviews recruitment and selection for the Queensland Police Service (QPS). The review began as a response to the concerns about the current recruitment and selection process raised in a CJC report, *Police Recruit Selection — Predictors of Academy Performance* (1996a). This report questioned the validity, reliability and fairness of parts of the current recruit-selection process.

Recruitment and selection are important matters for any organisation that wishes to ensure a qualified, committed and effective workforce. The selection of the right people is especially critical for police services, which must maintain public confidence in their integrity and efficiency. Since the Fitzgerald Inquiry, the QPS has also used recruitment and selection to achieve organisational and cultural change, particularly through the recruitment of older, more experienced and better educated people from a more diverse range of backgrounds.

The importance of the recruitment and selection process, therefore, goes beyond the choice of new entrants to the Service, to underpin the QPS vision of itself as a ‘professional police service, dedicated to excellence’ (QPS Vision Statement). The focus of this report is on assisting the QPS to develop the best possible recruitment and selection process, to ensure that this vision can be achieved.

The review:

- assesses the current recruitment and selection process in the context of relevant research concerning the validity and reliability of selection devices
- considers legal, policy and organisational requirements affecting recruitment and selection
- assesses outcomes from the recruitment and selection process, including its cost-efficiency and practicality.

The recommendations in this report are only the start of an ongoing process of developing and maintaining optimal recruitment and selection procedures in the QPS. It is essential that the recruitment and selection process is subject to continual monitoring and evaluation, and that the QPS is proactive in responding to the changing role of policing and the police environment.

Current recruitment and selection process (chapter 1)

The recruitment and selection process in the QPS has changed considerably since the late 1980s. Height and weight restrictions and the requirement for a Year 10 level of education have been replaced by a range of selection devices arranged as a series of ‘hurdles’. At each hurdle some applicants will be ‘knocked out’ until the number of remaining applicants is close to the number of positions available. To be eligible for admission to recruit training, applicants must pass the following sequence of hurdles:

- satisfaction of initial assessment criteria comprising the possession of Australian citizenship or permanent residency, a current driver’s licence, first aid and keyboard certificates, minimum education and employment experience, and criminal and traffic record checks
- a minimum score on a battery of psychometric tests
- satisfactory results from an interview panel, physical competency test and medical evaluation.

Applicants who pass these hurdles are ranked according to a formula which combines their scores on the psychometric test, panel interview, and education and employment experience. A Selection Committee considers this ranking, along with all other available information concerning each applicant, including referee reports, the results of background checks, and raw data from each of the selection devices. The Committee recommends to the Chief Superintendent of the Human Resource

Development Branch which applicants should be appointed. The Chief Superintendent may accept or overrule the Committee's recommendations.

At any stage of the selection process an applicant may be excluded for integrity reasons, as identified through such means as referee reports, criminal and traffic history checks, residence checks, and security vetting.

The QPS should be commended for its efforts so far to reform the recruitment and selection process, efforts characteristic of the QPS since the Fitzgerald Inquiry. However, there is a need for the overall recruitment and selection process to be reviewed and validated, and for a mechanism to be put in place to allow the process to be continually evaluated and improved when necessary. These issues are dealt with in the rest of this report.

Legal, policy and organisational issues (chapter 2)

The recruitment and selection process in the QPS is conducted within a framework of laws and policies (both governmental and organisational) including:

- the requirement that recruits be selected on merit
- anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws
- external review of recruitment decisions — by the Ombudsman and the courts
- privacy laws
- government policies about police numbers
- government budgetary policy
- QPS policies affecting recruitment, particularly those dealing with EEO and anti-discrimination issues.

These laws and policies affect both processes and outcomes.

The most significant of these issues to date has been the policy of recent governments to increase police numbers, which has resulted in a very marked growth in the size of recruit intakes over the past 18 months. In addition, anti-discrimination law has prohibited discrimination in selection decisions on bases such as sex, race and impairment, except in certain circumstances such as where a position has inherent occupational requirements. The implications of these developments are explored throughout the report.

The general duties police officer (chapter 3)

An effective and valid selection process should be based on a comprehensive job analysis, which identifies the knowledge, skills and abilities essential to perform the job. Policing has changed substantially over the last decade; therefore, it is necessary to ensure that recruitment and selection practices and criteria accurately reflect the current role and work of a general duties police officer, which is the position for which all recruits are trained.

In 1996, Kaczmarek and Packer of the National Police Research Unit published a comprehensive job analysis for general duties policing on a national basis. These findings have been adopted for this report. Kaczmarek and Packer identified 25 core activities for the general duties constable, which covered the full range of administrative, operational, proactive and reactive tasks commonly performed by general duties police. Based on these 25 critical activities, the authors also identified 42 psychological characteristics desirable in a general duties police officer. These characteristics are very similar to those which Queensland police officers identified when asked to comment on the traits of general duties officers who are considered to be 'good' at their job. A new job description and set of selection criteria should be adopted for general duties police officers in Queensland, based on Kaczmarek and Packer's research.

Recruitment marketing (chapter 4)

To maintain high standards among recruits, the QPS needs to attract enough well-qualified applicants to ensure that it has a real choice in whom it appoints. However, the recent marked growth in recruit intake size has not been matched by a growth in the number of applications that meet basic mandatory criteria. This has meant that the pool of qualified candidates available for selection for each recruit position has been substantially reduced. There is also evidence to suggest that the quality of applicants varies considerably between intakes.

Research should be undertaken to establish why applicant numbers have not increased in response to the QPS's marketing activities and, in particular, why the QPS has been unable to increase significantly the number of applicants from EEO target groups. Marketing strategies can then be developed to increase the size of applicant pools, and a comprehensive recruitment marketing plan can be designed and implemented.

Initial assessment criteria (chapter 5)

The first hurdle of the selection process requires applicants to meet initial criteria, including Australian citizenship or permanent residency, a current driver's licence, a minimum level of education and/or employment experience, and certificates in first aid and keyboard skills.

The main issue arising from these criteria relates to the current policy for assessing education and employment experience. There is evidence to suggest that the design of the current employment experience categories tends to favour male over female applicants. To overcome this problem, those ratings need to be reviewed. Three separate profiles for employment, education, and a combination of the two factors should be developed. The profile on which the applicant rates the highest should be used in the selection process and in the mechanical combinations of selection device scores. This will allow applicants to meet minimum criteria by having a degree, relevant work experience or a combination of both. Separate profiles will also facilitate future monitoring of the validity of each factor and enable any discriminatory effect to be identified.

Psychological screening and assessment (chapter 6)

The current battery of psychometric tests includes seven tests of cognitive ability and one personality test (the Sixteen Personality Factor, or 16PF, questionnaire). Scores from the seven cognitive-ability tests are combined to provide an overall score for each applicant. Although routinely administered to applicants, the personality test is not formally considered in the selection process.

When the results of the seven cognitive-ability tests are combined, the overall score has been shown to predict successful performance in the recruit-training program at the Academy (Burke 1994; CJC 1996). However, when tests within the battery are considered individually, the Mechanical Reasoning, Space Relations and Numerical Ability tests show poor predictive validity (CJC 1996a). These tests have also been evaluated in a review of psychometric tests for police selection (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997). The authors concluded that those tests did not have demonstrated validity and/or assessed abilities that were better assessed through other means. On the basis of their findings, it is recommended that these tests should be removed from the current battery.

Although personality tests have lower validity coefficients than cognitive-ability tests, they can be useful for identifying or 'flagging' applicants who should be scrutinised more closely by either psychological evaluation or further testing. There is value to policing organisations in any selection device that may be able to identify applicants who are maladjusted or suffering from some kind of psychopathology. On this basis, and in accordance with the recommendations of Kaczmarek and Packer, the QPS should use the 16PF questionnaire in the psychological screening of recruit applicants.

The panel interview (chapter 7)

The panel interview assesses the applicant's suitability for appointment as a police recruit. The principal concern about the interview is that it is a poor predictor of applicants' performance in the recruit-training program (Burke 1994; CJC 1996a). Examination of panel interviews suggests that problems with structure, format and content may be the major factors causing this low validity. These findings are consistent with the research literature, which shows that panel interviews, particularly unstructured interviews, generally have low reliability and poor validity for predicting work and training performance.

Specific problems with the interview process include:

- questions often do not relate to the selection criteria or requirements of the job
- interviewers are provided with excessive information, which increases the likelihood of biased decisions, and of different information being considered for different applicants
- there may be little or no use of probe questions
- decisions to reject applicants may be made without reasonable basis or justification.

The validity of the interview process can be improved by ensuring that questions are job related and by training interviewers. In addition, the QPS should consider the resource implications of continuing with three interviewers per panel, given the evidence that two trained interviewers could perform the function equally well.

Integrity screening (chapter 8)

Screening applicants on integrity is one of the most crucial aspects of the selection process. Misconduct or unethical behaviour can damage staff morale and public confidence in the QPS. The selection process, in conjunction with other strategies (e.g. complaints investigation), can help to minimise misconduct and corruption.

The current process is quite comprehensive and includes:

- criminal and traffic history checks
- previous employer checks
- present residence checks
- character and police referee checks
- the panel interview
- fingerprint checks
- publication of applicant names in the Police Gazette
- vetting by the QPS Ethical Standards Command, the Bureau of Criminal Intelligence and the CJC.

Currently, applicants are automatically excluded from the selection process if they have been convicted of certain offences. For other offences, the Selection Committee considers the circumstances and recency of the offence, in conjunction with other applicant information (such as referee reports).

The current automatic exclusion criteria are inconsistent in their treatment of offences of various types and degrees of seriousness. In addition, the criteria do not indicate which offences should exclude an applicant for life, and do not apply to 'quasi-criminal' offences.

The report proposes a new exclusion policy, involving three categories of offences:

- (i) offences that exclude an individual from application for life (e.g. serious sexual offences, trafficking drugs)
- (ii) those that exclude applicants for five years (e.g. less serious offences under the *Criminal Code*)
- (iii) other offences that would not lead to automatic exclusion but would create a rebuttable presumption against the applicant.

To reflect the importance of integrity screening, it is proposed that an Integrity Committee, comprising very senior management, should be created with the sole purpose of conducting comprehensive evaluations of each applicant who has an integrity concern raised against him or her. This process would separate integrity issues from ability issues and create a body responsible and accountable for integrity decisions.

The report also proposes that the QPS introduce drug testing of applicants. The costs of drug testing must be weighed against the potentially high costs of drug use by police, in the form of reduced efficiency and increased likelihood of misconduct. The use of such testing in selection should also deter current users from applying, and send a message to the wider community about the stance of the QPS on drug use. The QPS has already demonstrated its commitment to minimising drug use by the drafting of a drug and alcohol policy for current serving officers.

In addition, it is recommended that the QPS introduce financial and credit checks for applicants. The rationale for conducting these types of checks is that applicants with past or current financial difficulties may be at greater risk of serious corruption. While the potential intrusiveness of such checks is a concern, they may provide important information in determining the suitability of an applicant for the QPS. The QPS should request applicants to provide a statement of private interests and declare whether they have ever been declared bankrupt, been sued by a creditor, or defaulted under a loan or credit card contract. The Integrity Committee should develop guidelines on the treatment of such disclosures.

Referee checks (chapter 9)

The QPS currently requests written referee reports on applicants from all previous employers over the last ten years, two current serving police officers and two acquaintances. Each referee is asked to comment on the applicant's suitability in terms of the selection criteria and other issues where relevant, such as sick leave, punctuality, attitude to work, and responsibility. However, there is no formal or systematic procedure to follow up on reports, such as through a telephone interview. The reports are also of variable value, with the most useful being those from previous employers.

The QPS should continue to obtain referee reports from previous employers but only one personal/character referee report should be obtained, from a person of good community standing who has known the applicant for at least two years. The QPS also needs to revise the structure and content of the written referee reports so that they specifically relate to the selection criteria and requirements of general duties policing.

Although oral referee checks have some advantages over written referee checks, it would be extremely costly to the Service to conduct oral checks for all referees for each applicant. However, there is justification for contacting a referee who indicates concern about an applicant's suitability for policing. To obtain maximum benefits from referee checking, a trained interviewer should conduct a follow-up telephone interview to obtain further information in cases where there is a concern.

Physical fitness and ability testing (chapter 10)

The use of physical competency tests (PCTs) or obstacle courses for police service selection has attracted considerable criticism. Of particular concern is whether the PCT used by the QPS is validly based on the genuine physical requirements of operational policing. Two recent reports (Circelli & Wilson, in press; CJC–QPS 1998), which have examined the physical requirements of policing, have found that general duties policing requires repeated, regular performance of several low-demand physical activities (e.g. driving, getting in and out of police transport, and sitting). When more demanding duties arise, they tend to involve restraining, lifting and moving persons and objects, rather than a sustained series of highly demanding activities with a particular focus on hurdling and climbing, which are the focus of the current PCT.

In addition, there is evidence indicating that the PCT discriminates against women and possibly also against men from certain racial backgrounds, and people with physical impairments who may be able to perform the genuine physical requirements of policing but are unable to complete the PCT. Such discrimination would not only breach the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*, but also run counter to the QPS's own EEO policies, particularly as there is currently no compulsory physical fitness testing for serving officers or entrants to the rejoiners' program.

Because the PCT lacks validity and is potentially discriminatory, it is recommended that the use of the test as a selection device should cease by 1 March 1999, to be replaced by a health-screening process developed to identify applicants unlikely to have the physical capacity to complete the training program successfully.

Medical screening (chapter 11)

Medical screening is intended to ensure that successful applicants are fit to meet the demands of operational policing. Currently, applicants must fill out a detailed medical history questionnaire and be examined by a Government Medical Officer. Applicants suffering from certain medical conditions or injuries may be excluded by Recruiting Section staff, even without a medical examination, or an adverse medical report may be considered by the Selection Committee along with other relevant information about the applicant.

In recent years, anti-discrimination law has had a major impact on how pre-employment medical examinations are conducted and their results applied. The legal position now is that an applicant's medical condition may only affect the recruitment decision if:

- the applicant has been individually examined by a medical practitioner familiar with the duty statement and physical requirements of the relevant position
- the condition would prevent the applicant from performing the inherent occupational requirements of the position, having regard to any aids or services used by the person or which the employer could reasonably be expected to provide
- the medical assessment relates only to the applicant's current condition, and not to previous problems or the possibility of future deterioration.

Current QPS procedures do not comply with these requirements. It is therefore recommended that the QPS, with appropriate external assistance, produce a detailed guide to medical conditions and injuries that may affect specific duties of operational police. This guide should form the basis of all future medical evaluations. The current medical questionnaire also needs to be reviewed to ensure that it complies with anti-discrimination law. Finally, the way in which the QPS treats medical information about applicants and serving officers should be changed to ensure proper regard is paid to the privacy of individuals. These issues should be addressed urgently to ensure that the QPS complies with its lawful obligations.

The Selection Committee (chapter 12)

The Selection Committee is the final hurdle which applicants must pass before being recommended for acceptance into the QPS. The Committee uses all information gained in the selection process to determine which of the qualified applicants are most suited to be general duties police officers. Observation of the Selection Committee established that:

- there is no minimum cut-off point below which applicants are not considered, as a result of which the quality of applicants varies considerably from intake to intake
- the Committee often has incomplete, inappropriate or irrelevant information, which may increase the likelihood of biased decisions
- undue weight is given to interview scores, which have less validity than the more objective data contained in education, employment and psychometric scores, and referee reports tend to be treated inconsistently.

To address these problems, the QPS needs to institute a training program for Selection Committee members, with a particular focus on the use of appropriate selection techniques and the avoidance of bias. The Selection Committee should develop, and make available to applicants, formal policies specifying the information to be considered by the Committee in making its decisions, minimum information that must be available before the Committee will consider an application, information that will not be made available to the Committee, and the weighting and treatment of referee reports. The Committee should also adopt a majority vote system. In addition, the current process by which the Committee's recommendations may be rejected by the Chief Superintendent of Human Resource Development should be formally documented. The policy should require the Chief Superintendent to consult with the Committee before taking such action.

Sequencing and weighting of selection devices (chapter 13)

Selection devices in a 'multiple hurdle' selection process are generally sequenced so that the most cost-efficient devices with good predictive power are used as early as possible, and the more expensive devices are used in the final stages of selection. Current sequencing generally follows this pattern, but the following adjustments would substantially improve the process:

- criminal and traffic history checks should be run prior to the psychological assessment
- medical and fitness assessments should be conducted prior to the panel interview
- fingerprinting and vetting should be completed prior to the Selection Committee process
- integrity should be assessed continually throughout the selection process.

For final selection, each applicant receives an overall score calculated by the addition of their scores on the psychological tests, education/employment, and the panel interview. Each device is weighted at one-third of the overall score. The decision on how to weight selection devices relates primarily to the known predictive validity and reliability of each device. Research indicates that the panel interview, in its current form, is unreliable and of questionable validity. However, given that it is proposed to redesign the interview in the near future, the current weightings should remain until future evaluations can be conducted.

Selection process for POCC (chapter 14)

In 1994, the QPS introduced the Police Operational Conversion Course (POCC) to provide a much shorter training program for those applicants who already have general duties policing experience. While applicants to both the Police Recruit Operational Vocational Education (PROVE) and the POCC programs are being recruited to perform the same general duties function, the selection process for the POCC program differs considerably from that used for normal entry. In particular, POCC applicants are not evaluated using an employment/education rating, or required to complete the psychological screening tests or the PCT. For final selection, POCC applicants are evaluated on a case-by-case analysis rather than being ranked and considered comparatively to other applicants, as are PROVE applicants. In addition, there are no formally specified criteria declaring the period of separation or number of years of general duties policing experience required for eligibility for the program.

Data are not currently collected that would facilitate validation of elements of the POCC selection process. There needs to be a system that allows for validation of the way in which both education and previous employment are considered so that future studies can determine how important these factors are in selection, how they should be weighted relative to other selection devices, and if minimum entry criteria (as is used for PROVE applicants) should be introduced. A validation study should also be undertaken to determine the validity of the psychometric test battery and personality tests in predicting academy and work performance among POCC applicants.

POCC applicants are currently exempt from completing the PCT and also have a different physical skills education (PSE) program from PROVE applicants, because it is assumed that POCC applicants

have already demonstrated a level of fitness and skill to perform general duties policing. However, many rejoiners have not performed general duties policing for some time and it is probable that their fitness level has declined. There is also clear evidence that older applicants are less likely to meet the physical requirements of general duties policing. Therefore, the medical and fitness assessment process and criteria used for the selection of PROVE applicants should apply equally to the selection of POCC applicants.

It is also recommended that all POCC applicants should be evaluated by the Integrity Committee. This recognises the importance of the QPS ‘getting it right’ when recruiting officers from other police services. The Committee will be in the best position to interpret information about applicants’ complaints histories and other relevant background information on integrity-related matters.

Other recommendations include:

- applicants who have not been in policing work within the preceding five years should be excluded from consideration for the POCC program
- the panel interview should be redesigned to ensure that questions are work related and elicit sufficient information to allow interviewers to assess the applicant’s suitability for an abridged program.

Implementation and evaluation (chapter 15)

This review has highlighted the need for ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the recruitment and selection process. Policing and the police environment are subject to continual, rapid change and it is essential that the recruitment and selection process recognises and responds to those changes. Many of the recommendations in this report respond to changes that have occurred in the last five years.

This chapter recommends that an Implementation Committee be formed to oversee and monitor the implementation of recommendations made throughout this review. The Committee will include representatives from the QPS, CJC and PEAC, and should provide a progress report at each PEAC meeting. An Evaluation Subcommittee should also be formed with responsibility for designing the evaluation program, specifying the design of the database and what data should be collected. This will be a small committee composed of individuals with expertise in the area of research and evaluation.

It is important that evaluation is not seen as a one-off or occasional task. There needs to be a properly constructed cycle of implementation of change, monitoring of conditions, evaluation of processes, and design of further change. It is important that appropriate data are collected on which this process can be based. The evaluation program should not only assess current practice, but also evaluate alternative recruitment and selection strategies from time to time.

Conclusion

The success of any organisation depends on the quality of its personnel. Recruitment of staff is a major strategy for improving the general organisational effectiveness and public image of the QPS. Training recruits to become general duties police officers requires a great commitment of resources, particularly with the large intakes during the last 18 months. It is therefore important that the recruitment and selection process used is as valid, reliable and effective as possible.

The recommendations in this report are intended to improve the QPS recruitment and selection process to give it greater validity, reliability and legal defensibility. The recommendations are the start of an ongoing process of adopting and maintaining an optimum recruitment and selection process, underpinned by continual monitoring and evaluation of the process. With the greater pressure on organisations to defend their selection decisions, it is also important that the Service is able to demonstrate the validity and reliability of each of its selection devices, if challenged.

List of recommendations

Chapter 3: The general duties police officer

Recommendation 1 — New position description for general duties constables

That the QPS develop a single new position description or duty statement for general duties constables, relying on the 25 core activities identified in the NPRU report *Defining the Role of the General Duties Constable: A Job Analysis* (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996). The position description or duty statement should be used for all purposes relating to general duties constables, including for recruitment and selection.

Recommendation 2 — Statement of the inherent requirements of policing

That, using policing and legal expertise, the QPS develop a written statement of the inherent requirements of general duties policing.

Recommendation 3 — Desirable psychological characteristics

That the QPS adopt the list of psychological characteristics provided in the NPRU report (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996) as those desirable for general duties police officers in the QPS.

Recommendation 4 — New selection criteria and assessment measures

That the QPS adopt the selection criteria and assessment measures set out below for the position of general duties constable. The QPS should use these selection criteria for all purposes related to general duties constables, including for recruitment and selection, and should develop appropriate measures to assess serving officers in relation to each criterion.

ability and willingness to acquire sound knowledge of laws, regulations, policies and procedures relating to the duties of a police constable (*Assessed by education, referee reports, psychometric tests, and interview*)

ability to maintain effective working relationships with colleagues and members of the broader community, and respond to direction and instructions when necessary (*Assessed by referee reports and psychometric tests*)

demonstrated reasoning and analytical ability required to research problems thoroughly, make decisions and carry out complex tasks to completion (*Assessed by education, psychometric tests, and referee reports*)

mental and physical ability to perform operational activities effectively under unpredictable, emotional and sometimes extended and dangerous conditions (*Assessed by medical examination, referee reports, and psychometric tests*)

ability to use operational equipment in a safe and effective manner (*Assessed by driver's license, traffic history, keyboard skills, and referee reports*)

demonstrated high level of oral and written communication skills and ability to negotiate and resolve conflict effectively under different situations (*Assessed by education, referee reports, and interview*)

demonstrated high level of personal integrity, emotional stability and professionalism (*Assessed by integrity screening, psychometric tests, referee reports, and interview*)

Recommendation 5 — Other considerations relevant to applicants

That the QPS ensure applicants are made aware of considerations such as public perception and variation in work conditions, which are not covered in the selection criteria. This information should be included in the information booklet provided to applicants.

Chapter 4: Recruitment marketing

Recommendation 6 — Conduct marketing research

That the QPS engage appropriately qualified and experienced external marketing consultants to research:

- employment-related values, beliefs and needs of persons fitting the current QPS recruit profile

- perceptions of the QPS held by current employees and by potential applicants
- strategies to achieve greater congruence between perceptions of the QPS and the values, needs and beliefs of potential applicants.

Recommendation 7 — Development of a strategic marketing plan

That the QPS develop a comprehensive strategic marketing plan for recruitment, which contains a needs assessment, identifies target groups and appropriate techniques for reaching them, indicates necessary budgets and other resources, and provides monitoring strategies.

Recommendation 8 — Enhance promotional material used for recruitment

- (i) That the QPS assess the relevancy and interest of current promotional material used for recruiting to make this material more readable and accessible, ensuring that it presents an accurate perception of policing as a career and the QPS as an employer.
- (ii) That the material be combined into one booklet, with specific booklets produced for applicants from the following groups: women, Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders and people with non-English-speaking backgrounds. Information intended for non-English-speaking applicants should include specific advice about required levels of English language proficiency for entry to the QPS, how such proficiency may be acquired, and authorised testing arrangements.

Recommendation 9 — Consideration of a continuous recruitment-marketing program

That the QPS assess the desirability of undertaking a continuous recruitment-marketing program.

Chapter 5: Initial assessment criteria

Recommendation 10 — Development of new profiles to assess education/employment history

- (i) That, in place of the current education/employment scoring system, the QPS develop three separate profiles:
 - a pure education scale based on QTAC schedules T1000–T9000, where credit is given for a grade point average for an associate diploma, diploma or bachelor's degree
 - an employment scale to rate employment-related knowledge, skills and abilities, based on QTAC schedules V1001, M2001, M2011
 - a combined employment and education rating, developed on the basis of the first and second profiles.
- (ii) That the Recruiting Section only consider an applicant's best or highest-scored profile for selection purposes. All three profile scores should be recorded on a database for validation purposes.
- (iii) That the revised education/employment criterion to be monitored to ensure that it does not unlawfully discriminate against some groups of recruit applicants.

Recommendation 11 — Process for identifying applicants with language difficulties

- (i) That the QPS develop a systematic process for identifying applicants who may not be proficient in the English language. These applicants are to be identified for the purpose of language testing to ensure they have the language skills necessary to complete the recruit-training program.
- (ii) That applicants who do not meet the required standard on the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale not be appointed to the recruit-training program, regardless of how well they perform on other criteria. Applicants who are suitable on all other selection criteria should be guaranteed an appointment, subject to satisfactory completion of a language-skills course.
- (iii) That applicants who display difficulty with the English language should be advised to do an English language course before the panel interview.

Recommendation 12 — Continuation of special recruit programs for indigenous people

That special recruit programs for indigenous people continue until EEO targets are reached and maintained.

Chapter 6: Psychological screening and assessment

Recommendation 13 — Removal of the Mechanical Reasoning test from the test battery

That the QPS no longer include the Mechanical Reasoning test (from the Differential Aptitude Tests) as part of the battery of psychological tests for police recruit selection.

Recommendation 14 — Removal of the Space Relations test from the test battery

That the QPS no longer include the Space Relations test (from the Differential Aptitude Tests) as part of the battery of psychological tests for police recruit selection.

Recommendation 15 — Removal of the Numerical Ability test from the test battery

That the QPS no longer include the Numerical Ability test (from the Differential Aptitude Tests) as part of the battery of psychological tests for police recruit selection.

Recommendation 16 — Process to identify alternative psychological tests

That the QPS identify and assess alternative tests to complement the tests of general cognitive ability that are currently used. In the interim, the Digit Symbol and Digit Span tests continue to be included as part of the psychological test battery for police recruit selection.

Recommendation 17 — Introduction of personality assessment for police applicants

That the Sixteen Personality Factor questionnaire be included as part of the psychological screening process for police applicants.

Recommendation 18 — Policy requiring applicants to undergo psychological evaluation

That the applicants identified by the Sixteen Personality Factor questionnaire as having personality traits unsuited to policing be required to undergo a comprehensive psychological evaluation before further processing of their application. Such an evaluation may include further testing with clinical tools such as the Clinical Analysis Questionnaire and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–2 and/or a clinical interview.

Recommendation 19 — Role of registered clinical psychologist in the recruitment process

That the QPS use a registered clinical psychologist to assess Sixteen Personality Factor profiles and to conduct comprehensive psychological evaluations as required.

Chapter 7: The panel interview

Recommendation 20 — Development of a comprehensive interviewer-training program

That an external consultant, with demonstrated expertise in the area of interview design and interviewer training, be employed to develop a comprehensive training program for interviewers. Successful completion of the program should be a prerequisite to acting as an interviewer.

Recommendation 21 — Provision of applicant information to interviewers

That interviewers not be given the entire applicant file, but only information about the areas to be assessed in the interview. This information should:

- include prior work and education experience and exclude test results (e.g. cognitive abilities or personality) or other information (e.g. medical reports) not directly relevant to the purposes of the interview
- be prepared specifically for the interview and be ordered in the same way for each applicant (e.g. application first, resume second) to ensure that interviewers have relevant information readily available

- be provided to each panel interviewer in a timely fashion, one day in advance if possible, to allow interviewers sufficient time to read and become familiar with the applicant's education and employment history.

Recommendation 22 — Adoption of a structured interview process

That the QPS adopt a structured interview process to ensure the same questions are asked of each applicant, with probe questions used to clarify and elicit all necessary information from the applicant.

Recommendation 23 — Interview content

- (i) That the content of the interview be revised, with specific attention given to:
 - the objectives of the interview
 - identification of appropriate evaluation criteria
 - the number of questions
 - the quality of questions.
- (ii) That this task be completed by the external consultant employed to develop the interviewer training program. The external consultant should also develop a second schedule of interview questions. Interviewers should alternate between the schedules to ensure expertise is maintained in conducting both interviews. The applicant's file should record which schedule was used, for future reference.

Recommendation 24 — Procedure to record and rate the interview

That the criteria against which applicants are judged, and the scoring system used for the panel interview, be revised. The revised system should provide a descriptive rating scale for each criterion and require interviewers to support their rating by making comments and recording interviewee responses. The number of rating points should be reduced from 10 to between 4 and 7 points. The external consultant employed to develop the interviewer training program should make these revisions.

Recommendation 25 — Interviewee assessment by individual interviewers

That the consensus approach for assessing the performance of applicants at interviews be abandoned. Ratings should be made independently by each interviewer and submitted to the Selection Committee. Comparisons of the independent ratings should be used to identify interviewers who require retraining.

Recommendation 26 — Rejection of applicants by interviewers

That interviewers have the opportunity to recommend the rejection of an applicant. In these cases, interviewers should be required to clearly state, in writing, their reasons for rejection.

Recommendation 27 — Number of interviewers on each panel

That the QPS Board of Management consider whether panel membership should be reduced from three to two. Regardless of the number of interviewers per panel, the QPS should endeavour, where possible, to ensure an appropriate gender and/or race balance on the interview panel.

Recommendation 28 — Interview arrangements

That the QPS make every effort to provide more suitable rooms for the conduct of recruitment interviews. There should be a maximum of five interviews a day, with 1½ hours allocated to each applicant.

Recommendation 29 — Policy to ensure adequate pool of trained interviewers

That an adequate pool of trained interviewers be established to avoid last-minute replacements by untrained people. QPS policy should also be amended to ensure that when trained interviewers are not available, interviews are rescheduled. Those officers who are trained in interviewing should be permitted to give priority to this duty to ensure that sufficient interviewers are available.

Recommendation 30 — Interviewees with language difficulties

That where an interviewee demonstrates difficulty with communication and comprehension in the interview, interviewers be able to recommend that the applicant complete a language test.

Chapter 8: Integrity screening

Recommendation 31 — Establishment of Integrity Committee

- (i) That the QPS establish an Integrity Committee to evaluate applicants who have an integrity issue raised against them. The Integrity Committee should not be given access to information that is irrelevant to assessing an applicant's integrity (such as ability-test results or medical examination reports). A comprehensive set of criteria should be developed which define an 'integrity' issue and specify when an application should be referred to the Committee.
- (ii) That the Integrity Committee comprise the following:
 - Assistant Commissioner of the Ethical Standards Command as Chairperson
 - Chief Superintendent of the Internal Investigations Branch
 - Director of the Human Resources Division.
- (iii) That the decision of the Integrity Committee to reject an applicant be final. Where the Committee is unable to reach a consensus to reject or accept an applicant, the case should be referred to the Commissioner of Police for a final decision.

Recommendation 32 — Integrity Committee investigations

That a strategic approach be adopted for conducting integrity investigations. All information, both positive and negative, should be considered when evaluating an applicant. The Integrity Committee, as a matter of priority, should develop written guidelines on how it will investigate and determine integrity issues, and should document the measures it will take to ensure those guidelines are applied consistently and fairly.

Recommendation 33 — Automatic exclusion of applicants

- (i) That applicants who have been found guilty of offences (including attempted offences) against the *Criminal Code* and/or *Drugs Misuse Act* that indicate serious disregard of the law, property rights, and/or individuals' rights be permanently excluded from consideration for appointment to the QPS.
- (ii) That applicants who have been found guilty of other offences under the *Criminal Code* or *Drugs Misuse Act*, offences against the *Regulatory Offences Act*, or of equivalent offences under other Acts, be automatically excluded from consideration for appointment to the QPS if the offence was committed in the last five years. If the offence was committed more than five years ago, the applicant should be excluded unless the Integrity Committee determines that the person does not present an integrity risk.
- (iii) That applicants who have been found guilty of simple offences under the *Vagrants, Gaming and Other Offences Act*, or minor offences under other Acts, be excluded from consideration for appointment to the QPS unless the Integrity Committee determines that the person does not present an integrity risk.
- (iv) That applicants who have been found guilty of driving a motor vehicle with a BAC exceeding 0.1 per cent in the preceding five years, or who have two or more convictions for driving with a BAC less than 0.1 per cent within the previous five years, be excluded from consideration for appointment to the QPS. Two or more convictions for driving with a BAC over 0.1 per cent should be grounds for permanent exclusion from the QPS.
- (v) That an applicant who has been found guilty of an offence which may result in exclusion, but who argues special circumstances, may submit in writing a case for the exclusion criteria to be waived. The decision on whether to accept this submission will be made by the Integrity Committee.

- (vi) That the Ethical Standards Command and the QPS's Human Resources Division be responsible for determining which specific offences belong in the various exclusion categories, having regard to the work done by the PEAC subcommittee.

Recommendation 34 — Failure to disclose relevant information

That applicants who knowingly fail to disclose relevant information on their application form and/or in their medical assessment be automatically excluded from the selection process. The consequences of failing to disclose relevant information should be made clear to all applicants.

Recommendation 35 — Provision of exclusion criteria to applicants

That a summary of the exclusion criteria be provided in the information booklet for applicants.

Recommendation 36 — Procedure when insufficient information available

That where there is insufficient information available to assess an applicant's integrity, the application be considered no further.

Recommendation 37 — Residence checks of applicants

- (i) That residence checks be no longer performed as part of the normal selection process. When an integrity issue is raised, the Integrity Committee should have the discretion to order residence checks for particular applicants. No applicant should be rejected on the sole basis of a negative report from a neighbour.
- (ii) That the QPS Recruiting Section should send an inquiry form to the local station nearest to the applicant's current place of residence. If any adverse information is provided concerning the applicant, the file should be forwarded to the Integrity Committee for further investigation and assessment. No applicant should be rejected solely on the basis of information provided by a local station.

Recommendation 38 — Publishing of names in Police Gazette

That the practice of publishing the names of applicants in the Police Gazette be retained, but any information received as a result be carefully assessed by the Integrity Committee to establish its validity.

Recommendation 39 — Drug testing of recruits

That the QPS drug test applicants when they have their medical examination and conduct random alcohol and drug testing during the recruit-training program at the Academy. In addition, the Service should consider introducing a similar substance-abuse policy for currently serving QPS officers and staff.

Recommendation 40 — Financial checks of applicants

- (i) That all applicants to the QPS be required, at the time they submit their original application, to complete a statement similar to the New South Wales statement of private interests, and also to declare whether they, or their immediate family, have ever been declared bankrupt, sued by a creditor, or defaulted under a loan or credit card contract. All applicants who reach the interview stage of the selection process should be required to supply the QPS with a copy of their consumer credit file (if one exists).
- (ii) That any financial information that raises concerns about an applicant's integrity be referred to the Integrity Committee as the body responsible for integrity evaluations.
- (iii) That as part of the guidelines already recommended for the Integrity Committee, there be clear criteria developed specifying when financial information should be regarded as an integrity issue, and how such issues should be further investigated.
- (iv) That appropriate arrangements be made to ensure the privacy of all financial information about recruits.

Recommendation 41 — Written integrity tests

That personality and integrity tests be used, in conjunction with other integrity-screening measures, where an integrity issue has been raised about an applicant. This will require a registered clinical psychologist experienced in the area of psychometric testing to administer the tests and provide interpretation.

Recommendation 42 — Integrity interviews

That suitably qualified interviewers conduct a second interview with applicants for clarification on integrity issues where there is incomplete information or when the source of the information may be unreliable.

Recommendation 43 — Integrity monitoring for the Police Recruit Operational Vocations Education (PROVE) Program

That the discipline process for the PROVE program continue in its current form, but the Integrity Committee be informed about all cases where a recruit is asked to show cause on disciplinary grounds.

Recommendation 44 — Integrity monitoring for the First Year Constable (FYC) Program

That there be no changes to the current processes or delegations for dealing with performance and integrity matters within the FYC program. However, the Integrity Committee should be notified of any instances where disciplinary action is taken against an officer in the FYC program.

Chapter 9: Referee checks

Recommendation 45 — Types of referee reports to be provided by applicants

- (i) That the QPS continue to obtain referee reports from all of an applicant's employers for the last ten years.
- (ii) That the practice of obtaining two police and two personal referee reports be abolished but applicants be able to submit one character referee report.
- (iii) That the applicant may submit a character referee report from a person with good standing in the community (e.g. police officer, business owner) who must have known the applicant for a minimum of two years.

Recommendation 46 — Use of personal referees

That where there are insufficient employer referees (i.e. because of limited employment history), the QPS request the applicant to provide personal referees. In this case, the nominated referee(s) must have known the applicant for a minimum of two years, and have some formal relationship with the applicant (e.g. university lecturer, group leader, business associate or supervisor during an internship).

Recommendation 47 — Use of referee reports for integrity screening

That a systematic process be developed to use referee reports as a means of verifying the accuracy of the information provided by applicants. Where there is inconsistency between the information sources, the applicant's file should be referred to the Integrity Committee.

Recommendation 48 — Develop a systematic process for referee checking

That a systematic process for referee checking be adopted. Initially, all employers for the last ten years should be requested to complete a written referee report. If a concern is raised in a written report, a follow-up telephone interview should be conducted with the referee. If the matter is performance-related, the interview should be conducted by the Recruiting Section; if it is an integrity issue, the interview should be conducted by the Integrity Committee.

Recommendation 49 — Revise structure and content of the referee report

That a new written referee report be developed using the guidelines specified in this chapter. The information requested from an employer should be different from the information requested from a personal referee. This task may be undertaken by the external consultants employed to review the panel interview process.

Recommendation 50 — Introduction of a telephone-interview training program

That a telephone-interview training program (for referee-checking purposes) be developed. Panel interviewers and members of the Integrity Committee should be trained in this area. The external consultants reviewing the panel-interview process should be requested to develop this program.

Recommendation 51 — Introduce ratings for referee reports

That written referee reports be rated so that future evaluations can determine the value and importance of these reports in the selection process.

Chapter 10: Physical fitness and ability testing

Recommendation 52 — The development of a health-screening process for selection

- (i) That use of the current physical competency test as a selection device cease as soon as practicable, and no later than 1 March 1999, being replaced by a health-screening process to be developed to identify those applicants who are unlikely to have the physical capacity to complete the training program successfully.
- (ii) That the consultants selected to review the physical skills education program address, as part of that review, suitable ways of assessing the fitness of applicants, to detect those who are unlikely to be able to complete the new program. These recommendations should be discussed by the Physical Skills Education Review Steering Committee, the QPS's EEO unit and PEAC before submission to the Commissioner of Police.
- (iii) That applicants be strongly encouraged to do physical fitness training before acceptance to the QPS. The information booklet given to applicants should include a guide to the type and frequency of training recommended before commencement of the recruit training program.

Chapter 11: Medical screening

Recommendation 53 — Develop written guide to medical conditions relevant for selection

That the QPS urgently produce a detailed, written guide to medical conditions that may affect the performance of particular duties of operational police. The guide should be produced with specialist policing, medical, human movements and legal expertise and be made available to medical practitioners conducting medical assessments and also, in summary form, to potential applicants.

Recommendation 54 — Medical examination to be basis of rejection on medical conditions

That rejection of applications on medical grounds be made only on the advice of a medical practitioner, and only after a medical examination of the applicant has been carried out to determine the degree of impairment directly relevant to performance of the duties of a constable.

Recommendation 55 — Develop specific, verifiable criteria for rejection on a medical basis

That the guide to medical conditions relevant to selection include specific, verifiable criteria measuring the degree of impairment suffered by applicants.

Recommendation 56 — Development of a new medical questionnaire based on job requirements

That a new medical questionnaire be developed, directed at medical conditions that will substantially affect performance of the job requirements of operational constables. The questionnaire form should be developed at the same time as the guide for medical practitioners, with contributions from medical, human movements, legal and policing specialists. Applicants should give the completed questionnaire directly to the medical practitioner who performs the medical assessment.

Recommendation 57 — Management of medical information records

- (i) That all medical information and reports on applicants be maintained as confidential files by the Human Resources Management Branch and be available only to the relevant Selection Committee and, after the selection process, to designated personnel in limited, appropriate circumstances.
- (ii) That medical information on unsuccessful applicants be returned to them at the end of the selection process, but such applicants be advised in writing that they may elect to authorise the QPS to retain their medical information on file. Any authorisation should be in writing, and applicants making this election should be given written notification of how their information will be stored and used by the QPS and who will have access to it. Applicants should also be advised that they may request the return of the information to them at any time.

Chapter 12: The Selection Committee
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Recommendation 58 — Determination of an overall cut-off score for Selection Committee

That the QPS apply a cut-off point on the overall ranking of recruits, so that applicants scoring below that point will be rejected before the Selection Committee stage. The cut-off point should be based on all scores included in the ranking formula, and not just the overall ranking, and be applied consistently to all intakes. However, some flexibility should be exercised with applicants from EEO target groups who are just below the cut-off point but otherwise meet all requirements.

Recommendation 59 — Develop process and policy for the Selection Committee decisions

That the Selection Committee develop a policy specifying the information it considers in making its decisions. The policy should give due weight to all valid selection criteria, be applied fairly and consistently, and be made available to all applicants. The policy should include a formal statement of the way in which the QPS applies the merit process to recruit selection.

Recommendation 60 — Procedure where there is insufficient applicant information

That the Selection Committee policy specify that applications will not be considered by the committee, even provisionally, unless all necessary information, including that set out below, is available to the committee:

- confirmation from the Recruiting Section that the applicant has met all initial assessment criteria, including criminal and traffic history checks, citizenship or permanent residency, driver's licence, minimum education and employment experience, first aid and keyboard certificates
- standardised psychometric tests score
- standardised panel interview score
- confirmation from the Integrity Committee that any integrity concerns about the applicant have been resolved
- all required referee reports
- confirmation that the applicant has passed the physical competency test, or whatever test or procedure replaces it
- medical assessment report.

Recommendation 61 — Responsibility of the Chair of the Selection Committee

That the Chair of the Selection Committee be responsible for ensuring that irrelevant considerations are not raised, particularly those based on an attribute of the applicant that could be the basis of unlawful discrimination, or those which raise issues already dealt with in the selection process. The Committee Chair should also ensure that any irrelevant comments by interview panel members are disregarded by the Selection Committee.

Recommendation 62 — Withholding irrelevant information from the Selection Committee

That the Selection Committee not be given irrelevant information such as psychometric test responses or raw scores, interview responses or raw scores or information relating to any earlier interviews, documents concerning integrity issues (apart from confirmation from the Integrity Committee that there are no unresolved integrity concerns regarding the applicant), or documents concerning the initial assessment criteria (apart from confirmation from the Recruiting Section that such criteria have been met).

Recommendation 63 — Exclusion of Committee members who know the applicant

That Committee members who know particular applicants must disqualify themselves from any decision regarding that applicant. Decisions should be made from the material collected by the appropriate selection procedures, and not from informal, ad hoc contacts.

Recommendation 64 — Selection Committee policy on weighting of referee reports

That the Selection Committee policy detail the weight to be given to referee reports compared to other selection factors, and set out a consistent and fair process for considering adverse referee reports.

Recommendation 65 — Selection Committee to adopt majority vote system

That the consensus approach to Selection Committee decisions cease, and applications be determined by a majority vote, with the Chair having a casting vote, if necessary.

Recommendation 66 — Provision of feedback to unsuccessful applicants

That the Chair of the Selection Committee or some other person nominated by the QPS be the designated contact person for all requests from unsuccessful applicants for feedback. Applicants who request feedback should be advised of why their application did not succeed, any steps they can take to improve their prospects for success, and the appropriate procedure for reapplying. Unsuccessful applicants should be advised in writing of their right to request such feedback.

Recommendation 67 — Develop policy to manage applicants who reapply

That the Selection Committee policy specifically address the issue of applicants who reapply for selection.

Recommendation 68 — Policy on assessment of suitability and appointment of applicants

That applicants who are selected for appointment commence that appointment at the most appropriate time, taking into account any preference for where training is to be completed, and the convenience of both the applicant and the QPS. Applicants not yet qualified for appointment should not have their application considered until such time as they become qualified, except where the outstanding requirement is completion of an educational qualification which will be obtained before the commencement date of the intake.

Recommendation 69 — Development of training program for Committee members

- (i) That as part of the consultancy recommended in chapter 7, a comprehensive training program for Selection Committee members also be developed.
- (ii) That the Recruiting Section ensure that all Selection Committees have appropriate gender representation and that, if possible, other EEO target groups are also represented, if necessary through the selection of a community representative.

Recommendation 70 — Consultation between Committee and Chief Superintendent

That no Selection Committee recommendation be rejected by the Chief Superintendent of Human Resources Division without the Chief Superintendent first reconvening the relevant Committee, presenting a statement of concerns about the recommendation, and discussing those concerns with the Committee. If the matter cannot be resolved by consultation, the Chief Superintendent must then make the selection decision according to the relevant delegation.

Chapter 13: Sequencing and weighting of selection devices

Recommendation 71 — Sequencing the selection process

That the QPS adopt the sequence of selection devices and processes proposed in figure 13.2.

Chapter 14: Selection process for POCC

Recommendation 72 — Assessment of previous policing experience for Police Operational Conversion Course (POCC) applicants

- (i) That the QPS develop a systematic process for assessing and comparing applicants on the basis of previous policing experience. Information to be collected about applicants should include:
 - number of years in general duties and number of years since performing general duties
 - number and type of speciality areas worked in
 - number of years of formal supervisory or management experience
 - highest position attained.
- (ii) That previous employment in fields other than policing be assessed using the same systematic process as that applied to main entry recruits.

Recommendation 73 — Assessment of education for POCC applicants

That the QPS develop a systematic process for assessment and comparison of applicants on the basis of education. Information on post-secondary education should be evaluated in the same way as it is for main entry recruits. A systematic process for assessing and comparing prior police education and training should also be developed.

Recommendation 74 — Cognitive-ability testing of POCC applicants

That the QPS, in conjunction with the CJC and PEAC, undertake a study to determine the validity of the cognitive-ability test battery in predicting the Academy and work performance of successful POCC applicants.

Recommendation 75 — Personality assessment of POCC applicants

That the QPS Board of Management consider if POCC applicants should be required to undergo personality assessment to determine psychological fitness for general duties policing. If psychological screening is adopted, the Sixteen Personality Factor questionnaire should be used for selection.

Recommendation 76 — Physical testing of POCC applicants

That the medical and fitness assessment process and criteria used for the selection of PROVE applicants also apply to the selection of POCC applicants. This recommendation should be implemented when the new health-screening process recommended in chapter 10 is introduced, but by no later than 1 March 1999.

Recommendation 77 — Referee checking for POCC applicants

That the referee report for police supervisors be developed by the external consultants reviewing the panel interview process. This report should specifically address the applicant's prior policing experience as it relates to the requirements of general duties policing. Other recommendations made in chapter 9 regarding referee reports should also apply to the POCC selection process.

Recommendation 78 — Integrity screening of POCC applicants

That all POCC applicants, once they have completed the panel interview, be referred to the Integrity Committee for evaluation. The Integrity Committee should develop guidelines for evaluating complaints history and other relevant information for applicants with prior policing experience.

Recommendation 79 — Procedure when there is insufficient information for integrity screening of POCC applicants

That POCC applicants only be considered by the Integrity Committee when all information is available, including a complaints history. When this information is not available, the applicant should not be considered any further.

Recommendation 80 — Eligibility criteria for the POCC program

That the Human Resources Management Manual and any other reference material be updated to reflect accurately the eligibility criteria for the POCC program.

Recommendation 81 — Maximum time lapse since previous police experience

That applicants who have not been employed in policing work within the preceding five years be excluded from consideration for the POCC program, unless there are special circumstances that would justify the Selection Committee making an exemption.

Recommendation 82 — Assessing experience in related industries for POCC applicants

That in cases where work experience in a related industry is to be considered, a substitute for policing experience in applications to the POCC program, a systematic and comprehensive comparative process be adopted. This will ensure there are sufficient similarities in job duties and in the knowledge, skills and abilities required before the work can be considered a suitable substitute for policing experience. As part of this process, applicants should make a written submission outlining how their work experience meets the selection criteria.

Recommendation 83 — Panel-interview process for POCC applicants

- (i) That the panel-interview process for POCC applicants be comprehensively reviewed by an external consultant. There needs to be particular attention given to:
 - developing questions that directly relate to previous policing experience
 - ensuring that questions are directly related to the selection criteria
 - determining the number and quality of questions relating to previous policing experience.
- (ii) That all recommendations made in chapter 7 to be applied to the interview process used for applicants to the POCC program.

Recommendation 84 — Panel-interview questions for POCC applicants

That interview questions for POCC applicants aim to elicit sufficient information to allow interviewers to assess whether an applicant has the basic knowledge, skills and abilities to undertake the abridged program.

Recommendation 85 — Provision of information on POCC program to interviewers and recruiting staff

That interviewers and other recruiting staff be provided with adequate information regarding the POCC program so they are able to determine the applicant's suitability for the abridged course.

Recommendation 86 — Selection Committee for POCC applicants

That all recommendations made regarding the PROVE Selection Committee also apply to the POCC Selection Committee. In addition, a formal POCC selection policy be developed and documented. The policy should address the selection criteria and the selection process, including the weight to be given to each selection criterion.

Chapter 15: Implementation and evaluation

Recommendation 87 — Establish a comprehensive implementation and evaluation strategy

That the QPS develop an implementation program to determine how and when changes to the recruitment and selection process are made and, in consultation with the CJC, develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to monitor and evaluate recruitment and selection processes. The QPS should report regularly to PEAC on implementation and evaluation issues.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This is a report of the Police Education Advisory Council (PEAC), a body established in July 1990 to advise the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service (QPS) on education and training policy. PEAC's diverse membership includes representatives from all levels of the QPS, the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC), academics and the community. This report reviews the processes for recruitment and selection of constables for the QPS.

The chapter begins by canvassing the importance of recruitment and selection to the QPS, followed by discussion of:

- the historical perspective, describing changes to recruitment and selection that have occurred in the past two decades
- current QPS recruitment and selection procedures
- the need for this review, its establishment, scope and purpose
- the structure of this review.

Importance of recruitment and selection

The human resources of any organisation are usually its key ingredient for success. Employees provide the services, operate the technology and manage other employees and resources. Employees are also the most unpredictable of resources, and often are the largest ongoing cost (Nankervis, Compton & McCarthy 1996). These circumstances make the recruitment and selection of the right employees a matter of fundamental importance.

Recruitment and selection are particularly important for policing organisations. To function properly, police services need to maintain high levels of trust and cooperation with government and the public. The selection of the right people as police officers is essential if public confidence in the integrity and effectiveness of the police service is to be established and maintained.

For the QPS, recruitment and selection processes have taken on a further dimension since the Fitzgerald Inquiry. The report of that Inquiry (Fitzgerald Report 1989) argued that aspects of the QPS, including its recruitment practices and inadequate training programs, had contributed to an organisational malaise featuring 'misconduct, inefficiency, incompetence and deficient leadership' (p. 200), and a police force that was insulated from the community it served and which felt threatened by external criticism (pp. 208–212). Part of the remedy proposed for that malaise was to achieve cultural change among police officers by changing recruitment practices to ensure new entrants were more mature, better educated, and from a more diverse range of backgrounds (pp. 245–247).

Since the Fitzgerald Report, policing in Queensland has undergone rapid change. The *Report on the Review of the Queensland Police Service* (QPS Review 1996)¹ described that change:

The QPS has undoubtedly made considerable progress towards transforming itself into the sort of service envisaged by the Fitzgerald Inquiry. This transformation has required it to move from a rigid, authoritarian hierarchy to a modern, responsive, client-focused service. The QPS is attempting to replace control and command structures with concepts of delegation and innovation. Strategies such as community policing and liaison are being developed to lessen reliance on force and confrontation. In terms of physical resources, the QPS has, in less than 10 years, moved from an era of manual typewriters to one of networked computers and integrated data systems (p. 56).

Other external factors have contributed to cultural change in the QPS. In particular, there has been an increasing professionalism of police services throughout Australia and overseas. Greater reliance is now placed on education, management and the development of alternative strategies, as opposed to

¹ Also known as 'the Bingham Review' and referred to in this publication as 'QPS Review 1996'.

old concepts of force and control. This changed culture is reflected in the QPS Vision Statement, which describes a ‘professional police service, dedicated to excellence’.

Increasingly, professionalism and excellence in policing are related to levels of education — both in terms of attracting recruits who hold tertiary qualifications and in requiring further education to be undertaken as a prerequisite to promotion. The QPS has introduced a Constable Development Program, which must be completed by officers seeking promotion to the rank of senior constable. The program is accredited at the level of a university postgraduate diploma. Similar programs are planned for officers seeking promotion to higher levels within the QPS. Soon possession of a postgraduate qualification will be essential for any advancement within the QPS.

The creation of this new culture has important implications for recruitment and selection. It is no longer enough simply to select recruits able to perform the functions of general duties constables. The recruits now being selected will be responsible for implementing and developing the long-term vision of the QPS as a professional organisation devoted to excellence. These recruits will need to be capable of fulfilling the planned educational programs necessary for promotion. They will need the flexibility and skills to adapt and respond to continuous environmental change.

Recruitment and selection, therefore, play an important role in shaping the nature of the QPS as an organisation. The selection processes that operated in the 1980s produced the police force described in the Fitzgerald Report. Current processes will create the QPS of the next century. It is important to get the processes right, but it is equally important to recognise that this review is not the final word on the subject. The external environment will continue to change, and recruitment and selection processes will need to be adapted to reflect those changes.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of recruitment and selection are of fundamental importance. There are some issues which, at this stage, can be flagged for future monitoring. For example, at some time in the short- to medium-term future, there will be a need to consider whether possession of a university degree should be a prerequisite for entry to the QPS. This question will assume increasing relevance as levels of tertiary education among the general community continue to rise. While the issue is not examined in this report, its importance is recognised, as is the recent discussion of the issue in other jurisdictions, particularly New South Wales. Issues such as this will form part of the future agenda for PEAC.

There are further reasons for the QPS to have the right recruitment and selection processes. Although the costs to the Service remain unmeasured, less than optimal recruitment practices may result in:

- reduced work efficiency and output through the selection of individuals with insufficient knowledge, skills and abilities to learn and competently execute the job of policing
- high attrition rates due to selecting applicants that have a poor commitment to the organisation, become dissatisfied with the job, or are not suitable for the job of policing
- high absenteeism due to selecting applicants who are unsuitable for the job and have low motivation and commitment
- damage to morale and reputation of the Service by the behaviour of officers with poor ethical views and integrity.

The importance of the integrity aspect of recruitment and selection processes was shown in the recent CJC inquiry into police corruption led by the Honourable W J Carter, QC (CJC 1997). The inquiry uncovered corrupt activity among isolated pockets of police, some of whom had been only recently recruited. Corrupt activities cause huge expense to both the Service and the community. It is therefore relevant to question how the integrity and ethics screening aspect of recruit selection can be improved to reduce the number of police who are likely to become ‘corrupted’ or who already have a propensity to act unethically.

Considerable research shows the high costs of selecting poor-quality recruits, including financial loss for wasted training and employment (Cooksey 1991; Beck & Wilson 1995), loss of public image for the police service and a potential increase in police complaints and subsequent legal action (Beck & Wilson 1995). In the QPS, no comprehensive quantification of the costs of recruit and selection processes has been undertaken, but table 1.1 below indicates that substantial expenses are involved. Other costs not dealt with in the table include those related to integrity checking and the Selection Committee process (see chapters 8 and 12).

The high costs involved make it imperative that everything possible is done to ensure that recruit-selection processes produce the best possible results for the QPS. Each selection technique used should be effective, cost-efficient and make a valid and reliable contribution to the selection process.

In addition to these costs, expenses related to recruit training also need to be considered. Approximate costs are set out in table 1.2 below. Recruits who do not complete their training, who leave the Service at an early stage, who must take stress leave or retire on medical grounds, or who become subject to the complaints and discipline system, represent a heavy drain on limited resources.

Table 1.1 — Approximate costs to recruit an average PROVE intake

Process	Cost \$
Processing applications	203,600
Administering and processing psychometric tests	800
Conducting the physical competency test (PCT)	1,700
Conducting panel interviews	24,900
Advertising	17,400
Total	248,400

Note: Based on average intakes of 100 to 140 recruits to the Police Recruit Operational Vocational Education (PROVE) program.

Source: Recruiting Section, QPS

Table 1.2 — Approximate training and education costs per PROVE recruit

	Cost \$
PROVE Program	
Academy administration and salaries	6,979
Recruit wage during training	10,248
Total	17,227
FYC Program	
Administration and salaries	1,397
FYC salary (minimum)	36,362
Total	37,759
Total cost of training recruit	54,986

Note: Costs calculated as a proportion of relevant overall administration costs, based on 540 recruits per year.

Source: Queensland Police Service Academy

Historical perspective

Changes to the QPS recruitment and selection process over the past two decades have resulted mainly from moves towards professionalism, legislative changes, and the growing importance of accountability and validity. In the early 1980s, the following selection criteria and procedures were required of applicants (QPS Policeman's Manual):

- Australian citizenship
- minimum age of 18 years and four months and maximum age of 39 years
- good character (evaluated by a police report based on information such as whether the applicant had a relative of such character as to bring discredit on the Police Force; was the parent of a child born out of wedlock; or had any illicit entanglements with females or males)
- criminal record free from conviction and/or misdemeanour
- males to be a minimum height of 172 cm in bare feet, a minimum weight of 65 kg stripped, a minimum deflated chest measurement of 900 mm and a minimum chest expansion of 60 mm, irrespective of chest measurement
- females to be a minimum height of 163 cm in bare feet, a minimum weight of 52 kg stripped and a minimum chest expansion of 60 mm, irrespective of chest measurement
- where necessary, tests of physical fitness to be conducted prior to induction
- applicants to be free from physical defects (e.g. weak constitution, imperfect development or malformation, physical weakness, skin diseases, defects of vision, colour-blindness, speech impediment, diseases of the ears, nose, mouth or gums, lung disease, deformity or contraction of the chest, tuberculosis, obesity, sexually transmitted diseases, defects of the genital organs, diseases of the stomach and/or bowel, constitutional mental inadequacy or psychiatric defect or history thereof)
- minimum educational qualification of a junior certificate [Year 10]
- applications to be made to the recruiting section of police headquarters if within Brisbane, otherwise to the officer in charge of the nearest police station.

Legislative changes in 1984 increased the maximum age for entry to the service to 40 years.

The Fitzgerald Report (1989) found that an applicant's suitability was assessed subjectively by a panel and that few selection techniques with formal validation were available to assist panel members in their decision making. The report concluded that a professional recruitment and selection process must be implemented which should use a range of assessment techniques based on selection criteria that reflect the job requirements (p. 245). To achieve this, the following recommendations were made:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| C1.6 | community policing be adopted ... |
| (d) | staff with language abilities and cultural skills are to be recruited to gain the acceptance and cooperation of ethnic and aboriginal communities. |
| C1.11 | a professionally designed process be introduced for the recruitment and selection of trainee police officers which will provide for: |
| (a) | adequate testing of aptitude, including psychological and other proven test procedures |
| (b) | thorough evaluation of the history of each applicant in terms of past behaviour and standards of conduct |
| (c) | removal of past restrictions on the recruitment of women, and emphasising recruiting the best possible applicants for police service irrespective of sex, race, or religion |
| (d) | phasing out of the present cadet system which directly recruits Grade 12 school-leavers |
| (e) | introduction of lateral recruitment to positions in the Police Department |
| (f) | introduction of term and contract appointments. (p. 382) |

The QPS has implemented the majority of these recommendations.

Table 1.3 outlines the changes in the recruitment and selection process since 1989.

Table 1.3 — Changes in the recruitment and selection process since 1989

Year	Description of change
1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimum height and weight requirements abolished
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSA Act introduced — appointments to be made on merit and cadetships abolished • maximum age limit abolished • introduction of community representative on interview panels • firearms test and timed 2.4 km run introduced • psychometric testing introduced • job-related selection criteria introduced • introduction of structured interview and referee reports • introduction of integrity vetting through the PSU and CJC
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • university-based recruit-training program commenced • applicant education assessed and ranked on notional Tertiary Entrance score • selection panel workshops held • psychometric test and interview used for selection
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection Committee formed • bridging program for ATSI applicants introduced • education included with psychometric test and interview for final selection
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCT replaced timed run for PROVE intakes • education/employment matrix developed • introduction of minimum education requirement of two-year associate diploma • introduction of requirement for first aid and typing certificates
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PROVE program commenced • driving test introduced
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POCC program introduced
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visual acuity requirements amended
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of traineeship in policing for ATSI applicants • PCT modified to include step at two obstacles • firearms test ceased • introduction of formal vetting procedure to screen rejoiners

Source: Recruiting Section, QPS

In addition to these changes, the *Criminal Justice Act 1989* gives the CJC responsibility for overseeing reform of the Police Service, monitoring the performance of the Police Service, and providing the Commissioner with policy directives on matters including the education, training and operations of police (section 23). The Research and Prevention Division of the CJC has particular functions to review the effectiveness of police recruitment and selection (section 56(3)(f)(iv)).

Current QPS recruitment and selection process

The current selection process uses multiple techniques to select recruits from a relatively large applicant pool. There is a series of ‘hurdles’ that applicants must pass. At each hurdle some applicants will be ‘knocked out’, the process continuing until the number of remaining applicants is close to the number of positions available at the Academy. Figure 1.1 outlines the current sequence of hurdles.

Applicants initially are assessed on Australian citizenship, driver’s licence, education and employment, and integrity. The score given to each applicant for educational qualifications also encompasses work experience. Education and number of years of work experience and, in some cases, the types of work experience are combined to give a single score. In some cases, applicants who do not meet the education criteria may be accepted on the basis of relevant work experience alone.

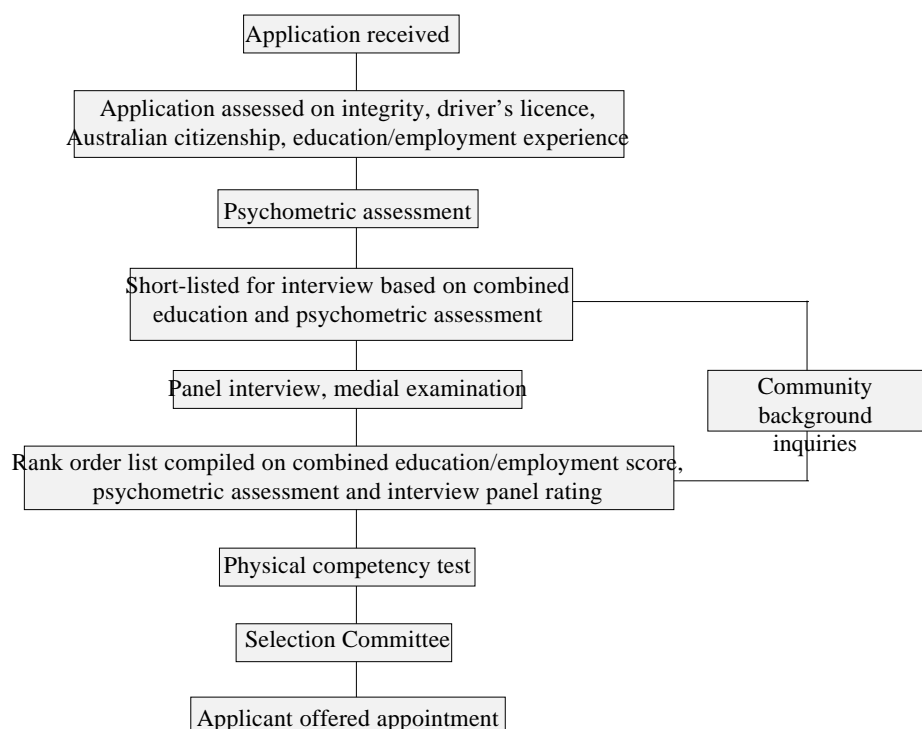
The next hurdle is psychometric assessment. The battery consists of eight tests, which cover non-verbal and verbal reasoning, memory and clerical skills, spatial, numerical and mechanical abilities. The general purpose of these tests is to measure intelligence, independent of cultural biases and education. Aspects of personality are measured by the Sixteen Personality Factor (16PF) questionnaire, although results are not formally incorporated into the selection process.

After completing the PCT, applicants are short-listed and interviewed. The three-member interview panel comprises two members of the QPS and a representative of the community, independent of the QPS. Interviewers are provided with a list of approximately 25 questions based on the selection criteria. Not all questions are asked of each applicant, and interviewers may ask additional questions that are not on the list. The interview panel makes a decision to recommend or not recommend the applicant for selection into the QPS.

In the final selection phase, applicants are given a single score comprising the composite psychometric test result, the rating of education/employment history, and the score from the structured panel interview. Each of the three components is weighted equally (33.33%).

The Selection Committee makes the final recommendation as to whether an applicant should be accepted, carried over to the next recruit intake pool or rejected. Committee members consider the final score, as discussed in the previous paragraph, as well as information from other selection techniques (e.g. qualitative comments from the panel interviews, referee checks) to reach a decision on the applicants who have made it to the end of the selection process. The Selection Committee's recommendations are considered by the Chief Superintendent of the Human Resource Development Branch (HRDB) within the QPS, who has authority delegated from the Commissioner to appoint recruits.

Figure 1.1 – Current sequence of hurdles and processes for selection



Source: QPS 1997

Establishment, scope and purpose of the review

The need for a review was highlighted in a CJC report in June 1996, undertaken as part of the CJC's statutory function to monitor QPS recruitment and selection processes (CJC 1996a). The report assessed the validity and utility of certain recruit selection devices in predicting recruit performance at the QPS Academy. Academy performance was used to measure selection criteria effectiveness because no standardised measure of the work performance of constables was available.

Key findings of the analysis were:

- psychometric test results and education/employment ratings were the best predictors of performance at the Academy
- panel-interview ratings contributed very little to predicting Academy performance
- psychometric test results and education were not correlated, indicating that they were independent measures of performance
- some of the psychometric tests that formed the composite score for each applicant had poor predictive value for Academy performance
- the 16PF questionnaire did not assist in screening applicants in or out of the selection process; no consistent test profile could be found for poor performers at the Academy.

The CJC report concluded that the current selection criteria and selection process used by the QPS should be further evaluated. The release of the report coincided with concerns raised at the first Australasian Women and Policing Conference regarding the validity and fairness of the PCT used by the QPS in recruit selection (Prenzler 1996).

Accordingly, PEAC established this review of the recruitment and selection procedures used by the QPS. The subcommittee formed to carry out the review included major stakeholders in the recruitment and selection process (e.g. QPS Human Resource Division (HRD) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) sections, operational police, the Academy, the CJC, representatives from PEAC, and the community). The subcommittee was chaired by the Chair of PEAC, the Honourable W J Carter, QC, and was resourced largely through the HRD and the Research and Prevention Division of the CJC.

The subcommittee's functions were to review all aspects of the recruitment and selection process, including marketing strategies and the final Selection Committee process, in addition to individual selection techniques (e.g. panel interviews). The subcommittee also considered alternative and additional strategies to improve the precision and validity of the overall selection process.

Shortly after the subcommittee was established, the QPS Review 1996 recommended that:

- the physical requirements for entry to the QPS be evaluated for job relatedness by the QPS Human Resources Division (HRD) before the end of 1996
- the PEAC subcommittee reviewing the current recruit selection process include the PCT as part of its review, giving particular attention to whether the test discriminates against female applicants
- the Commissioner ensure that systematic reviews of selection criteria are included as part of the regular monitoring of the performance of the recruit selection process (Recommendations 42 and 43, pp. 96–98).

PEAC regarded this review as an opportunity to refine recruitment and selection in the QPS to achieve processes which would be progressive, feasible and accountable, and which would:

- select people with the required knowledge, skills, abilities and aptitude to undertake the recruit-training program and the job of a general duties police officer
- select people with the highest ethical values and integrity
- be valid and reliable

- be non-discriminatory and conform with the law
- select people representative of the community within which the Service exists
- ensure that the individuals involved in the selection process are trained in the most effective use of the selection techniques
- ensure that recruitment and selection in the QPS continues to evolve and adapt to the changing needs of the Service and the community generally.

PEAC had regard to the general consensus in the relevant literature that the development of the ideal selection process should include four steps (Gowan & Gatewood 1995):

1. conducting a job analysis, which requires the systematic collection of information about the job duties, the tools, equipment and other items/resources used to complete duties, as well as information regarding the environment in which the duties are executed
2. identifying the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for the job, where:
 - *knowledge* is the information that makes for successful task performance (e.g. knowledge of police duties);
 - *skills* are the individual's level of competency, proficiency or ability to perform specific psychomotor tasks (e.g. skill to drive a car at speed); and
 - *abilities* are the competencies to perform a behaviour that is observable, or that results in an observable outcome (e.g. ability to keep two angry people calm to resolve a conflict)
3. developing assessment techniques that can accurately measure knowledge, skills, and abilities
4. validating the assessment techniques.

These steps require the screening or selection process to be justified in terms of its relevance to the successful performance of recruits as police officers and/or the functioning of the organisation.

Previously used selection processes for police jurisdictions suggest the ideal officer is of large physical stature with a high level of fitness. These ideals would be appropriate if the role of a police officer is conceptualised as one strictly of law enforcement. However, order maintenance and the provision of social services appear to constitute most of a police officer's time. In particular, police work involves interaction with citizens and the provision of human services. The complex nature of policing means that the job needs to be analysed continuously to develop and improve the recruitment and selection process. It is also important that police organisations can demonstrate the relevance of a selection technique to general duties policing, as well as prove that the knowledge, skill or ability level required before entry is the same as that required to perform the recruit program and the job of general duties policing.

The 'ideal' recruitment and selection process must be valid but also effective and cost-efficient. The QPS is currently aiming to attract 500 to 550 suitable recruits from about 3,000 total applications each year (source: QPS Recruiting Section, May 1998). The recruitment and selection procedures must be able to process large numbers of applicants in the most cost-efficient way. There must be consideration of how effectively each selection technique can 'cull' the applicant pool and at which stage each technique should be used. Logically, cost-effective techniques with high validity should be used early in the process, leaving expensive techniques with high validity till later in the process.

To improve continually the effectiveness of selection procedures, there must be a constant monitoring of the requirements of police tasks in the face of changing social circumstances. The organisation must also be receptive to problem areas in police functioning (as evidenced, for example, by a large number of on-the-job injuries, or complaints from the public), possibly representing an inadequacy among police officers in the specific skills or abilities required for certain tasks.

Structure of the report

Chapter 2 describes the legal, policy and organisational context within which recruitment and selection occurs in the QPS. Issues of particular concern are discussed again throughout the report, particularly government policy to achieve rapid increases in police numbers, and the effect of anti-discrimination and EEO legislation.

Chapter 3 provides further background by discussing the role of the general duties police officer, which is the role for which all recruits are selected and trained. The job description, the inherent requirements and desirable psychological traits of persons performing the job, and selection criteria are discussed.

Chapter 4 discusses current activities designed to attract applications for recruit positions, and reveals that the overall numbers of applications have not increased in line with the much larger numbers of recruits now being selected. In addition, the strategies have not been successful in attracting more applicants from people belonging to EEO target groups.

Chapter 5 identifies and discusses initial criteria by which all applicants are assessed, and the basis on which applicants can be rejected from further participation in the selection process.

Chapter 6 describes the psychological and personality tests currently administered to applicants, and analyses the validity and usefulness of those tests in light of relevant research.

Chapter 7 discusses the panel-interview process, which is used to recommend which applicants are considered most suited to policing careers. Problems with the current process are identified, particularly the unstructured nature of the interview, and lack of training given to interviewers.

Chapter 8 sets out the current processes by which applicants' integrity and ethical values are assessed, and recommends refinements to that screening process, including the adoption of new integrity measures.

Chapter 9 describes current processes dealing with applicants' referee reports. Problems identified include the categories of people from whom reports are obtained, the structure and content of the reports, and inconsistencies in the way in which reports are considered.

Chapter 10 analyses the validity of the current PCT undertaken by recruit applicants, and discusses the effect of anti-discrimination law on that test.

Chapter 11 deals with the medical evaluation of applicants, particularly the effect of anti-discrimination and privacy laws.

Chapter 12 deals with the Selection Committee, which is responsible for making the actual selection recommendation. Problems in the committee processes are identified, particularly in relation to its lack of consistency in decision making.

Chapter 13 discusses the overall sequencing of selection criteria, and in particular, the different weighting given to the current devices in the making of the final decision.

Chapter 14 examines the separate selection procedures for the special, abridged program offered to applicants with previous policing experience. Particular attention is paid to differences in the application of selection criteria between programs.

Chapter 15 deals with the need for a planned process of implementation of the recommendations made in this report. It also stresses the need for continued monitoring and evaluation of recruitment and selection processes, both the current processes assessed in this report and alternative selection strategies.

Conclusion

Recruitment and selection are vital to the QPS, both to achieve current and future organisational goals and to minimise the financial and other costs of selecting the wrong applicants.

The QPS should be commended for its efforts to date to reform its recruitment and selection processes, efforts characteristic of the QPS since the Fitzgerald Inquiry. However, there is a need for the overall recruitment and selection process to be reviewed and validated, and for a mechanism to be put in place to allow the process to be continually evaluated and improved when necessary. These issues are dealt with in the rest of this report.

Chapter 2: Legal, policy and organisational issues

The recruitment and selection process for the QPS is conducted within a legal, policy and organisational framework — that is, recruitment and selection procedures need to comply with the law, government policy and the QPS's own organisational policies and strategies.

This chapter provides a background to the review by identifying and briefly discussing issues relevant to the recruitment and selection procedures dealt with later in this report. More detailed analysis occurs where relevant throughout the review.

Legal issues affecting recruitment and selection

The primary legislation governing the QPS is the *Police Service Administration Act 1990* (PSA Act). The PSA Act sets general principles governing the recruitment and selection process in that it:

- establishes the position of recruits as members of the QPS (section 2.2)
- requires certain appointments within the QPS, including appointments of recruits, to be made by fair and equitable procedures, which must include the inviting of applications, selection of applicants on merit, and the absence of unjust discrimination (section 5.2(2))
- makes the Commissioner responsible for the selection of recruits (section 4.8(2)(e))
- requires the Commissioner, subject to the PSA Act, to ensure compliance with the requirements of all Acts and laws binding on members of the Police Service (section 4.8(4)(b)).

The Commissioner, therefore, is responsible for ensuring fair, equitable, merit-based, non-discriminatory procedures in the selection of recruits, and for ensuring compliance with other laws affecting the recruitment process.

Other laws that may affect recruitment include:

- anti-discrimination legislation, particularly the Queensland *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* and the Commonwealth *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, both of which include provisions aimed at preventing discrimination in employment
- the Queensland *Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act 1992*, which imposes positive obligations on public sector employers engaged in making employment decisions
- administrative law including the Queensland *Judicial Review Act 1991*, *Freedom of Information Act 1992*, and *Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974*, which may offer some redress to persons affected by employment decisions in the QPS
- privacy laws.

These legal obligations affecting the recruitment and selection process are discussed further under five headings: the merit process, anti-discrimination, equal opportunity, reviews of recruitment decisions, and privacy.

The merit process

As discussed above, the PSA Act requires 'fair and equitable procedures' in the appointment of recruits. Those procedures must include the invitation for applications and selection on the basis of merit. The PSA Act does not specify how the requirement for fair and equitable procedures for recruit selection may be fulfilled, or what is meant by selection on the basis of merit. The Police Service (Administration) Regulations 1990 and the HRM Manual are also silent on these matters.

However, the PSA Act does contain some guidance on the meaning of merit. The appointment of police officers is subject to the same requirement for fair and equitable procedures as that applying to recruits, but with a further provision defining merit to comprise:

- the integrity, diligence and good conduct of the officer
- the potential of the officer to discharge the duties of the position in question
- the industry shown by the officer in the performance of the duties of office in the course of the officer's career
- the physical and mental fitness of the officer to perform the duties of the position in question (section 5.2(5)).

The officer's potential to discharge the duties of a position is to be judged by factors including:

- the performance of duties of office in the course of the officer's career
- the range of practical experience of the officer in or outside the Service
- the ability, aptitude, skill, knowledge and experience determined by the Commissioner to be necessary for the proper performance of the duties of the position in question
- any relevant academic, professional or trade qualifications of the officer (section 5.2(6)).

Further guidance about the merit process can be gained by examining its application in the public sector more generally. The *Public Service Act 1996*, which does not apply to recruits or police officers, provides that, subject to certain exceptions, selection for the Queensland public service must be based on merit alone (section 78(1)). Merit is to be determined by taking into account:

- the extent to which each applicant has abilities, aptitude, skills, qualifications, knowledge, experience and personal qualities relevant to the carrying out of the duties in question
- if relevant, the way in which each applicant carried out any previous employment or occupational duties; and the extent to which each applicant has potential for development (section 78(2)).

The Office of the Public Service has recently issued guidelines on the requirements applying to the recruitment and selection of public service employees (OPS Directive No. 5/97). The directive requires:

- the basis for selection to be merit
- the obligations in the *Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act* and the requirements of the *Anti-Discrimination Act* to be met
- the use of a job description setting out the duties, outcomes and responsibilities of the job and the use of selection criteria against which the relative merits of applicants are to be assessed
- vacancies to be advertised as widely as practicable
- the use of selection methods that provide transparent, effective, bias-free decisions
- documentation that clearly explains the decision-making process in a form that allows it to be reviewed
- selection documents to be retained for at least 12 months and their confidentiality to be maintained.

From this discussion, it is apparent that both the PSA Act and the *Public Service Act* relate merit (apart from the requirement for integrity) to the applicant's ability, potential, fitness, aptitude, knowledge, skill, experience, or qualification to perform the duties of the office in question. A merit-based assessment of applicants depends on an accurate understanding and statement of the duties of the position, and selection criteria which relate directly to those duties.

This review has considered the extent to which QPS recruitment and selection procedures comply with the legislative requirement for a merit-based process. That consideration has involved a review of the requirements of recruits during their training, and, given that successful recruits will fill the

position of constable, of the functions and duties of that position (which are discussed further in chapter 3). The review has particularly considered the extent to which each step in the selection process reflects the actual requirements of recruit training, and the duties of constables. These issues are discussed where relevant in the subsequent chapters of this report.

Anti-discrimination

As discussed above, section 5.2(2) of the PSA Act prohibits unjust discrimination in the recruit selection process. Additional anti-discrimination obligations arise under both State and Commonwealth law.

The effect of anti-discrimination law is to place an obligation on the QPS to ensure that its recruitment and selection processes do not discriminate on the basis of any of the attributes that are recognised under the relevant legislation, which under the Queensland *Anti-Discrimination Act* include: sex, marital status, pregnancy, parental status, age, race, impairment, religion, political belief or activity, trade union activity, or lawful sexual activity (section 7). Discrimination on these bases in the pre-work area is specifically prohibited, with that area being defined to include decisions as to who should be offered work, the terms of work offered, or access to a training program (section 14). Breaches of the *Anti-Discrimination Act* are enforceable in the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal and, in some circumstances, the Supreme Court.

Unlawful discrimination may be direct in that a decision is taken not to employ a person with a particular attribute, such as race (section 10). Indirect discrimination — which occurs when a policy has a disproportionate impact on a particular group of people — is also prohibited. Examples given in the Act include a height requirement which tends to discriminate against people of a particular race or sex and which is not a genuine requirement of the occupation, or a uniform requirement for a cap to be worn which is not necessary for health or hygiene reasons and which tends to exclude people required by their religious or cultural beliefs to wear a particular headdress (section 11).

The main exemption to the prohibition against discrimination under the *Anti-Discrimination Act* is the existence of genuine occupational requirements which relate to the performance of the duties of the position (section 25). A second important exemption provides that an employer may discriminate on the basis of impairment if the person with the impairment would require special services or facilities and the supply of those special services or facilities would impose unjustifiable hardship on the employer (section 35).

In addition, the Act provides for welfare measures which may be taken by employers for a group of people with an attribute for whose welfare the Act was designed; for example, the provision of high-security car parks exclusively for women to reduce the risk of assault (section 104). Similarly, section 105 of the Act enables employers to institute equal opportunity measures designed to benefit such groups, for the period until equal opportunity is achieved. The Act also contains exemptions for employers who can show that their actions are reasonably necessary to protect either the health of members of the general public (section 107) or the health and safety of persons at a workplace (section 108).

The Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws are similar in scheme to the Queensland *Anti-Discrimination Act*. Breaches of the *Racial Discrimination Act* are enforceable in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and the Federal Court.

Therefore, there is a clear obligation under anti-discrimination laws and the PSA Act for the QPS to ensure that it does not act in a discriminatory way, except where permitted by law, and this obligation extends to recruitment and selection procedures. QPS selection procedures have not always met this obligation. For example, in 1993 a recruit applicant, rejected on the basis of his short-sightedness, successfully challenged the selection standard. The Anti-Discrimination Tribunal rejected the argument that it was a genuine occupational requirement that a recruit have a certain standard of uncorrected eyesight and found that the applicant, with his contact lenses in place, could perform all the

requirements of the position. The Tribunal was particularly influenced by the fact that a number of existing police officers in Queensland had a similar standard of uncorrected eyesight to the applicant.²

In a more recent decision, the QPS was ordered to reinstate a recruit whose employment was terminated following an epileptic seizure.³ The Tribunal found that the recruit could, with proper medication, perform all the essential duties of a police officer and that an ability to drive a motor vehicle at all times was not a genuine occupational requirement of the position. The Tribunal found it relevant in this regard that a significant number of currently serving QPS officers could not drive for medical reasons, yet were accommodated by the QPS.

In considering QPS recruitment and selection procedures, this review has been conscious of the obligation for such procedures to operate in a non-discriminatory and lawful way. This issue is of particular relevance to some of the procedures discussed in this report, in particular chapter 10 dealing with the physical competency test, chapter 11 dealing with medical fitness screening, and chapter 14 dealing with recruitment standards between programs. Relevant discrimination issues are discussed further in those chapters.

Equal opportunity

The *Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act*:

- imposes obligations on agencies including the QPS (section 3) to develop and implement EEO management plans to enable members of target groups to compete for recruitment, selection, promotion and transfer and pursue careers as effectively as people who are not members of the target groups (section 4)
- requires agencies to ensure that they eliminate discrimination in employment matters against members of the target groups (section 4)
- defines target groups to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with a non-English-speaking background (NESB) or with a disability, and women (section 3)
- requires employment powers, which includes decisions as to recruitment, selection and training (section 3), to be exercised having regard to the agency's EEO management plan (section 13).

The effect of this Act is to impose strong obligations on the QPS to devise and implement EEO measures in relation to employment decisions, and to report annually on progress (section 14). The QPS can be supervised in this regard by the Public Service Commissioner, and noncompliance can be referred to the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal (sections 15–24).

The QPS Review 1996 referred to an internal evaluation of the QPS's 1994–96 EEO Management Plan and recommended that the Commissioner address forthwith issues of concern identified in that evaluation (Recommendation 69, p. 124).

The QPS's current EEO Management Plan establishes four EEO programs. Two have objectives directly relevant to recruitment and selection, namely to:

- achieve membership of the Service which is representative of society by achieving equitable representation of the four target groups
- remove unlawful discrimination in HRM policies and practices which indirectly discriminate against target group members, including in the recruitment and selection process.

This review, in considering QPS recruitment and selection procedures, has taken into account the obligations arising under the *Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act*, and the Service's own objectives, as stated in the EEO Management Plan. All aspects of the procedures need to be measured against the requirements of both the Act and the EEO Management Plan, and this issue has been

² *Flannery v. O'Sullivan (No. 2)* (1993) EOC 92–501.

³ *Stevens v. QPS* (unreported, Anti-Discrimination Tribunal of Queensland, Copelin (President), 30 March 1998).

considered where relevant throughout this report.

Reviews of recruitment decisions

A range of administrative review mechanisms, outlined below, can affect QPS recruitment and selection procedures.

- The *Freedom of Information Act* may enable access to documents relating to recruitment and selection, including applications, assessments and reports. Some specific documents are likely to be exempt from disclosure; for example, medical reports on applicants are likely to fall within the personal affairs exemption in section 44(1) of the Act, and thereby be available only to the applicant involved. Some documents relating to integrity checks may fall within the law-enforcement exemption (section 42(1)).
- The *Judicial Review Act* gives persons adversely affected by administrative decisions the right to apply for a review of the legality of that decision. The Act also confers the right to request written reasons for decisions, but that right does not extend to appointment decisions (section 31). Grounds for review include: denial of natural justice; nonobservance of required procedures; lack of jurisdiction in the decision maker; or that the decision involved an error of law, or improper exercise of power, was not authorised, was affected by fraud or was not supported by the evidence (section 20).
- The *Parliamentary Commissioner Act* authorises the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (the Ombudsman) to investigate complaints relating to administrative and procedural matters, which includes recruitment and selection processes. The Ombudsman's powers, however, are restricted to making recommendations to the Minister and reports to Parliament.

These review rights are intended to ensure that decision making by government agencies is as open and accountable as possible. The existence of these rights of external review means that QPS recruitment and selection procedures and decisions need to be:

- properly documented to enable review and freedom of information rights to be accessed according to law
- lawfully made and supported by sufficiently reliable evidence to sustain the decision.

This requirement is recognised for the public service by the Office of the Public Service directive on recruitment and selection, which requires selection decisions to be clearly documented to facilitate review (OPS Directive No. 5/97).

All steps in the selection process are potentially subject to review, and the possibility of such review is an important factor when considering the style or format of procedures, including, for example, the nature or style of interviews and the extent to which they are recorded in writing. The possibility of review also emphasises the importance of selection decisions being based on evidence related to the selection criteria, rather than on opinion or impressions. This report deals with these issues where relevant in its consideration of the various QPS selection procedures.

Privacy

There is no Commonwealth or Queensland legislation that specifically regulates the privacy of employment-related documents. The Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* does impose certain obligations on record-keepers to limit the use of, access to, and disclosure of personal information. While the primary objective of these provisions is to protect the privacy rights of consumers, the provisions are also capable of applying to the possession by employers of personal information about employees. However, the Act does not apply to Queensland departments and agencies such as the QPS.

There is currently no Queensland equivalent of the Commonwealth *Privacy Act*, although a recent report has recommended the enactment of such legislation (Legislative Assembly of Queensland 1998).

Although the *Privacy Act* does not specifically regulate the privacy of employment-related documents, it does indirectly regulate the legal capacity of the QPS to obtain certain ‘credit check’ documents on applicants. Similar provisions are contained in the Queensland *Invasion of Privacy Act 1971*. This issue is discussed further in chapter 8, which deals with the integrity-screening process.

Another privacy issue that is discussed later in this report (see chapter 11) concerns applicants’ medical reports.

Government policy affecting recruitment and selection

In addition to the legal issues discussed above, QPS recruitment and selection are also affected by a range of government policies. While these policies may not have the force of legislation, the QPS is ultimately subject to government direction, through the responsible Minister. The PSA Act acknowledges this fact by recognising and preserving the capacity of the Minister for Police to give binding directions to the Commissioner concerning:

- the administration, management, superintendence, policies and priorities of the Police Service
- the number and deployment of officers and staff members and the number and location of police establishments and police stations (section 4.6(2) and (3)).

Such government directions may have a significant impact on QPS recruitment and selection. For example, current Government policy requires a substantial increase in police numbers within a relatively short time. The Government’s short-term policy is to provide an extra 800 sworn officers and 400 extra civilians by August 1999. The ten-year plan is to boost sworn strength by 2,780 to 9,100 by 2005. This policy requires the QPS to increase the numbers of recruits selected and trained within the specified time frame. This requirement affects QPS recruitment and training resources and needs, and raises many other issues, such as the need to maintain high standards when many more recruits are sought from a pool of applicants that has not substantially increased in size. The imperative to select larger numbers of recruits may also have an impact on the educational and gender profile objectives of the QPS, as does the recruitment of significant numbers of re-entrants through the Police Operational Conversion Course (POCC). All of these factors need to be borne in mind when assessing recruitment and selection procedures.

In addition to policy on police numbers, the other main area of government policy affecting QPS recruitment and selection is budgetary policy. All aspects of recruitment and selection procedures need to be assessed in the light of their impact on the QPS budget allocation, and governmental emphasis on the effective and efficient use of resources.

This review has recognised that the QPS is constrained by relevant government policies, some of which have particular impact on recruitment and selection. Nevertheless, there is room to assess whether current procedures are the best response to those policies. This issue is discussed where relevant throughout this report, but particularly in chapter 4 (recruitment marketing) and chapter 14 (selection process for POCC).

QPS policies affecting recruitment and selection

In addition to government policies, the recruitment and selection process is also affected by the organisational policies and strategies of the QPS. These policies and strategies are expressed in documents such as the Vision Statement, Mission Statement, Corporate Plan, HRM Plan, EEO Management Plan, and HRM Manual.

These policies indicate the outcomes expected by the QPS of its recruitment and selection process to the extent that they relate to the characteristics and role envisaged for current and future police officers. For example, the Vision Statement refers to a ‘professional police service, dedicated to excellence’. This has implications for the type of qualifications and personal qualities that should be sought in the selection process. The Corporate Plan (1995–1998) likewise refers to a QPS characterised

by strategic thinking, professionalism and best practices.

The HRM Plan 1995–2000 contains more detailed description of QPS policies affecting recruitment, including strategies to:

- ensure appropriate community representation in the QPS, including by refining selection procedures, validating physical entry requirements and actively promoting the Service as an EEO employer
- increase community knowledge of, and access to, police careers
- identify bridging programs and other vocational/educational avenues to assist entry to the QPS by targeted groups
- refine the selection process to increase target group numbers in the QPS, including the provision of special entry status for target group members, focusing selection criteria on the special qualities of target group members, and extending target group representation on selection panels
- increase the proportion of constables in the Service, and refine attrition and recruitment forecasting procedures (QPS 1995, pp. 4–5).

The EEO Management Plan 1996–2000 also contains strategies affecting recruitment and selection, including to:

- promote the service as an EEO employer, and enhance recruitment procedures to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are selected as police recruits
- enhance recruitment procedures to ensure women are selected on merit to be police recruits
- identify, in conjunction with other Australian police services, medical and physical standards to ensure appropriate applicants are selected to train as police officers
- develop recruitment strategies to attract NESB people to police officer positions within the Service
- review HRM and administrative policies and practices to ensure they do not unlawfully discriminate against target group members (QPS 1994, pp. 9,11,13,15,17).

This review has taken these existing QPS policies into account where relevant throughout this report. Unlike legislation or government policy directives, QPS policies are not binding. Nevertheless, corporate policies and strategies, as an expression of the organisation's perception of its values and role, should be fully reflected in recruitment and selection procedures. Achievement of the stated goals of the QPS depends on the recruitment of appropriate personnel. These issues are discussed mainly in chapter 4 (recruitment marketing), chapter 14 (selection process for POCC), and chapter 15 (implementation and monitoring).

Conclusion

Recruitment and selection for the QPS are conducted within a framework of laws, and government and organisational policies which affect both the processes and their outcomes. Relevant factors include:

- the requirement that recruits be selected on merit
- anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity laws
- external review of recruitment decisions
- privacy laws
- government policies about police numbers
- government budgetary policy
- QPS policies affecting recruitment, particularly those dealing with EEO and anti-discrimination.

The most important of these issues to date has been the policy of recent governments to increase police numbers, which has resulted in a considerable growth in the size of recruit intakes over the past 18 months. In addition, anti-discrimination law has prohibited discrimination in selection decisions on bases such as sex, race and impairment, except in certain circumstances where a position has inherent occupational requirements. The implications of these developments are explored throughout the report.

Chapter 3: The general duties police officer

The QPS selects recruits to be trained as general duties police officers. Most officers will spend at least five years as general duties constables, before being eligible to apply to join specialist branches such as juvenile aid, the Special Emergency Response Team, fraud, criminal investigations, training, or to assume managerial or administrative duties. The majority of officers will remain in general duties for most of their policing career.

Recruit selection and training is directed at general duties because most police are engaged in such duties and because a thorough understanding of general duties is regarded as essential to the performance of all other specialised functions within the QPS. The period which new officers spend in general duties is regarded as an extension of their formal training and an opportunity for them to acquire practical knowledge.

Issues for consideration

This chapter:

- analyses the activities of a general duties police officer
- discusses those duties which can be described as inherent occupational requirements of policing which, as discussed in chapter 2, are important to considering whether selection procedures may be discriminatory
- describes desirable psychological characteristics of an effective general duties police officer
- discusses selection criteria for the general duties position.

Activities performed by a general duties police officer

The term ‘general duties’ describes all areas of non-specialist operational policing. It encompasses officers posted to a range of police stations and establishments throughout Queensland, generally at ranks of constable through to sergeant, although for some sergeants administrative and supervisory functions are a significant part of their duties.

There is no legislative definition of a general duties officer or the functions of such an officer. Section 2.3 of the PSA Act defines the functions of the Service as:

- the preservation of peace and good order
- the protection of all communities in the State and all members thereof from unlawful disruption of peace and good order and commission of offences against the law generally
- the prevention of crime
- the detection of offenders and bringing of offenders to justice
- the upholding of the law generally
- the administration, in a responsible, fair and efficient manner and subject to due process of law and directions of the Commissioner, of the *Criminal Code* and certain other legislation, and the powers, duties and discretions prescribed for officers by any Act
- the provision of such services, and the rendering of such assistance, in situations of emergency or otherwise, as are required of officers by lawful authority or the reasonable expectations of the community, or as are reasonably sought of officers by members of the community.

This legislative description sets the framework of general duties policing, but says little about the specific tasks and activities performed. Those tasks and activities are relevant because recruit applicants are assessed on their ability or potential to perform them. An appropriate assessment process, therefore, is dependent on an accurate and fair statement of policing duties, which in turn must take account of

the considerable changes that have occurred in recent years to the tasks and activities associated with general duties policing.

Such changes include:

- Responsibility for the monitoring of parking within cities and towns, installation of traffic control lights, the issuing of driver's licences and the monitoring of heavy transport vehicles is now shared with other government departments and local authorities, allowing police in metropolitan areas to concentrate on other duties.
- Technological advances such as the introduction of red light cameras and speed cameras have required the development of new skills, and changed strategies for the detection and deterrence of traffic offences.
- Changing community attitudes to social problems have required different policing reactions to issues such as juvenile crime, homelessness, and prostitution. Police must now deal with such problems cooperatively with other government and community agencies, and with sensitivity to the needs and views of disparate sections of the community.
- Government law and order policies increasingly require police to focus on particular tasks, such as the prevention and detection of break and enter offences, or offences against children. Police have to be flexible enough to respond quickly and appropriately to legitimate policy directives.

The current QPS statement of the functions of a general duties police officer is set out in the position description for constables and senior constables, which describes their principal responsibilities as follows:

- control available resources (internal and external) through effective management techniques aimed at service delivery, crime prevention and detection
- research environmental factors and respond appropriately to community and Service needs
- conduct enforcement patrols and investigations to enhance the role of the Service within the community
- participate in community based policing initiatives to enhance service delivery
- identify and implement appropriate actions for performance management and personnel development where appropriate
- establish and maintain effective communication with all stakeholders to complement service provision.

A current QPS handout to applicants describing the profile of a constable sets out the duty statement somewhat differently:

use reactive and proactive policing methods to assist the peace and well-being of the community in accordance with operational safety standards
perform all tasks lawfully required by senior police officers to ensure effective policing
comply with the Service code of conduct in all work activities
work with police, other personnel and the community to maximise use of resources
gather and collate information from the community and other sources for effective policing
prepare and submit documentation for effective working practices, and as required by the judicial system, licensing and regulatory bodies
provide for and manage persons in care or custody, process and escort prisoners
use and maintain operational equipment effectively in accordance with operational safety standards
contribute to and participate in community based policing initiatives aimed at crime prevention
plan and facilitate professional development.

It is confusing for the QPS to rely on these two separate duty statements describing the same position.

The first statement is applied to serving constables, and the second is used for recruitment and selection purposes. However, applicants are recruited to fill the position of constable, subject to the satisfactory completion of their training. The same position description or duty statement for general duties constables should be used for all purposes, including recruitment and selection. Applicants would then have a clearer understanding of the functions of a general duties police officer.

Both the current QPS position descriptions contain very little information about the actual activities and duties of operational police. There has been recent research directed at identifying more precisely the tasks and activities currently performed by such police on a day-to-day basis. Two Australian reports are particularly relevant:

- the Australian Policing Operational Core Competency Standards developed by the Steering Committee of the Australasian Police Education Standards Council (APESC) in 1997. The Steering Committee comprises the Assistant Commissioners or Directors of Education and Training from each of the Australian State police services, the Australian Federal Police and the New Zealand Police Service, and the Director of the Australian Institute of Police Management.
- the National Police Research Unit (NPRU) report entitled *Defining the Role of the General Duties Constable: A Job Analysis* (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996).

At the commencement of this review, the PEAC subcommittee considered whether there was a need to undertake further research in the form of a specific, comprehensive job analysis of the role of the general duties officer in Queensland. However, given that the NPRU project to establish the role of the general duties constable had commenced, and that operational officers from each jurisdiction were included in their sample, the subcommittee decided that it was not necessary to replicate an already ongoing project. Instead, it was agreed to adopt the findings of the NPRU report, provided they proved to be applicable to Queensland. As well as avoiding duplication, this approach is a step towards the development of national standards in policing.

The APESC core competency standards focus on what is expected of a person in the workplace, including the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.

The 10 core competencies found to be required of a general duties police officer are:

- utilise operational safety standards (e.g. employ self-defence and restraining techniques)
- use reactive policing methods (e.g. arrest, report or caution)
- employ proactive policing methods (e.g. utilise and remain current with internal intelligence)
- facilitate communication (e.g. utilise conflict resolution/negotiation skills)
- gather and collate information (e.g. conduct interviews)
- prepare and submit documentation (e.g. required by judicial system)
- manage persons in care or custody (e.g. provide for persons in care or custody)
- use and maintain operational equipment (e.g. use and maintain personal equipment)
- participate in community policing (e.g. school/community police education programs)
- plan and facilitate professional development (e.g. establish/implement career path strategies)

Source: Australian Policing Operational Core Competency Standards, 1997

The NPRU report details a more comprehensive job analysis undertaken to define the activities of a general duties constable.

The 25 activities identified as forming the core activities of the general duties constable are:

investigate incidents or offences
act in accordance with occupational health and safety regulations and guidelines
complete departmental forms or reports
utilise problem solving techniques
undertake mobile patrols as a preventative measure
establish local knowledge of a specific patrol area
provide customer service
adhere to or apply the code of ethics/conduct
manage personal stress
participate in team work or encourage team morale
establish or develop good relationships with the community
use or maintain operational equipment
utilise police databases
use keyboard skills
keep up-to-date with current affairs
adhere to guidelines relating to uniform
record information using notes, plans, photos etc.
adapt communication strategies to meet the needs of individuals
maintain communication with other members and sections
prevent or detect traffic offences
use safe driving procedures
deal with aggressive people
use firearms
respond to reported crime, inquiries or requests for assistance
prioritise tasks

Source: Kaczmarek & Packer 1996

Phase one of the NPRU report was based on an analysis of responses from 913 officers representing each police jurisdiction in Australia. Constables, senior constables and sergeants were required to complete a comprehensive job analysis questionnaire. The results of the analysis identified a number of commonly performed activities by police officers regardless of jurisdiction. The activities identified cover a range of administrative, operational, proactive and reactive tasks commonly performed by general duties police. Many of the identified tasks overlap or expand upon the 10 core competencies listed on page 21.

Some of the tasks are clearly related to specific policing duties; for example, to investigate incidents or offences, complete departmental forms, undertake mobile patrols, respond to requests for assistance, prevent or detect offences and use operational equipment and databases. Other tasks relate more to the way in which such duties are performed; for example, to provide customer service, manage personal stress, develop good relationships with the community, encourage team morale, deal with aggressive people, and prioritise tasks.

The core activities identified in the NPRU report represent a much more current, accurate and detailed description of the duties of an operational police officer than either of the current QPS duty statements. Their report concluded that the job of the general duties constable is the same in all jurisdictions. Comparison with other job analyses performed by individual Australian jurisdictions found the majority identified similar tasks and activities.

The NPRU findings should be adopted and should underpin a single new duty statement or position description for the position of a general duties constable in the QPS.

Recommendation 1 — New position description for general duties constables

That the QPS develop a single new position description or duty statement for general duties constables, relying on the 25 core activities identified in the NPRU report *Defining the Role of the General Duties Constable: A Job Analysis* (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996). The position description or duty statement should be used for all purposes relating to general duties constables, including for recruitment and selection.

The inherent requirements of general duties policing

As discussed above, there is a need for an accurate, comprehensive statement of duties to underpin recruit selection processes. In addition, there is a need to consider which of those duties can be regarded as inherent occupational requirements of general duties policing, as opposed to those tasks occasionally, or even often, attended to by police, but not fundamental to the performance of the job.

This need arises because of the legal obligations now imposed on employers, particularly under anti-discrimination law, as discussed in chapter 2. Discrimination that would otherwise be unlawful is permitted if authorised under the *Anti-Discrimination Act*, including where it is based on a genuine occupational requirement. The test of whether a particular task or activity is an inherent requirement of a position is an objective one, not a subjective assessment made according to the needs or wishes of the employer. This means that while a duty statement may list those activities the employer would like performed, applicants may only be rejected in a discriminatory way if they cannot perform activities objectively determined as essential to the position.

For example, the ability to participate in mobile patrols may be regarded as an essential function of operational policing. This ability is listed in the NPRU report (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996) as a core activity in itself, and is also central to other activities depending on officers' mobility, such as investigating incidents or offences, responding to reported crimes or requests for assistance, establishing local knowledge of a patrol area, providing customer service, and preventing or detecting traffic offences. Therefore, an officer unable to participate in mobile patrols because of a physical disability could be said to be incapable of performing the inherent functions of an operational police officer, and therefore his or her application could lawfully be rejected.

However, careful attention needs to be given to defining the actual essential duty: are officers capable of participating in mobile patrols if they can be passengers in the vehicle but not drivers? There are strong arguments for suggesting that the trend to single-officer patrols and stations, and the possibility of emergencies arising where partners cannot always be contacted, means that it is the ability to drive that is essential, rather than simply the ability to get into the vehicle as a passenger. Further, it can be argued that the requirement extends to the ability to drive in extreme and stressful situations, such as high-speed pursuits.

The Queensland Anti-Discrimination Tribunal, however, recently found that the fact that the QPS currently accommodates significant numbers of general duties officers who cannot drive shows that the ability to drive is not an inherent requirement of the job. The practical effect of this finding is to enable challenges to QPS decisions that discriminate against recruit applicants who, because of a disability, are unable to drive a vehicle.⁴

⁴ *Stevens v. QPS*. See also the discussion of this case in chapters 2 and 11.

Similar considerations need to be applied to other identified core activities of police. For example, the requirements for keyboard skills, use of databases, operational equipment and firearms may well be considered as essential, but if it can be shown that operational officers perform their functions in an apparently satisfactory way without possessing these skills, or possessing them only at a low level, then there are strong arguments to suggest that they are not genuine inherent requirements of the job.

It appears that no research has been undertaken to identify specific inherent features of general policing. Similarly, a survey of relevant discrimination cases provides relatively little guidance on what features can be regarded as genuine requirements of policing or similar occupations. In the absence of such guidance, the following is suggested as the basis of a statement of the inherent requirements of a general duties officer within the QPS:

- Because modern operational policing is heavily reliant on motor vehicles, police must be able to get into and out of and lawfully drive operational vehicles.⁵
- To investigate incidents, respond to complaints and requests for assistance, police must be physically able to access a range of places where incidents occur, or assistance is needed. This means police must have a sufficient level of personal physical mobility to achieve access to a wide range of buildings, vehicles, and public places.
- Police must have a sufficient degree of oral and written communication skills to conduct investigations, be aware of and understand legislation and other formal requirements, record information, produce statements and reports, and give evidence.
- Police must possess sufficient communication, negotiation and physical skills to allow them to prevent offences, deal with aggressive or noncompliant people, and respond to requests for assistance.

The QPS needs to address this issue by developing its own comprehensive statement of the inherent requirements of general duties policing, based on the suggestions set out above. That statement must be prepared with a combination of policing knowledge and legal expertise about the requirements of anti-discrimination law.

Recommendation 2 — Statement of the inherent requirements of policing

That, using policing and legal expertise, the QPS develop a written statement of the inherent requirements of general duties policing.

Psychological characteristics of a successful general duties police officer

Considerable research has been conducted into the knowledge, skills and abilities that best suit operational policing. This information is relevant when selection committees are considering which applicants are best suited to policing. The NPRU report (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996), based on the 25 core activities discussed above, identified 42 psychological characteristics desirable in applicants for the position of a general duties police officer, listed on the next page.

As part of this review, a number of focus groups with officers of the QPS were conducted to identify the characteristics judged to be important by QPS job incumbents. Questions asked of the focus groups were:

- What are the characteristics/qualities of a general duties officer who is good at the job?
- What are the characteristics/qualities of a general duties officer who is not good at the job?

⁵ Subject to *Stevens v. QPS*. See also chapters 2 & 11.

Psychological characteristics	
Ability	Personality
vocabulary	trustworthiness
spelling	self-esteem
perception	moral judgement
abstract reasoning	internal locus of control
inductive reasoning	orderliness
deductive reasoning	empathy
observation skills	sensitivity
decision-making skills	integrity
memory	tolerance
manual dexterity	agreeableness
finger dexterity	responsibility
speed and accuracy	conformity
mechanical ability	self-control
clerical ability	cooperativeness
writing ability	flexibility
motor skills	sociability
spatial relations	objectivity
reading comprehension	conscientiousness
judgment	assertiveness
	conflict resolution skills
	interpersonal relations skills
	communication skills
	listening skills

Source: Kaczmarek & Packer 1996

Participants were asked to identify characteristics and qualities relevant to all situations in which a general duties officer can find themselves; for example, everyday duties, and exceptional or rare situations. A total of 86 officers (75 male, 11 female) ranked from First Year Constable to Inspector, participated in the focus groups. Lengthy lists of characteristics and qualities were identified by participants. Characteristics and qualities identified as ‘good’ have been collated (see below) by clustering like characteristics and qualities.

Characteristics and qualities identified as ‘good’
commonsense
reasoning ability (analytical, quick thinker, lateral thinker, creative, inspirational, problem solving)
judgement (moral, tact, diplomacy, discretion, fair, equitable, decisive)
confidence
maturity (experience, worldliness, stability, life skills)
sense of humour
knowledge (ability to acquire, retention, education, social awareness)
assertiveness (can take control)
observation and listening ability
self-control (responsible, disciplined, ability to cope, patience, calmness)
stamina (endurance, energetic, physically fit)
motivation (reliable, worker, initiative, industrious, enthusiasm, energetic)
communication skills (mediation, negotiation, persuasion)
sensitivity (empathetic, able to take adverse criticism, open-minded)
integrity (ethical, moral, honest, reliable)
leadership (ability to motivate others, obtain respect, resourceful)
competence (able to work, be held accountable)
team worker (loyal, trustworthy, tolerance, do work)
professionalism (pride in work, appearance)
organisational skills (time management, ability to accept change)
inquiring mind (suspiciousness, shrewdness)

Similarly, a job-related analysis carried out by the Western Australia Police Service (1987) also defined the job dimensions for general duties constables as:

... integrity, adherence to authority, job knowledge, practical intelligence, initiative, attention to detail, controlled demeanour, observation ability, problem confrontation, written communication, oral communication, oral fact finding, person relations, resilience, technical proficiency. (p. 26)

As can be seen from the NPRU report (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996), the Western Australia Police Service analysis, and the focus groups conducted for this review, there is considerable agreement on the psychological characteristics of effective general duties police officers. On the basis of this consistency, the QPS should adopt the NPRU list of psychological characteristics as those considered desirable among officers in the QPS. Assessments of individual applicants on the basis of these characteristics do need to be treated with some caution. Assessment or testing can clearly be used to assist in the ranking of applicants or to identify those who may have special training needs. However, because of the problems in establishing a sufficient degree of uniformity and fairness in judgments made about psychological characteristics, they should not be used as the sole basis for adverse decisions, such as the rejection of applicants.

Recommendation 3 — Desirable psychological characteristics

That the QPS adopt the list of psychological characteristics provided in the NPRU report (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996) as those desirable for general duties police officers in the QPS.

Selection criteria for a general duties police officer

As discussed in chapter 2, it is well accepted that selection decisions must be made on the basis of objective criteria which accurately and fairly represent the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform the activities of the relevant position. Such decisions rely on a set of selection criteria which fairly assess the applicant's ability to perform the job described in the position description.

Currently, as is the case with position descriptions, the QPS uses different selection criteria for appointments of serving constables than are applied to recruit applicants. The selection criteria for serving constables are as follows:

Essential selection criteria

- a serving sworn member of the QPS who has successfully completed the field training program
- a standard of personal integrity as required by the Commissioner of the QPS.

Key selection criteria

- sound knowledge of and demonstrated skills in applying legislation, policies and procedures to general duties policing
- demonstrated ability to research problems and to provide quality advice
- ability to maintain a productive and participative working environment
- ability to manage personnel in accordance with modern human resource management principles and practices including EEO, occupational health and safety and fair treatment of employees
- demonstrated skills in oral and written communication.

The current selection criteria used by the QPS for recruit applicants, and the processes used to measure how well the applicants address each of the criteria, are shown in table 3.1. Problems with the current criteria include:

- It is unnecessary and confusing to have separate selection criteria for applicants and serving general duties constables, given that applicants are being selected for the position of general duties constable, subject to satisfactory completion of training, and particularly given the recommendation made earlier in this chapter that the same position description be used in both situations.

Table 3.1 — Selection criteria and assessment measures for a general duties constable

1. POLICE ORIENTATION	
Job knowledge	Academic results, psychometric tests, employment history, background inquiries and interview
Professional development	Academic results, psychometric tests, background inquiries, and interview
Adherence to authority	Psychometric testing, employment history, background inquiries and interview.
Attention to detail	Psychometric testing, academic results, employment history, background inquiries, application and related correspondence, and interview
2. PERSONAL SUITABILITY	
Practical intelligence	Academic results, employment history, background inquiries, and interview
Vigilance, endurance & perseverance	Academic results, psychometric testing, employment history, background inquiries, medical condition/history, and interview.
Stress tolerance & resilience	Employment history, background enquiries, medical condition/history, and interview
Observation skills	Academic results, medical condition/history, psychometric testing employment history, and background inquiries
Technical proficiency	Academic results, certificates, traffic history, employment history, medical condition/history, background inquiries, and psychometric testing
Physical efficiency	Physical competency testing medical condition/history, employment history, and background inquiries
3. SOCIAL MATURITY	
Interpersonal sensitivity	Employment history, background inquiries, community interaction, and interview
Interpersonal skills	Psychometric testing, employment history, community background inquiries, interaction with community and recruiting staff and interview.
Community policing skills	Employment history, background inquiries, community interaction, language skills, and interview
Equity awareness	Employment history, background inquiries, community and personal interaction, and interview
4. COMMUNICATION	
Oral communication skills	Psychometric testing, academic results, employment history, background enquiries, interaction with recruiting staff, and interview
Written communication skills	Psychometric testing, academic results, employment history, background inquiries, résumé, and correspondence
Negotiation & conflict management	Academic results, employment history, background inquiries, and interview
5. PERSONAL IMPACT	
	Employment history, background enquiries, personal interaction, and interview
6. INTEGRITY	
	Application, criminal and traffic history, employment history, background inquiries, and interview

Source: HRD, QPS

- The criteria currently used for applicants do not relate directly to the activities described in either of the current position descriptions.
- The criteria currently used for applicants are very general and attempt to cover all possible aspects of policing rather than focusing on essential knowledge, skills and abilities for the position.
- The criteria currently used for serving officers do not explicitly set out the means by which such officers will be measured against each criterion.

New criteria based on information from the NPRU report and the focus groups conducted for this review have been developed. These criteria are directly related to the key activities of general duties policing, and for each criterion, measures are indicated which will enable the assessment of applicants on a merit basis.

The new selection criteria are set out in the recommendation below; however, they may need further revision if the recommendation made above for a new position description for general duties constables results in significant changes to key activities. Furthermore if, as recommended, the new selection criteria are also applied to serving officers, separate assessment measures will need to be devised to enable assessment of performance during training and performance of policing duties.

Recommendation 4 — New selection criteria and assessment measures

That the QPS adopt the selection criteria and assessment measures set out below for the position of general duties constable. The QPS should use these selection criteria for all purposes related to general duties constables, including for recruitment and selection, and should develop appropriate measures to assess serving officers in relation to each criterion.

ability and willingness to acquire sound knowledge of laws, regulations, policies and procedures relating to the duties of a police constable (Assessed by education, referee reports, psychometric tests, and interview)

ability to maintain effective working relationships with colleagues and members of the broader community, and respond to direction and instructions when necessary (Assessed by referee reports and psychometric tests)

demonstrated reasoning and analytical ability required to research problems thoroughly, make decisions and carry out complex tasks to completion (Assessed by education, psychometric tests, and referee reports)

mental and physical ability to perform operational activities effectively under unpredictable, emotional and sometimes extended and dangerous conditions (Assessed by medical examination, referee reports, and psychometric tests)

ability to use operational equipment in a safe and effective manner (Assessed by driver's license, traffic history, keyboard skills, and referee reports)

demonstrated high level of oral and written communication skills and ability to negotiate and resolve conflict effectively under different situations (Assessed by education, referee reports, and interview)

demonstrated high level of personal integrity, emotional stability and professionalism (Assessed by integrity screening, psychometric tests, referee reports, and interview)

Other considerations

There are other considerations that are not appropriate for inclusion in the selection criteria, but that nevertheless are relevant to the performance of general duties policing. Such considerations include the need for officers to be prepared to:

- perform duties in varying and diverse locations throughout Queensland
- perform shift work
- face socialisation, cultural, organisational and management issues

- deal with public perceptions of police and policing
- attend traumatic incidents (e.g. accident, fatality, and child abuse situation)
- perform duties in varying work conditions.

These important factors are considered by panel interviews and selection committees. The work requirements of shift work and statewide service represent considerable lifestyle changes for most people. There can be marked differences in the type and frequencies of duties required of an officer dependent on the location of the position (e.g. Thursday Island compared to Metro North). Furthermore, general duties officers in Brisbane, Cairns, Mount Isa and Thursday Island will have differing socialisation and cultural experiences, and possibly differing management experiences.

Another consideration for applicants to the QPS is the responsibility that comes with becoming a police officer, both on and off duty. In particular, it needs to be recognised that the public have expectations and perceptions regarding police officers which may be positive or negative. There should be consideration of how each applicant to the QPS will manage these expectations and perceptions both at work and away from work. While it is appropriate for these matters to be raised in panel interviews with applicants, the QPS should ensure that applicants are aware of these requirements prior to the selection process. Relevant information should be included in the booklet to be provided to applicants (which is recommended in chapter 4 on recruitment marketing).

Recommendation 5 — Other considerations relevant to applicants

That the QPS ensure that applicants are made aware of considerations such as public perception and variation in work conditions, which are not covered in the selection criteria. This information should be included in the information booklet provided to applicants.

Conclusion

The recruitment and selection process needs to select applicants who have the knowledge, skills and abilities to undertake the training program and competently perform the tasks currently required of a general duties police officer. These tasks range from those which are job-specific and complex (e.g. arresting and restraining violent offenders) to those which are general and would be expected in many jobs (e.g. manage personal stress, use keyboard skills, effective communication). The NPRU has undertaken a project to perform a comprehensive job analysis for general duties policing on a national basis (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996). Their findings have been adopted for this report.

To ensure compliance with the law, the selection process needs to focus on those requirements that are inherent occupational requirements of policing. Selection procedures designed to screen out applicants must only screen out those applicants not able to perform relevant inherent requirements. All other applicants must be dealt with on merit, as discussed in chapter 2.

The NPRU report identified 42 psychological characteristics desirable in a general duties police officer. These characteristics are very similar to those identified by Queensland police officers when commenting on the traits of general duties officers who are considered to be ‘good’ at their job. On the basis of the information collated on general duties policing, a new job description and set of selection criteria are recommended for general duties police officers in Queensland.

Chapter 4: Recruitment marketing

The QPS aims to appoint recruits of the highest possible standard. To do so, it needs to attract enough well-qualified applicants to ensure that it has a real choice in selection. The task of ensuring a satisfactory pool of applicants for selection is a marketing task, which involves assessing current and future recruiting needs, designing both short-term and long-term strategies to ensure those needs are met, monitoring the effectiveness of those strategies and improving them where necessary.

Marketing in the QPS is complicated by external pressures, and in particular by government policies concerning operational police strength (as discussed in chapter 2). This external pressure on the QPS makes it even more essential that the right marketing strategies are developed and applied, to ensure that the Government's targets are met, and that in the process, proper selection standards are not compromised.

This chapter addresses these issues by describing current recruitment marketing within the QPS, identifying issues of concern, and making recommendations to improve the process.

Current recruitment-marketing process

The Recruiting Section of the QPS is responsible for designing and implementing strategies to attract applicants for each recruit intake. In the past, there have been times when little active recruitment was needed because more than enough suitably qualified applicants approached the QPS. This is no longer so because of the pressure of larger intake requirements, and also because rapid changes to the policing environment have substantially changed the profile of recruits sought by the QPS. Some of the recent changes include:

- the removal of mandatory entry requirements for height, weight, age and marital status, and increases in education requirements
- the introduction of psychometric assessments, the PCT, and prerequisite skill requirements
- the introduction of the Police Recruit Operational Vocational Education (PROVE) and Police Operational Conversion Course (POCC) programs
- increased professionalism, accountability, use of technology and moves towards community policing
- the introduction of three specific intakes each year
- promotion on merit, pay increases and programmed days off
- the introduction of Police Service codes relating to conduct, ethics, dress and appearance
- the introduction of EEO target group objectives and affirmative action policies
- the opening of the North Queensland campus in Townsville.

As a result of these changed conditions, the profile of the typical recruits sought by the QPS has also changed. Little more than ten years ago, most recruits were male school-leavers of large physical stature (as discussed in chapter 1). The current recruit profile focuses on mature people from a diverse range of backgrounds, who have substantial tertiary or employment experience and demonstrated integrity, and are medically and physically fit.

To attract applicants who fit this profile, the Recruiting Section currently:

- conducts information seminars in Brisbane and northern and western areas of the State to promote the Oxley and Townsville Academies and to encourage applications from people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, and women

- attends career markets throughout the State including remote locations such as Goondiwindi, Chinchilla and Charters Towers
- sends QPS representatives into high schools, TAFE colleges and universities throughout the State to promote policing careers
- seeks media coverage, including radio and television interviews, throughout the State to promote recruitment drives, information seminars and career markets
- places advertising in newspapers throughout the State for recruitment campaigns specifically targeting groups such as women, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- issues regular news releases publicising the work of the QPS
- produces brochures, posters, portable display boards and televideo to enhance recruiting displays.

Issues for consideration

This review was conducted by examining the existing marketing activities described above, QPS recruitment data and relevant research literature. The review identified the following factors as giving rise to concern:

- the size and quality of applicant pools
- the lack of a coordinated marketing process
- the poor quality and lack of coordination of existing promotional material
- the current multiple intake arrangement as opposed to year-round recruit marketing.

Size and quality of applicant pools

The size and quality of the pool of applicants for each intake are two of the best performance measures of the QPS's marketing activities. As discussed, the goal of the recruitment process is to attract enough suitably qualified applicants to ensure that selection involves a real choice, rather than the mere acceptance of all or nearly all applicants who meet basic mandatory criteria.

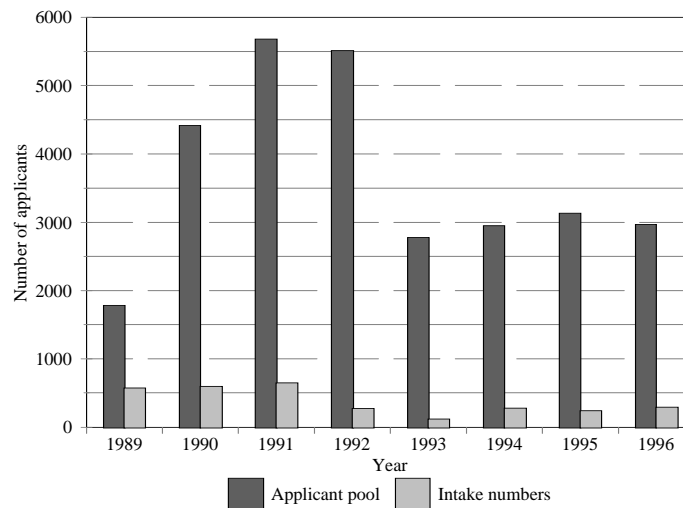
Figure 4.1 sets out QPS statistics for applicant pool numbers relative to intake numbers for the period 1989 to 1996 inclusive. For this purpose, the QPS has defined 'applicant pool' as the total number of applications received for the relevant period, before any assessment takes place. The numbers of applicants shown for both pool and intake size relates to the whole of the relevant calendar year.

Figure 4.1 shows that since 1993, when applications for the PROVE program were first sought, overall numbers of applicants have been fairly steady at about 3,000 per year. Currently, that represents about 1,000 applicants for each of the three intakes per year.

However, the graph does not reflect the real size of the pool of qualified applicants, because it relates to all applications received. Thirty to 40 per cent of these applications are rejected by the Recruiting Section because they do not meet mandatory, minimum education/employment requirements (see chapter 5) or other initial assessment criteria (citizenship, driver's licence, first aid or keyboard certificates). A further proportion of applicants fail other selection tests (psychometric, medical, physical competency, panel interview or integrity checks).

The QPS advises that by the Selection Committee stage of each intake, about 300 applications remain in the pool, from which 140 to 180 must be chosen to meet current recruitment targets. Effectively then, for each recruit position, there are only about two candidates who meet mandatory selection standards.

The small pool of qualified applicants for current intakes contrasts with the situation in previous

Figure 4.1 — Recruit applicant pool and intake numbers per year

Source: HRD, QPS

years. Since 1993, the overall number of applications has remained steady at about 3,000 per year. The QPS advises that the proportion of applications meeting minimum criteria has also remained relatively steady. However, during the same period, the number of recruits appointed each year has increased from 120 in 1993 to 296 in 1996, then rising sharply to the current target of 500 to 550 per year.

Effectively then, up to four times as many appointments are now being made from a pool that has not increased in size in any significant way since 1993. These circumstances suggest that current QPS strategies have not been successful in attracting larger applicant pools to meet increased intake sizes.

In addition, there is no evidence to suggest that the quality of applicant pools has improved during the same period. In fact, as discussed in chapter 12, the lack of a standardised cut-off point below which applications are not considered means that there is considerable variation in the standard of successful applicants between intakes.

The lack of consistently applied standards and the increased intake numbers from an unchanged number of qualified applicants suggest that it may sometimes have been necessary to adjust recruitment standards downwards to ensure that appointment targets were met. Adjusting recruiting standards in this way is not conducive to achieving consistent or high quality among recruit intakes.

There is some collateral and anecdotal evidence to support the suggestion that applicant pool quality is not always high. For example, a common justification given for the POCC program (see chapter 14) is that not enough high-quality applicants for the PROVE program are currently being attracted to meet recruitment targets.

As well as not attracting sufficient well-qualified applicants in general, there is also doubt about whether current marketing activities are able to achieve the particular EEO recruitment targets of the QPS in relation to women, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, and NESB persons (as discussed in chapter 2). Insufficient data are available for any systematic analysis of this issue, although data for appointees are available. Figure 4.2 details the gender breakdown of appointed applicants to the QPS from 1989 to 1996. Figure 4.3 shows a similar breakdown for applicants from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-English-speaking backgrounds.

Unfortunately, these data relate to appointments, not applications. Under current EEO policy, the Selection Committee favours applicants from these target groups. This means that any increased rate of appointment of recruits from the targeted areas may be due to these policies, rather than to successful marketing strategies attracting more applications from people belonging to target groups.

One obvious response to the fact that overall application numbers have not increased is to examine why more applicants are not attracted to the QPS. After all, it represents a secure career in a time of considerable employment insecurity, it is well paid compared to other professions and occupations with similar entry requirements, and it offers good access to ongoing training and good employment conditions.

There is considerable research to indicate that employment choices are strongly connected to the corporate image of the employing organisation (Gatewood, Gowan & Lautenschlager 1993). That is, potential employees seek out organisations which have an image they perceive as congruent with their own values and goals. Individuals are motivated as much by a desire for personal satisfaction and achievement as they are by factors such as salary and conditions (Herzberg 1987).

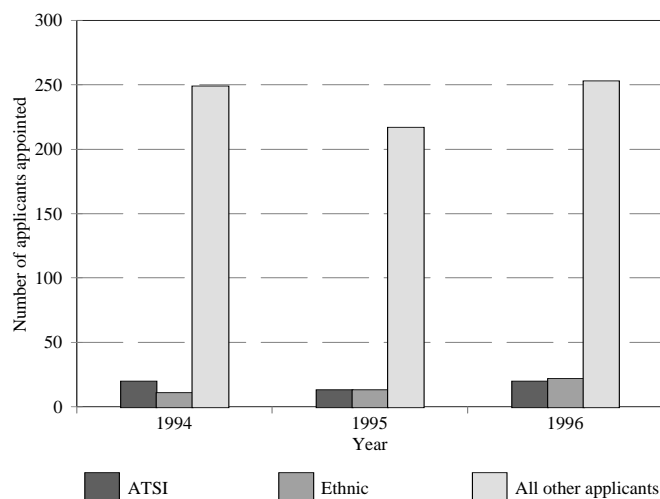
This research is supported by the findings of the NPRU report (Hogg & Wilson 1995), *The Development of Organisational Commitment across the Career Span of Police Officers*. The authors found that at the pre-entry stage (i.e. applicants), commitment to the organisation was influenced by personal characteristics such as the individual's beliefs, values and personalities; expectations about the job, based on information from formal or informal sources such as family members; and characteristics of the job choice, such as the sacrifice in turning down other offers, and the nature of employment contracts. Therefore, individuals are likely to seek out an occupation that provides an environment congruent to the person's own values, beliefs and needs (p. 7).

Figure 4.2 — Gender breakdown of appointed applicants



Source: HRD, QPS

Figure 4.3 — Appointment of ATSI/ethnic applicants



Source: HRD, QPS

In terms of the QPS, this research suggests:

- The inability of the QPS to generate increased applicant response is likely to be linked to perceptions held by potential applicants about the QPS as an organisation, which are not congruent with the values, beliefs and needs of those potential applicants.
- Those perceptions are related to expectations about the job of policing, garnered from formal material supplied by the QPS, but also from informal sources of information, particularly if those sources come from within the QPS (e.g. family members or friends employed by the QPS).
- To achieve significant improvements in applicant numbers, it will be necessary to change the QPS's corporate image so that the perceptions of the QPS held by persons fitting the recruit profile more closely align with their own values, beliefs and needs. Formal and informal information sources will need to be targeted.
- Before such changes can be made, there needs to be a study of factors which contribute to the lack of congruence between the current corporate image and the values, beliefs and needs of persons fitting the recruit profile. Such a study could address issues including, for example, whether there is a reluctance among women, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders to respond to QPS recruitment drives because of perceptions (whether accurate or not) that the QPS is male-dominated, hierarchical or authoritarian; or whether perceptions of corruption and misconduct among police discourage some qualified people from applying to join the QPS.
- Once these problematic perceptions have been identified, strategies can be developed to overcome them, either by making more accurate information available in ways likely to be accessed by potential applicants, or by identifying structural factors within the QPS organisation that may be inhibiting recruitment.

Currently, the QPS lacks the capacity to assess and develop the required marketing strategies to deal with these issues. While the Recruiting Section has staff well qualified in the human resources area, it has no staff qualified in marketing and it has not engaged specialist marketing consultants. Some assistance has been obtained from the QPS Media and Public Relations Branch, but marketing and marketing research are specialised disciplines quite different to journalism and public relations, particularly requiring strong quantitative research and statistical skills, underpinned by knowledge of marketing theory.

As discussed, current QPS strategies have not been successful in attracting more applicants to ensure an appropriate selection pool for increased recruit numbers. This means that funds currently spent on advertising and other marketing activities are not achieving program goals. More importantly, the QPS is being restricted in its choice of recruits, when a better approach to marketing could attract significantly more first-rate applicants. Given the current lack of marketing expertise within the QPS, external consultants should be engaged to research and develop proper strategies.

Recommendation 6 — Conduct marketing research

That the QPS engage appropriately qualified and experienced external marketing consultants to undertake research on:

- employment-related values, beliefs and needs of persons fitting the current QPS recruit profile
- perceptions of the QPS held by current employees and by potential applicants
- strategies to achieve greater congruence between perceptions of the QPS and the values, needs and beliefs of potential applicants.

Lack of a coordinated marketing process

The QPS currently has no overall marketing plan, marketing needs assessment, or assessment of appropriate marketing targets, and until very recently, did not undertake formal or systematic

monitoring of marketing outcomes. There is no organisational budget for marketing, nor are there facilities or structures within which to conduct marketing activities. At present, the QPS also lacks the necessary information to determine marketing needs and strategies, although the research recommended above should provide that information in the future.

Marketing plans identify current and future needs and opportunities, develop strategies, and put in place monitoring systems, so that strategies can be adjusted where necessary. There is a clear need to design a complete marketing plan for QPS recruitment. That plan can address issues including:

- the assessment of short- and long-term recruitment needs, both government dictated, and as otherwise determined within the organisation (e.g. for POCC applicants as opposed to PROVE applicants)
- the identification of appropriate targets for advertising and promotional activities, based on desirable recruit profiles (e.g. justice studies and law students, persons working in law enforcement related areas, persons from specific geographical or ethnic backgrounds)
- the identification of appropriate techniques for reaching those targets (e.g. press, television or cinema advertising, careers days, university graduate placement offices, groups representing particular ethnic targets)
- the establishment of an appropriate marketing budget and other necessary resources
- the development of monitoring strategies.

The marketing plan should be regarded as an ongoing management tool, used in conjunction with other organisational plans such as the Corporate Plan and the EEO Management Plan. The marketing plan will need constant assessment and updating.

Recommendation 7 — Development of a strategic marketing plan

That the QPS develop a comprehensive strategic marketing plan for recruitment, which contains a needs assessment, identifies target groups and appropriate techniques for reaching them, indicates necessary budgets and other resources, and provides monitoring strategies.

Poor quality and lack of coordination of existing promotional material

Currently, potential applicants to the QPS are provided with a range of different promotional material, including brochures or information sheets on:

- Police Recruit Entry
- Police Career Information
- Police Recruit Selection Process and Initial Service Training
- A Constable in the Queensland Police Service
- Psychometric Assessment Familiarisation
- Physical Competency Test
- Make a Difference — Information Sheet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- Variety is the Spice of Life — Information sheet for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Policing: Not just a job for the boys — Information sheet for women
- Recruitment of Current or Former Police Officers (POCC)
- Educational Advice for Police Recruit applicants
- Educational Advice for Year 12 students
- Queensland Police Service — Structure and Functions
- Rank Insignia

- Queensland Police Service — Specialised areas
- Information Sheet — The Juvenile Aid Bureau
- Queensland Mounted Police Information Sheet
- Forensic and Technical Services Branch Information Sheet.

In addition, potential applicants receive a separate application form, medical questionnaire, and instructions and advice concerning the application process.

This material is of mixed relevance to the potential applicant still considering a career in the QPS. In addition, much of it is presented in an ad hoc, uncoordinated and unappealing way. The material presents barriers to applicants seeking specific information, and contains little about the issues known to be important to potential employees, as discussed above. The current material needs to be assessed for its relevancy and interest, made more readable and accessible, and, above all, present an accurate perception of policing as a career and the QPS as an employer.

The appropriate material, including application forms, should be combined into one brochure or booklet, with separate booklets produced for specific groups, such as women, Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders and NESB people. Particular consideration should be given to providing versions of the brochure in a range of language groups spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Queensland. Promotional material produced for NESB people should give specific advice about required levels of English language proficiency for entry to the QPS, how to acquire such proficiency, and authorised testing arrangements (see discussion in chapter 5).

As well as reorganising and improving the existing material, there is a need to consider other ways of giving interested, potential applicants accurate insight into policing and the QPS. As discussed above, the perceptions held by many target group members are likely to be quite negative. In addition, there will be some potential applicants who hold unrealistically favourable images of what policing entails, and to whom the common activities of a constable, as discussed in chapters 3 and 10, will come as a disappointment.

Thought needs to be given to developing innovative ways of providing insight into policing as an occupation. The use of video material could be considered, as could providing interested applicants with some form of work experience; for example, through career exposure days at the police academies, or at a police station (although considerable legal and practical hurdles would first need to be overcome).

Recommendation 8 — Enhance promotional material used for recruitment

- (i) That the QPS assess the relevancy and interest of current promotional material used for recruiting to make this material more readable and accessible and to ensure that it presents an accurate perception of policing as a career and the QPS as an employer.
- (ii) That the material be combined into one booklet, with specific booklets produced for applicants from the following groups: women, Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders and people with non-English-speaking backgrounds. Information intended for non-English-speaking applicants should include specific advice about required levels of English language proficiency for entry to the QPS, how such proficiency may be acquired, and authorised testing arrangements.

Current multiple-intake arrangement as opposed to year-round recruitment

Currently, QPS recruitment efforts are directed at three intakes each year for POCC and for PROVE at the Oxley Academy, with the Townsville Academy accepting PROVE recruits from every second intake. As a result, marketing activities are focused on developing a suitable pool of applicants three times each year, some four or five months before the next intake.

There are concerns about whether focusing all resources and efforts on three campaigns each year is as effective a tactic as continuous recruitment. The constant focus on the next intake means that little attention is paid to achieving a surplus or ongoing pool of applicants, or to generally developing more interest in policing careers.

An alternative approach would see the QPS develop and adopt a continuous recruitment program, with year-round marketing activities directed at generating interest in policing careers. This means that marketing strategies could be directed at attracting well-qualified applicants, rather than filling intake targets. Such an approach would require a different response to processing applications. Rather than processing taking place in three large batches each year, it would be necessary for applications to be dealt with in smaller groups as they are received during the year. There are some advantages to such an approach, at least in relation to panel interviews, which could be spread more evenly throughout the year rather than the current burdensome arrangement by which hundreds of interviews are held in three short periods each year.

Continuous recruitment marketing would not alter the current number of intakes conducted each year, but would result in successful applicants being offered a place in the next suitable intake. Many large-scale recruiters undertake such processes, whereby successful applicants are offered positions not intended to be taken up for a considerable period. The QPS should undertake a full assessment of the advantages and disadvantages attaching to year-round recruiting.

Recommendation 9 — Consideration of a continuous recruitment-marketing program.

That the QPS assess the desirability of undertaking a continuous recruitment-marketing program.

Conclusion

To maintain high standards among recruits, the QPS needs to attract enough well-qualified applicants to ensure that it has a real choice in whom it appoints. However, the recent significant growth in recruit intake size has not been matched by a growth in the number of applications that meet basic mandatory criteria. This means that the pool of qualified candidates available for selection for each recruit position has been substantially reduced. There is also evidence to suggest that the quality of applicants varies considerably between intakes.

There is a need for research to establish why applicant numbers have not increased in response to the QPS's marketing activities and, in particular, why the QPS has been unable to increase significantly the number of applicants from EEO target groups. Marketing strategies can then be developed to increase the size of applicant pools, and a comprehensive recruit marketing plan can be designed and implemented. As part of these strategies, there is a need to review and redesign the promotional material currently available to people inquiring about policing careers, and to assess whether the QPS should move towards a continuous recruitment marketing program.

Chapter 5: Initial assessment criteria

All applicants to join the PROVE program are assessed by the QPS recruiting section against a set of initial assessment criteria. These criteria are intended to identify basic qualifications without which a person would not be able to complete training at the Academy, or perform the functions of a general duties police officer. The early identification of applicants who do not meet these essential criteria saves the QPS time and expense in processing applications which must fail, and also saves those applicants from wasting further time and effort in the selection process.

This chapter identifies the existing criteria and areas of concern arising from them. It discusses those concerns in the light of relevant research, the practical experience of the QPS recruiting section, and relevant legal and organisational issues (as discussed more generally in chapter 2). Recommendations are then made to improve the existing process.

Current criteria

Currently, all applicants to the QPS must supply sufficient information with their application for them to be assessed in relation to the following initial requirements:

- possession of Australian citizenship (although persons without permanent residency may be considered and appointed as recruits on probation, pending the granting of Australian citizenship — in such cases, citizenship certificates must be produced prior to the recruit receiving confirmation of appointment as a constable, at the end of training at the Academy)
- a satisfactory criminal and traffic history check (see discussion in chapter 8)
- possession of a current driver's licence
- possession of a keyboard skills certificate indicating the applicant can type at 25 words per minute using a typewriter or computer keyboard, with at least 80 per cent accuracy
- possession of a senior certificate in first aid from the Australian Red Cross, St John Ambulance, or Queensland Ambulance Service, obtained not less than six weeks before appointment as a recruit
- a minimum level of education and/or employment experience, determined by reference to a QPS-designed matrix (see appendix A).

Each of these criteria is discussed further below, apart from the check of criminal and traffic histories, which is discussed in detail in chapter 8 (integrity issues).

The current criteria were evaluated for this review by:

- considering relevant research literature
- obtaining information from the QPS recruiting section about practical aspects of the process and problems with those aspects
- considering the impact of relevant legislation, especially the requirement under the PSA Act for the appointment of recruits to be made on merit, and aspects of the *Anti-Discrimination Act*, *Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act* and *Judicial Review Act*, which have been discussed generally in chapter 2
- considering relevant primary data about recruit intakes.

Evaluation of criteria

Australian citizenship

The first issue arising from this criterion is whether the requirement for citizenship is a valid and lawful precondition for employment as a police officer. It is not clear why the criterion for citizenship

is imposed, other than a general belief that law enforcement activities should be conducted by persons with the rights and obligations of citizenship. A parallel can be drawn with military service, where citizenship is also a precondition of employment. However, the military requirement is imposed by statute, and there is no statutory basis for the QPS requirement.

There is an argument that the requirement for citizenship is discriminatory, in that it affects access to the QPS by immigrants, which may have a disproportionate effect on people from certain racial or cultural backgrounds. However, the existing policy enables permanent residents to be employed as recruits, subject to them obtaining citizenship during their training at the Academy. This lessens any discriminatory effect of the requirement, and the likelihood that applicants will be excluded simply because they lack citizenship.

The second issue arising from the requirement for citizenship is the policy of enabling permanent residents to be appointed subject to confirmation of their citizenship. The policy has potential cost implications for the QPS, in that it is possible that applicants may be selected and trained at the Academy, at considerable cost, and still not be eligible for appointment as constables because of a failure to obtain citizenship.

Data are not available to indicate how many recruits are currently appointed subject to the requirement to obtain citizenship. In the absence of such data, and of any indication that the failure to obtain citizenship is proving a major problem for the QPS, the current system should be retained. The Academy should be responsible for follow-up prior to the confirmation of a recruit's appointment to ensure that a copy of the recruit's citizenship certificate is on his or her personnel file.

Driver's licence

Applicants are required to hold a current provisional or open driver's licence for a motor car (manual or automatic) prior to lodging an application. The basis for this requirement is the research which suggests that the ability to drive is an inherent requirement of a police officer's job, underlying several core activities of general duties officers, as discussed in chapter 3. As discussed in chapter 2, there is now doubt about the legality of this requirement, following the decision of the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Tribunal in *Stevens v. QPS*. That decision was made on the basis that the ability to drive was not an inherent requirement of policing. However, the QPS maintains that driving is an essential duty for general duties policing. On this basis, the requirement to possess a current driver's licence should be retained.

Keyboard skills certificate

Because of the high level of computerisation within the QPS, the degree of keyboard proficiency currently required is considered essential for proper performance of the functions of a general duties police officer. This is particularly so in relation to the training requirements at the Academy and the amount of data entry required of police officers on the job. The use of keyboard skills was found to be a core activity of policing in the NPRU study (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996), discussed in detail in chapter 3. On this basis, the requirement for a keyboard skills certificate should remain.

First aid certificate

The current requirement for a first aid certificate is based on the assumption that police officers may be called upon to apply first aid in emergency situations. The joint CJC–QPS report *The Physical Requirements of General Duties Policing* (1998) found that during a one-year period, 35 per cent of officers participating in the study administered first aid, at an average of 3.3 times a year. A smaller proportion of officers reported administering CPR or EAR. The report commented that, although not often required, these are critical lifesaving procedures (p. 12).

A senior first aid certificate from organisations such as St John Ambulance, Australian Red Cross or Queensland Ambulance Service must be provided not less than six weeks before appointment as a

recruit. Such a certificate will usually cost applicants \$90–\$100 for the relevant training course. A certificate remains current for three years.

The Constable Development Program requires officers in that program to have maintained the currency of their first aid certificates. The program is a voluntary training program required for further advancement in the QPS. There is no similar requirement for current first aid skills of other serving officers. In consideration of these issues, the current requirement to hold a senior first aid certificate prior to entry should remain, and the QPS should give consideration to requiring all officers to maintain their first aid skills.

Education and employment experience

The most significant and substantial component of the initial assessment criteria is that requiring minimum levels of education and/or previous employment experience. Currently, minimum education and employment experience levels are determined by reference to a matrix developed by the QPS and used in the selection process since February 1992. The matrix began as an assessment of education only, but after concerns that an emphasis on education did not give due recognition to relevant work experience, the matrix was modified in 1993 to combine recognition of education and job-related employment. The matrix was initially based on similar scales used by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) to determine eligibility for tertiary entrance (see appendix B); however, the QTAC scales have now been modified to some extent, generally to give greater weighting to employment experience in certain fields.

Table 5.1 shows the progress of applicants through the recruiting process for the January and May 1997 intakes. The data show that for the relevant period over 30 per cent of applicants did not reach the second stage of the process, the majority for education/employment reasons.

Validity of education as a selection criterion

There is general agreement that educational levels should form part of the police selection process. Most of the extensive literature concerning the professionalisation of police advocates increasing levels of educational attainment as essential to that goal (Neiderhoffer 1967; Roberts 1961; Fitzgerald Report 1989). Lefkowitz (1977) and Casio (1977) reviewed supportive evidence which suggests increased educational attainment is associated with greater job satisfaction, higher personal involvement in the job, greater emphasis on achieving self-actualisation, and more open-minded, less authoritarian or punitive attitudes of police officers. Casio also noted that more educated police will receive fewer complaints concerning their work performance and attitude.

The Fitzgerald Report (1989) was critical of the youthfulness of recruits and their consequent lack of education and experience, the low education standards of police officers generally, and the negative attitude of the prevailing police culture towards education:

... Police need an education which equips them with a sense of balance in both enforcing the law and serving the community. As well, they need preparation to cope with the traumas associated with police work ... Whether operational skills and abilities are wisely applied by young officers in confronting the full range of policing circumstances will depend primarily on factors such as personal attitude, social values, and disposition, all of which are fostered by higher education coupled with experience. Police need a deeper appreciation of social, psychological and legal issues which are intrinsic to their work - an understanding which can only be acquired by higher education ... United States research confirms that authoritarian tendencies are lower and tolerance higher among better educated police. Better educated police also perform more effectively ... This research confirmed that an absence of higher education leads to police isolation from the community and the development of an anti-intellectual subculture, where corruption was more likely to flourish. The study concluded that the net residual benefits to be gained from higher education far outweighed any costs or disruptions to the force involved ... (p. 250)

The QPS Review 1996 concluded that a post-secondary education is needed for applicants to successfully undertake the pre-service course. The review had concerns that certain groups of applicants

Table 5.1 — Analysis of recruit applications for intakes in January and May 1997

Progress of applicants through recruiting process	January 1997		May 1997	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Not meeting criteria				
Education/employment	128	60	203	93
No documents received	14	7	6	2
Medical reports not received	9	4	5	3
Criminal/Traffic	18	4	19	3
Other (residency/driver's licence etc)	4	0	3	0
Other police service <5 years	0	0	4	1
Total	173	75	240	102
	(32.52%)	(31.12%)	(36.09%)	(33.66%)
Fail to attend testing	10	5	15	16
	(1.88%)	(2.07%)	(2.26%)	(5.28%)
Fail testing				
Psychological tests	12	9	41	20
Driver training	2	0	2	1
Medical evaluation	19	11	18	14
Panel interview	50	29	73	30
Background Enquiries	2	0	3	1
Total	85	49	137	66
	(15.98%)	(20.33%)	(20.60%)	(21.78%)
Withdrawn	25	19	31	25
	(4.70%)	(7.88%)	(4.66%)	(8.25%)
Not recommended by Selection Committee	4	0	32	6
	(0.75%)	(0.00%)	(4.81%)	(1.98%)
Defer to next intake				
Appointed to next intake	19	2	28	4
Requested deferral	101	38	73	24
Temporarily unfit	5	1	2	0
Reconsider next intake — further interview	17	6	0	0
Reconsider next intake — has not done PCT	2	7	8	6
Reconsider next intake — further PCT	0	7	0	3
Further background enquiries needed	3	0	1	0
Total	147	61	112	37
	(27.63%)	(25.31%)	(16.84%)	(12.21%)
Appointed	88	32	98	51
	(16.54%)	(13.28%)	(14.74%)	(16.83%)
TOTAL	532	241	665	303

Source: HRM, QPS

might be disadvantaged by the relatively high education standards, which might be addressed through other strategies. The review suggested a limited scholarship scheme to permit applicants, especially from country areas, to join the QPS.

Burke (1993) conducted research on the predictability of the recruit selection process for performance at the Academy for the February and July 1991 intakes. The education rating, while not available at the time, was applied post hoc to education details previously provided in applications from those recruits. This education rating was found to be a significant predictor of recruit performance, as measured across all facets of training at the Academy. The education range was from Year 10 to postgraduate level.

The education rating was also found by a CJC study (1996a) to be significant in predicting performance of recruits who had commenced their training after 1993. Education and employment were analysed separately. Those recruits with tertiary qualifications had noticeably better Academy results than

those who had the employment/education criterion waived, had completed a trade or hospital-based nursing training, had general employment of at least five years full time with Year 12 studies, or had a partial associate diploma or degree.

Validity of employment experience as a selection criterion

In contrast to the research validating the use of educational levels in the selection process, there is less evidence to support the value of prior work experience in selecting police recruits. Arvey and Farley (1988) discuss the rationale and assumptions behind using and applying experience requirements in selecting for particular jobs. The first such assumption is that direct experience of a particular job or content area (e.g. policing) will result in an accumulation of the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics necessary for successful job performance. A second assumption concerns motivation, in that it is presumed individuals with past experience have been drawn to, and are satisfied with, the particular occupational activities involved and are motivated to continue to perform them. There is also the assumption, based on the behavioural consistency model, that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour.

However, there are a number of concerns about basing selection decisions on these assumptions. The first such concern is that some groups may have less experience due to past discrimination or fewer educational opportunities, or career breaks to undertake family responsibilities. Arvey and Farley (1988) have also pointed out that experience requirements imposed by organisations may simply be artificial barriers and really have nothing to do with job performance. Another concern involves assessing the amount of experience necessary to perform the job. While a certain level of experience may be necessary, some organisations may impose requirements that are arbitrary or far in excess of that amount. Whether these requirements are really necessary or simply represent tradition, whim or indirect discrimination is an important consideration.

It is also important to note that, while research indicates that education levels are significant for both training effectiveness and police work performance, the limited research conducted into the relevance of employment has validated only previous employment of a similar nature as a predictor of future work performance. There is no evidence of the value of considering non-related prior work experience in selection decisions.

Effect of current combined education/employment profile

Examination of the education/employment profiles of applicants appointed to the QPS indicates that females generally make the grade on education alone, with the majority having a tertiary qualification or part thereof. This implies that employment experience as used within the QPS matrix assists male applicants to a disproportionate level.

This effect may arise because the employment categories in the matrix as currently designed tend to favour male applicants, particularly when the matrix is compared to QTAC schedules. For example, the weighting given for categories of employment which are more likely to have been occupied by males (e.g. trade, defence service) are rated more highly by the QPS than QTAC: the QPS matrix scores trades from 85 to 87 whereas the QTAC schedules score trades from 80 to 81. Nursing is considered by the QPS to be comparable to a trade, rather than being a para-profession, thereby resulting in lower scores for an occupation which tends to be female-dominated. Clerks are not considered to have job-related experience and are not included in the QPS matrix: the QTAC schedules do recognise clerks.

The current matrix also requires certain numbers of years of experience in order to justify scores. This requirement likewise has the capacity to discriminate against women who tend to take career breaks for family reasons more often than males. Additionally, part-time work is calculated into years of full-time work, based on a 40-hour week. Thus, a person who works part-time for ten years may receive credit for only five years. Again, this has the effect of disadvantaging women, who are more likely than males to have worked part-time.

Advice from recruiting officers who make assessments based on this matrix indicates that, because of the limited number of female applicants, more flexibility is allowed to female applicants who do not fall strictly within the categories of the profile. Nonetheless, 31 per cent of female applicants are rejected on the education/employment criterion.

Analysis of information provided by the QPS recruiting section shows that the profile of male employees is reasonably evenly spread across the age ranges. Few applicants under 20 years have been appointed since 1993. By contrast, the average profile for female appointees is a person under 25 years, with a tertiary degree and limited employment experience. Female appointees are likely to be concentrated in the under 25 years age group for such reasons as:

- the physical competency test, which is likely to be a significant hurdle to older, less fit women
- the education/employment matrix, which does not value the former employment experience of females as much as males, meaning that older women who are reliant on job skills rather than education are unlikely to be accepted
- the perception that the job of policing is incompatible with family responsibilities.

The possible discriminatory effect of the employment aspect of the current matrix, combined with the lack of research validating prior employment in an unrelated field as a predictor of success in policing, makes reliance on employment experience in recruit selection decisions less certain than reliance on education. Until studies are undertaken to assess whether previous employment, other than previous police employment, is valid as a selection criterion, employment and education should be assessed separately. The development of separate profiles will enable discriminatory effects to be identified more readily, and will facilitate further research on the validity of reliance on employment experience.

Recommendation 10 — Development of new profiles to assess education/employment history

- (i) That in place of the current education/employment scoring system, the QPS develop three separate profiles:
 - a pure education scale based on QTAC schedules T1000–T9000, where credit is given for a grade point average for an associate diploma, diploma or bachelor's degree
 - an employment scale to rate employment-related knowledge, skills and abilities, based on QTAC schedules V1001, M2001, M2011
 - a combined employment and education rating, developed on the basis of the first and second profiles.
- (ii) That the Recruiting Section only consider an applicant's best or highest-scored profile for selection purposes. All three profile scores should be recorded on a database for validation purposes.
- (iii) That the revised education/employment criterion to be monitored to ensure that it does not unlawfully discriminate against some groups of recruit applicants.

Assessment of language proficiency

Applicants with non-English-speaking backgrounds who are identified as being at risk of having difficulty at the Academy because of their language proficiency are required to undertake assessment at the Southbank TAFE. Most such applicants are identified at the interview stage of the selection process (QPS Recruiting Section). The test used to assess identified applicants, the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale (ASLPRS), was developed by the Centre for Language Education, Griffith University. The ratings cover speaking, listening, reading and writing proficiency on a 0 to 5 scale:

0	zero proficiency	3	minimum vocational proficiency
1	elementary, minimum, survival proficiency	4	vocational proficiency
2	minimum social proficiency	5	native-like proficiency

After completing the ASLPRS test, applicants may be advised to do a course to upgrade their language skills. Applicants are required to have a rating of 4 on each of the four areas of the profile: speaking, listening, reading and writing, prior to appointment as a police recruit. The cost of this assessment to the applicant is \$100.

While the process of testing applicants' language skills is appropriate, there is concern as to whether the process to identify applicants who may have language difficulties is sufficiently systematic. The QPS should seek to identify applicants who may have English language difficulties as early in the selection process as possible; it is neither cost-efficient, nor fair to the applicant, to have applicants completing the panel interview who clearly have insufficient English language skills.

A possible strategy is to add a question to the application form asking applicants to identify whether they have English language difficulties, or whether they speak English as a second language. Those applicants may need to be interviewed by an appropriately qualified recruiting officer to ensure they have the required language skills before further processing of the application. Alternatively, at the time of psychometric assessment, such a recruiting officer could speak with each applicant to identify those who should undertake the ASLPRS test.

As recommended in chapter 7, panel interviewers should also be able to request an applicant to undertake language testing if it becomes evident during the interview that the interviewee is finding it difficult to comprehend the questions being asked and/or communicate his or her responses to the panel interviewers.

Recommendation 11 — Process for identifying applicants with language difficulties

- (i) That the QPS develop a systematic process for identifying applicants who may not be proficient in the English language. These applicants are to be identified for the purpose of language testing (ASLPRS) to ensure they have the language skills necessary to complete the recruit-training program.
- (ii) That applicants who do not meet the required standard on the ASLPRS test not be appointed to the recruit-training program, regardless of how well they perform on other criteria. Applicants who are suitable on all other selection criteria should be guaranteed an appointment, subject to satisfactory completion of a language-skills course,
- (iii) That applicants who display difficulty with the English language should be advised to do an English language course before the panel interview.

ATSI bridging program and traineeships

In response to recommendations of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (1991) and the Fitzgerald Report, the QPS, in 1991, developed and adopted new policies and procedures in relation to the selection, training and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A one-semester bridging course was developed at the Johnstone TAFE in collaboration with both QPS personnel and members of the Aboriginal community in Innisfail. The purpose of this course was to enable ATSI people to be more competitive in their applications for justice-related positions, including recruitment to the QPS.

The course was offered for the first time in semester 1, 1992 with funding made available from the Commonwealth government. Delivery of the course involved both TAFE staff and police officers stationed in Innisfail. In addition, students participated in a week-long visit to the Academy during which they were addressed by staff from specialist sections of the Service, the courts and other justice-related fields. Students also participated in a workshop related to role, function and ethics. Later in 1992, this bridging course was extended to the School of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education at the Southbank Institute (Kangaroo Point) to cater for the needs of ATSI students in southern Queensland.

Because of a ministerial decision in July 1993 not to recruit an overall intake to the Service in semester 2 of that year, it was decided to extend the bridging course by a further semester. The QPS contributed \$70,000 per annum over three years to the TAFE institutes to cover the delivery costs associated with semester 2.

On 8 November 1994, this extended program was again reviewed and accredited as the Associate Diploma in Justice for ATSI people. On 2 May 1997, this course was changed to a Diploma of Justice for ATSI people.

Since 1997, traineeships have been offered to indigenous people, part of which is the Diploma of Justice for ATSI people. Completion of the diploma, in conjunction with meeting other integrity, medical and physical criteria, guarantees entry to the Academy as a police recruit.

These access programs are special initiatives taken under the QPS's EEO Management Plan and provided for under section 105 of the *Anti-Discrimination Act*. Funding is also available to provide special tutoring during the Academy phase of the various programs.

The QPS currently has a representation of 1.3 per cent identified indigenous police officers. A target of 2.4 per cent has been set for the year 2000. Targets of 6 to 9 per cent indigenous recruits per intake incrementally per annum, and a separation rate of less than 2 per cent should ensure that the target of 2.4 per cent is achieved.

Recommendation 12 — Continuation of special recruit programs for indigenous people

That special recruit programs for indigenous people continue until EEO targets are reached and maintained.

Conclusion

The first 'hurdle' of the selection process requires applicants to meet initial criteria, including: possession of Australian citizenship or permanent residency, a current driver's licence, a minimum level of education and/or employment experience, and certificates in first aid and keyboard skills.

The main issue arising from these criteria relates to current policy for assessing education and employment experience. There is evidence to suggest that the design of the current employment experience categories favours male applicants to a disproportionate level compared to females. To overcome this problem, those ratings need to be reviewed. Three separate profiles for employment, education, and a combination of the two factors should be developed. The profile on which the applicant rates the highest should be used in the selection process and in the mechanical combinations of selection device scores. This will allow applicants to meet minimum criteria by having a degree, relevant work experience or a combination of both. Separate profiles will also facilitate future monitoring of the validity of each factor and enable any discriminatory effect to be identified.

In addition, the QPS needs to develop a systematic approach to the identification of applicants who may not be proficient in the English language, and should not appoint such persons until such time as a language skills course has been satisfactorily completed. Current special recruit programs for indigenous people should continue until EEO targets are met and maintained.

Chapter 6: Psychological screening and assessment

The QPS uses psychological tests in its selection procedures both to screen-out and screen-in applicants. Screening-out identifies applicants who may be unsuitable for selection because they lack the cognitive ability to undertake recruit training or to meet the demands of operational policing, or have psychopathological problems. Screening-in is a complementary, competitive process that uses quantitative measures to compare applicants with each other; for example, by predicting their likely degree of job success (Hibler & Kurke 1995).

This chapter reviews the psychological screening and assessment process used by the QPS, and makes recommendations on how it can be improved. The chapter begins with a description of the process currently used by the QPS. The process is then reviewed within the context of the research literature. Particular reference is made to the NPRU report on determining a job-related test battery for the psychological screening of police applicants in Australian jurisdictions (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997).

Current screening and assessment process

Psychological screening of recruit applicants was first introduced by the QPS in 1991. The current battery comprises two types of psychological tests: seven cognitive ability tests and one personality test. Only the results of the cognitive ability tests are used in the selection process. Psychological testing is used only for applicants to the PROVE program, and not for POCC applicants (see chapter 14).

Cognitive-ability tests

Cognitive-ability tests are the most frequently used psychological test for selection purposes. This is primarily because of their high predictive validity when compared to other selection devices (Campion, Pursell & Brown 1988; Coutts 1990; Wiesner & Cronshaw 1988). There is 'extensive empirical support for the use of ability tests in personnel selection. For some of these job types, including protective services (e.g. police, fire), the validity coefficients are high' (Gowan & Gatewood 1995, p. 192).

Many studies have shown that general intelligence is a good predictor of police performance as measured by both training and on-the-job success (e.g. Black 1995; Burke 1993; CJC 1996a). As highlighted in the NPRU report (Kaczmarek & Packer 1996), it is essential that police officers have the ability to plan, adapt to new situations, learn new concepts and processes, solve problems, make decisions, be perceptive and attentive, and display good judgment, all of which are elements of intelligence.

Cognitive-ability tests are designed to measure several distinct aspects of intelligence, usually of a verbal, mathematical, memory, or reasoning nature (i.e. general intelligence). Consequently, different tests are used to measure different aspects of cognitive ability. The QPS uses the following seven cognitive-ability tests:

- Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM)
- Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA)
- Mechanical Reasoning (MR) from the Differential Aptitude Test
- Space Relations (SR) from the Differential Aptitude Test
- Numerical Ability (NA) from the Differential Aptitude Test
- Digit Symbol (Dsy) from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale
- Digit Span (Dsp) from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale.

Personality tests

The QPS administers one personality test known as the 16PF questionnaire. Personality tests provide measures of personal traits, emotional states, and attitudes. Although there is no single definition of personality, it can be defined as the organisation of personal characteristics which define individuals and determine the way in which they interact with their environment (Gatewood & Feild 1995). For policing, the determination of personality type and the presence of psychopathology are important issues in an effective and legally defensible selection process. Given the powers entrusted to police officers, it is important that applicants who may be psychologically 'unfit' to perform policing duties are identified.

Earlier studies assessing the predictive validity of personality tests found a poor relationship to job performance. However, more recent studies have offered some evidence that personality measures are a valid selection device (Gowan & Gatewood 1995) and that there is an association between personality constructs and job performance (see Kaczmarek & Packer 1997 for a literature review).

Test administration and scoring

The cognitive abilities and personality tests are administered to applicants by a trained administrative assistant from the QPS recruiting section. Up to 80 applicants are tested in one sitting: the numbers are only restricted by the size of the testing room. It takes approximately five hours to administer all the tests. Computerisation allows the tests to be scored quickly and efficiently (e.g. it takes approximately 45 minutes to score and list results for 80 applicants).

The QPS has developed its own norms for each of the ability tests. 'Norming' is a process where a test is administered to large numbers of a particular population or reference group (e.g. police officers) to provide an appropriate frame of reference for interpreting the test scores (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997). The recruit applicant norms used by the QPS were established from a group of 1,152 applicants and are age-adjusted.

A composite score is calculated on the seven cognitive-ability tests for each applicant using the following formula:⁶

$$\text{Composite Score} = [\text{SPM} + \text{CTA} + (\text{MR} + \text{SR})/2 * (\text{if } \text{MR} - \text{SR} < 10) + \text{NA} + (\text{Dsy} + \text{Dsp})/2 * (\text{if } \text{Dsy} - \text{Dsp} < 10)] / 5 **$$

* if 10 or greater difference, test scores are taken individually

** this number is relevant to the number of test scores taken individually

The composite score is used three times in the selection process:

- Early on to identify and screen-out applicants. Those applicants scoring under a composite standard score of 45 (.5 of a standard deviation below the mean) are rejected. The composite score of 45 equates to an IQ within the range 90 to 95; in the general population, the average IQ is 100. Applications from Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who complete the Associate Diploma in Justice (ATSI studies) may be permitted to remain in the selection process even if their composite score is below 45.
- In the middle stage, combined with the education/employment rating, to short-list applicants for the panel interview stage.
- In the final stage, combined with both the education/employment rating and panel interview score (each weighted at one-third of the overall rating), to rank applicants for consideration by the Selection Committee.

Although the 16PF questionnaire is administered to all applicants who meet the initial assessment criteria, it is not formally considered or weighted in the selection process because of the lack of psychological resources within the QPS. The test was originally adopted by the QPS for in-service personnel. It was intended to be used to provide a psychological profile for each member of the Service and was to be considered when a member applied for a promotion. The test is discussed in depth later in this chapter.

⁶ The formula was developed in 1990 by consultant psychologist Mr Robin Johnstone of the University of Queensland.

Issues for consideration

The main focus of the review was on considering the validity and reliability of each of the tests in use. For this purpose, we relied primarily on two validation studies conducted on the psychometric test battery used by the QPS (Burke 1993; CJC 1996a), and the NPRU report (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997), which was aimed at determining a national, job-related test battery for the psychological screening of police applicants. We have endeavoured to support the development of national standards for police jurisdictions in Australia by encouraging the QPS to adopt appropriate recommendations from the NPRU report. Each test is described, followed by a summary of the evidence in support of the test's validity and reliability. The applicability of the test to policing is identified and recommendations are made where necessary.

Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM)

The SPM is a multiple-choice test which contains 60 matrix problems separated into five sets of 12 matrix problems. Kaczmarek and Packer (1997, p. 24) described the test:

Within each set, the problems are sequenced in order of increasing complexity and the sets become progressively more difficult. Each problem consists of 9 figures in a 3 x 3 square with the bottom right figure missing. The problem is solved by selecting the correct figure to complete the matrix from 6 or 8 possible choices. The correct answer may complete a pattern, complete an analogy, systematically alter a pattern, introduce systematic permutations or systematically resolve figures into parts.

The SPM is a non-verbal test which measures inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, abstract reasoning, perception, short term/working memory, spatial reasoning and observation skills (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997). Because the test is non-verbal, it is less influenced by cultural experiences and linguistic ability than are tests of verbal reasoning, which are measures of specific learning. This test is administered to applicants untimed. Applicants are allocated 45 minutes to complete the test; it is estimated that 97 per cent of applicants would comfortably complete the test within that time. QPS norms are available for the untimed administration only.

The test has been demonstrated to be reliable and there is considerable evidence to support its validity (see Kaczmarek & Packer 1997 for a review of the literature). The SPM as used in the recruit selection process has been shown to be a significant predictor of performance in the QPS recruit-training program (Burke 1993; CJC 1996a). This test has been recommended for inclusion in the national test battery for screening police applicants by Kaczmarek and Packer (1997). On this basis, there is a strong argument for the continued use of the test.

Watson–Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA)

The WGCTA (Watson & Glaser 1980a) consists of written passages or statements followed by questions that require the use of reasoning. The exercises within this test include problems, statements, arguments and interpretations of data similar to those that are encountered on a daily basis at work, in the classroom, and in newspaper and magazine articles.

The WGCTA is a verbal reasoning test which measures abstract reasoning, inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, decision-making skills and judgment. The reading level needed for the WGCTA is Year 9 (14 years) (Watson & Glaser 1980b). Unlike the SPM, success on the WGCTA is associated with scholastic achievement. It has been suggested that this may be a difficult test for NESB people because of the amount of reading that must be done, not only to answer the questions but to understand the tasks posed by each passage (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997). The QPS administers this test to applicants untimed. Applicants are allocated 55 minutes for the test, during which time at least 97 per cent will fully complete it.

The reliability estimates for the WGCTA have been shown to be adequate, and the validity of the test has been well documented (see Kaczmarek & Packer 1997 for a review of the literature). Again, the WGCTA has been shown to be a significant predictor of performance in the QPS recruit-training program (Burke 1993; CJC 1996a).

Kaczmarek and Packer (1997) have not recommended the WGCTA for inclusion in the national test battery for screening police applicants because of the difficulty of the test and the narrow range of skills it covers. However, as noted by the authors:

While the test has demonstrated validity for predicting the police academy success of recruits to the Queensland Police Service, the majority of recruits selected by the Queensland Police Service have post-secondary educational qualifications or prior service with a defence service or another police service and/or more than five years employment. The education and employment requirements set by some of the other Australian police services are not as high, making it questionable whether the test would be appropriate for screening the majority of police applicants [with regard to establishing a national test battery]. (p. 34)

As further noted by the authors, it is an objective of the QPS to recruit applicants with higher education qualifications and suitable ability to undertake successfully the continual training and education expected of officers once they join the Service. This objective, when coupled with the predictive validity of the WGCTA, provides strong argument for the continued use of the test in the QPS selection process.

Mechanical Reasoning (MR)

The MR test (a sub-test from the Differential Aptitude Tests) contains 70 items of increasing difficulty to be completed within 30 minutes. Kaczmarek and Packer (1997, p. 37) described the test as follows:

Each item presents a mechanical problem depicted in pictorial form with a simply expressed question. Responses to the question are in multiple-choice format with three possible solutions to each problem.

The MR test measures mechanical ability and, according to the test manual, suggests whether the candidate has an aptitude for learning ‘the principles of operation and repair of complex devices’. Although the developers have aimed to make test items independent of scholastic achievement, some of the items on the MR have been criticised for their reliance on knowledge of scientific principles (Mastie 1976 in Kaczmarek & Packer 1997, p. 37). The test has been demonstrated to have high reliability, but its construct validity is questionable, and its results show a marked differentiation between males and females (see Kaczmarek & Packer 1997 for a literature review).

The MR test has been shown not to be a significant predictor of performance in the QPS recruit-training program (Burke 1993; CJC 1996a). Kaczmarek and Packer (1997) have not recommended the MR test for inclusion in the national test battery for screening police applicants. The authors concluded that:

... the evidence is not clear as to whether it is a valid measure of mechanical aptitude for personnel selection. This, added to the questionable value of screening police applicants for this ability when they are not required to understand and apply principles of physics or mechanics as part of the General Duties Constable position, means that the MR is not recommended for inclusion in the national test battery. (p. 38)

It is therefore recommended that this test not be used in the QPS recruit selection process.

Recommendation 13 — Removal of the Mechanical Reasoning test from the test battery

That the QPS no longer include the Mechanical Reasoning test (from the Differential Aptitude Tests) as part of the battery of psychological tests for police recruit selection.

Space Relations (SR)

The SR test (a sub-test from the Differential Aptitude Tests) contains 60 multiple-choice items. In each item, a pattern is presented followed by five figures. The objective of the test is to select the figure that can be made by folding the given pattern into a three-dimensional figure. The figure must match the pattern according to its shape and the shading of its surface. The test takes approximately 35 minutes to administer and complete.

This test measures the ability to visualise and manipulate objects in space. The test manual states that this ability is required of people working in occupations such as design and architecture. The SR test has high internal consistency reliability but questionable validity for predicting job performance (see Kaczmarek & Packer 1997 for a literature review). The SR test has also been shown not to be a significant predictor of performance in the QPS recruit-training program (Burke 1993; CJC 1996a). Furthermore, Kaczmarek and Packer (1997) have not recommended the SR test for inclusion in the national battery for screening police applicants. The authors concluded that:

... the fact that spatial relations skills are linked to only one of the core General Duties Constable tasks (i.e. safe driving procedures) raises some doubt over whether such a test is necessary in a battery used to screen police applicants. While spatial skills may be needed for driving, police applicants are required to hold a driver's licence at the time of application. As they can demonstrate attainment of basic driving skills, it can be said that they already possess the prerequisites for driving safely and do not need to be screened for these abilities. Through training, they will be taught to drive defensively. (p. 40)

It is therefore recommended that this test not be used in the QPS recruit selection process.

Recommendation 14 — Removal of the Space Relations test from the test battery

That the QPS no longer include the Space Relations test (from the Differential Aptitude Tests) as part of the battery of psychological tests for police recruit selection.

Numerical Ability (NA)

The NA test (a sub-test from the Differential Aptitude Tests) was designed to test understanding of numerical relationships and facility in handling numerical concepts (de Lemos 1989). This test avoids the language elements of the usual arithmetic reasoning problem, in which reading ability may play a significant role.

This test was not considered by Kaczmarek and Packer (1997) in their evaluation to determine a national battery of psychological tests. To date, there have been no studies to determine the validity and reliability of this test for police selection. However, it should be noted that the Differential Aptitude Tests' manual cautions against placing too much emphasis on any of the sub-tests (such as the NA test) for selection purposes. The national job analysis for the position of general duties constable conducted by Kaczmarek and Packer in 1996 did not identify numerical ability as a characteristic desirable for general duties policing. This factor, coupled with the lack of validating evidence, provides strong argument for the removal of the NA test from the QPS psychological test battery.

Recommendation 15 — Removal of the Numerical Ability test from the test battery

That the QPS no longer include the Numerical Ability test (from the Differential Aptitude Tests) as part of the battery of psychological tests for police recruit selection.

Digit Symbol (Dsy) and Digit Span (Dsp)

The Dsy test (from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale) is a 90-second test of clerical speed and accuracy. Characteristics measured by this test include listening skills and working memory.

Research (Burke 1993; CJC 1996a) has shown this test to be a statistically significant predictor of performance at the Academy. Kaczmarek and Packer's 1997 report did not evaluate the Dsy test but did evaluate a similar test (the clerical speed and accuracy test from the Differential Aptitude Tests). The authors concluded that 'it is doubtful whether the inclusion of any test of clerical ability is needed at the point of police recruit selection' (p. 62). The reasons for this include:

- Tests of general cognitive ability or intellect (such as the SPM and WGCTA) are good predictors for a range of clerical jobs. Through using general ability tests to screen-in applicants with at

least average ability, it can be assumed that the potential to perform the lower level skills that comprise clerical ability will also be screened-in.

- Applicant clerical ability is already assessed by the requirement for officers to hold a typing certificate.
- ‘During academy and on-the-job training, general duties constables will be exposed to and/or taught the tasks that require clerical skills. It is believed that this instruction should be sufficient’. (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997, p. 62)

It is unlikely that the Dsy test measures anything over and above what is already measured in the SPM and WGCTA tests, and the demonstrated predictive value of the test for performance in recruit training arises because it echoes the results of those other tests. It would be more appropriate for the QPS to determine whether alternative psychological tests could be used instead of the Dsy test which would complement, rather than supplement, the tests of general cognitive ability. In the interim, while such other tests are being assessed, it is appropriate to continue the use of the Dsy test as it has demonstrated predictive validity and is cost-efficient and quick to administer.

The Dsp test (from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale) is a listening skill, short-term memory test. It requires the applicant to listen to a sequence of random numbers, and write them down forwards and backwards. This is an untimed test which takes approximately 10 minutes to administer. Research (Burke 1993; CJC 1996a) has shown this test to be significantly reliable in predicting performance at the Academy. Kaczmarek and Packer did not consider the Dsp test for inclusion in the national test battery for screening police applicants, but it can be considered similar to many other clerical tests. The arguments outlined for the Dsy test also apply to the Dsp test. On this basis, the Dsp test should be retained pending assessment of other tests which may make a more significant contribution to the selection process.

Recommendation 16 — Process to identify alternative psychological tests

That the QPS identify and assess alternative tests to complement the tests of general cognitive ability that are currently used. In the interim, the Digit Symbol and Digit Span tests continue to be included as part of the psychological test battery for police recruit selection.

Sixteen Personality Factor (16PF) questionnaire

The 16PF is a test of normal personality, rather than a tool to assist in clinical diagnosis when a known psychopathology exists. Characteristics measured by the 16PF are agreeableness, responsibility, conformity, self-control, cooperativeness, flexibility, sociability, conscientiousness, assertiveness, empathy, sensitivity, tolerance, self-esteem, orderliness, moral judgment and objectivity (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997). The test is administered to a group and takes 35–50 minutes to complete.

The test was developed by factor-analysing a set of English-language trait and ability adjectives describing human behaviour. This resulted in a set of oblique, or correlated, factors. Through this process, 15 bipolar personality factors and a general intelligence factor were identified. These primary factors are listed at the top of the next page.

Analysis of these factors created five second-order or global factors: extraversion; anxiety; tough-mindedness; independence; and self-control. Scores from both the primary and secondary factors can be used to develop profiles of the respondents’ personality patterns (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997).

Kaczmarek and Packer (p. 78) evaluated several tests of normal personality and chose the 16PF for inclusion in the national battery of psychological tests. According to Kaczmarek and Packer, the 16PF test has adequate reliability, and validation studies using the fourth edition indicate that the test is useful for police selection.

Primary factors

- A: Warmth: reserved versus outgoing
- B: Intelligence
- C: Emotional stability: emotionally stable versus neurotic
- E: Dominance: cooperative versus forceful
- F: Impulsiveness: serious versus lively
- G: Conformity or rule-consciousness: non-conforming versus rule-conscious
- H: Social boldness: shy versus venturesome
- I: Sensitivity: objective versus sensitive
- L: Suspiciousness: trusting versus vigilant
- M: Imagination: practical versus imaginative
- N: Shrewdness or privateness: forthright versus discreet
- O: Insecurity: self-assured versus worried
- Q1: Radicalism or openness to change: traditional versus experimenting
- Q2: Self-sufficiency: affiliative versus self-reliant
- Q3: Self-discipline or perfectionism: flexible versus perfectionistic
- Q4: Tension: relaxed versus tense

There is a clear need for policing organisations to make every effort possible to identify applicants with personality traits unsuited to policing (e.g. uncontrolled aggression). Personality testing offers perhaps the only systematic process to identify such individuals. Given the work that has already been conducted on the 16PF test (the review by Kaczmarek & Packer and the norms developed for the QPS) it is logical that this test be used in the recruit selection process.

Recommendation 17 — Introduction of personality assessment for police applicants

That the Sixteen Personality Factor questionnaire be included as part of the psychological screening process for police applicants.

Psychological evaluation

An applicant should not be rejected on the sole basis of his or her profile on the 16PF questionnaire (in fact, rejection on the basis of any single personality test is not recommended). Instead, such an applicant should be referred to a registered clinical psychologist for a complete psychological evaluation. This evaluation may include further psychological testing and/or a clinical interview.

Kaczmarek and Packer's report also considered a number of clinical personality tests which could be used if additional testing is deemed necessary. These tests, unlike the normal personality tests, have been developed to assist in diagnosis when a psychopathological disorder is known or suspected (e.g. because of the profile resulting from the 16PF test). Kaczmarek and Packer concluded that the Clinical Analysis Questionnaire (CAQ) (see Cattell & Delhees 1970) and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory – 2 (MMPI – 2) (see Hathaway, McKinley & Butcher 1989) are suitable tests for clinical assessment.

Recommendation 18 — Policy requiring applicants to undergo psychological evaluation

That the applicants identified by the Sixteen Personality Factor questionnaire as having personality traits unsuited to policing be required to undergo a comprehensive psychological evaluation before further processing of their application. Such an evaluation may include further testing with clinical tools such as the Clinical Analysis Questionnaire and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–2 and/or a clinical interview.

A registered clinical psychologist must be used both to assess initial 16PF profiles and to conduct comprehensive psychological evaluations. In addition, as recommended in chapter 8, the proposed Integrity Committee may also request a comprehensive psychological evaluation of applicants for integrity/ethical screening purposes. To put these recommendations into effect, the QPS will need to either employ an appropriately qualified clinical psychologist, or establish a panel of private practitioners to whom testing and evaluations may be contracted out.

Recommendation 19 — Role of registered clinical psychologist in the recruitment process

That the QPS use a registered clinical psychologist to assess Sixteen Personality Factor profiles and to conduct comprehensive psychological evaluations as required.

Conclusion

The QPS relies on a battery of psychometric tests both to screen undesirable applicants out and to allow comparison between suitable applicants. The current battery of psychometric tests includes seven tests of cognitive ability and one personality test. Scores from the seven cognitive-ability tests are combined to provide an overall score for each applicant. Although routinely administered to applicants, the 16PF questionnaire is not formally considered in the selection process.

The value of psychometric testing is highlighted by the high validity of the tests in predicting successful performance in the recruit-training program at the Academy (Burke 1994; CJC 1996a). However, examination of validities for individual tests showed that two tests (MR and SR) were not significant predictors of recruit performance (Burke 1994; CJC 1996). In addition, the suitability of, and necessity for, including these types of tests in the selection process for policing has been questioned (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997). Consequently, both these tests should be removed from the current battery. The NA test should also be removed from the test battery because of the lack of research demonstrating its relevance to policing (Kaczmarek & Packer 1997).

It is important that police organisations use all available strategies to ensure that individuals who are psychologically unsuited to general duties policing are screened-out of the selection process. Although personality tests have lower validity coefficients than cognitive-ability tests, they can be useful for identifying or ‘flagging’ applicants who should be scrutinised more closely by either psychological evaluation or further testing. There is value to policing organisations in any selection device that may be able to identify applicants who are maladjusted or suffering from some kind of psychopathology. On this basis, and in accordance with the recommendations of Kaczmarek and Packer, the QPS should use the 16PF questionnaire in the selection process to identify applicants who should undergo further psychological evaluation.

Chapter 7: The panel interview

The selection interview is perhaps the most popular and commonly used selection tool for most organisations (Rowe 1989). As the interview is also one of the more costly selection devices, it is not surprising that it has been well researched. The research conducted over the last 70 years provides invaluable information on how the interview can be made a more valid and useful tool.

This chapter focuses on the use of the panel interview in the selection process. The first section provides an overview of the current process; followed by an evaluation of the methodology adopted to evaluate it. The remainder of the chapter outlines the problems identified by the review and makes recommendations on how the interview process can be improved.

Current panel-interview process

The panel interview is part of the third phase of the selection process used by the QPS. Traditionally, all panel interviews were conducted at police headquarters in Brisbane. However, interviews for north Queensland applicants are now conducted at the Townsville campus, which opened in October 1996.

The interview panels are required to:

- interview applicants for appointment as police recruits
- provide an interview rating score, which reflects the applicant's personal suitability for appointment as a police recruit
- assess applicants on the selection criteria and indicate their suitability or unsuitability for appointment as a police recruit
- provide applicants with the opportunity to declare any incident or matter concerning their integrity that may affect their suitability for appointment to the QPS
- note any inconsistencies between the applicant's résumé/application form and oral information provided during the interview (for consideration by the Selection Committee).

Each interview panel comprises three interviewers:

- a senior police officer from the Queensland Police Service Academy
- a QPS police officer with an operational background
- a community member independent of the QPS.

There is currently no formal training program for interviewers, although each interviewer is requested to be familiar with the Recruit Interview Panel Manual before conducting interviews. There are no dedicated panels (i.e. full-time panels), but many of the interviewers are involved in each recruitment drive and have become experienced in the process. The interviews take 30 to 45 minutes and assess applicants against five selection criteria, which have weighted importance in contributing to the final panel interview score (see table 7.1).

There is only one interview schedule, which consists of approximately 25 questions based on the selection criteria. Not all questions are asked of each applicant, and interviewers can ask additional questions. This usually occurs if an interviewer wants to explore issues raised by an applicant's responses. Applicants are rated on a 1 (very unsatisfactory response) to 10 (very well thought-out responses) rating scale for each selection criterion. The ratings are determined by panel consensus. A panel interview score is calculated by the addition of the totals (i.e. panel rating by weight) for each selection criterion. The panel interview score comprises one-third of the overall score given to the applicant for final selection.

The last criterion assessed is integrity. Although no weighting is given (in terms of the final score), the panel would not recommend any applicant (regardless of suitability on other criteria) if there was doubt about his or her integrity or ethical/moral values.

Table 7.1 – Selection criteria and weighting for the panel interview

Selection criteria	Domains covered in the interview process	Weight
police orientation	motivation job knowledge knowledge of PROVE preparedness for police duties	10
personal suitability	decision-making ability judgment ability to cope under pressure	9
social maturity	leadership qualities teamwork empathy responsibility and reliability social tolerance	9
interpersonal communication	fluency clarity listening skills	8
personal impact	dress and grooming confidence presence/impact	7

Source: Recruiting Section, QPS

Methodology

To complete a comprehensive evaluation of the panel interview process, we:

- reviewed the policies and procedures for panel interviews (by reference to the Recruit Interview Panel Manual and the HRM Manual, and by consultation with the Human Resource Management Branch (HRMB) and Recruiting Section of the QPS)
- observed panel interviews
- reviewed two research reports that have evaluated the selection process used by the QPS
- reviewed the research literature and compared findings to the practices of the QPS.

Observation of the panel interviews was conducted by two members of the PEAC subcommittee. These observers sat in the interview room and took notes without participating in the interview. The observers noted any problems with the interview process as well as any inconsistencies between the interview policy/guidelines and practice. Panel members were aware of the purpose of the observation sessions and were assured that their individual identities would not be revealed in the report. Interviewees were informed that the role of the observer was to assess the interview process and not to evaluate or rate their performance in the interview process. Approximately 45 interviews were observed. The notes from the observation sessions were summarised and form the basis of this chapter. A review of the literature on interviews was combined with the findings of the observation sessions to formulate the recommendations made here.

Research assessing the validity of the selection process used by the QPS has shown that panel interviews have poor validity in predicting Academy performance (Burke 1993; CJC 1996a). This is not a problem unique to the QPS — research in general has found interviews to have low predictive validity (Heneman, Schwab, Fossum & Dyer 1986; Zedeck, Tziner & Middlestadt 1983) and to have significantly lower validity when compared to cognitive-ability tests (Hunter & Hunter 1984; Mayfield 1964; Reilly & Chao 1982).

Issues for consideration

The process of evaluating the panel interview identified several issues of concern:

- interviewer training
- use of pre-interview information

- interview format
- interview content
- scoring the interview
- independent versus consensus ratings
- interview panel membership
- interview conditions and practicalities
- adherence to QPS practices and policy.

Each of these issues will be discussed in turn.

Interviewer training

Observation of the panel interviews suggests that QPS interviewers vary in skill, experience and competence. Some interviewers were highly skilled at using probe questions to explore issues and elicit more detailed information from applicants. Other interviewers were content to accept an interviewee's assertion that they could, for example, manage stress well, without seeking further information to clarify the interviewee's response. There were differences across interviews in the type of pre-interview information considered by the panel; for example, in some cases the interviewee's performance on the psychometric test was discussed while in other cases it was not mentioned at all. There were also inconsistencies in the 'value' which interviewers placed on different attributes; for example, the importance given to tertiary education and life experience seemed to vary between interviewers.

These observations are consistent with findings of the research literature. Individual differences are reflected in interviewer effectiveness (Graves & Karren 1992; Graves 1993) and interviewer error or bias can contribute to the decreased validity of the interview (Eder & Ferris 1989; Gowan & Gatewood 1995). The decision-making process can be affected by attributes of the applicant (i.e. pre-interview information, physical characteristics) and attributes of the interviewer (i.e. stereotypes held, training and experience). These attributes, particularly when they are not correct or relevant to the interview process, can bias the outcome of the interview. Examples of common biases include:

- halo effect (i.e. when a favourable aspect of the interview results in over-inflated ratings on all aspects of the interview)
- contrast effect (i.e. when the evaluation of the current applicant is made on the basis of a comparison with characteristics of the previous candidate)
- gender effect (i.e. differential ratings resulting from the influence of gender stereotypes)
- similarity effect (i.e. giving the applicant over-inflated ratings because he or she reminds the interviewer of him/herself)
- first-impression effect (i.e. when the early impressions of the applicant affect later ratings and final outcome) (Gowan & Gatewood 1995, p. 189).

Although it is probably impossible to remove the effect of interviewer bias completely, training can minimise interviewer error and ensure that all interviewers have the same level of competence in conducting interviews. Research and general comment in the research literature show strong support for the benefits of a comprehensive interviewer training program (Conway, Jako & Goodman 1995; Eder & Ferris 1989; Gowan & Gatewood 1995; Gatewood & Feild 1994; Pulakos et al. 1996).

Given that the QPS, like many other organisations, is committed to the use of panel interviews in the selection process, the Service needs to develop a comprehensive interviewer training program for improving the low validities shown by the panel interview. Although an interviewer training program may be initially costly, the benefits of such a program will be substantial, especially given the importance the interview plays in the selection process.

Based on the research literature and the findings from the observations of the interview process, a training program should cover areas such as:

- how to evaluate pre-interview information (e.g. résumé)
- interviewer biases and how to minimise them
- how to use probe questions
- how to evaluate and rate information provided by the interviewee
- how to take effective notes during the interview
- the legislation relevant to the interview process and the principles of merit and equity.

The structure of an intensive interviewer-training program should include lectures on the overall interview process, practice rating of videotaped interviewees, discussions about ratings made during practice, and feedback on the accuracy of a trainee's judgment.

Recommendation 20 — Development of a comprehensive interviewer-training program

That an external consultant, with demonstrated expertise in the area of interview design and interviewer training, be employed to develop a comprehensive training program for interviewers. Successful completion of the program should be a prerequisite to acting as an interviewer.

Use of pre-interview information

An applicant's file is given to the panel on the day of the interview. The file contains all information regarding the applicant and includes the application form, letters of reference, education and employment history and ratings, psychometric rating scores, results of the medical evaluation, all details of prior applications to the QPS, and all correspondence between the QPS and the applicant. The file presents to the interviewers a mass of information, which is collated in a disorganised fashion (the files are kept in chronological order so information useful to the interviewers may be scattered throughout the file). The file also contains information that is irrelevant to the interview process (e.g. academic records), and in some cases, information that the interviewers should not have, both for privacy reasons and because it may be used in a discriminatory way (e.g. results of the medical evaluation).

Because of the size of the file and the lack of time to peruse it, the interviewers often lacked familiarity with the applicant's prior work and education experience. This results in interviewers:

- flicking through the applicant's file during the course of the interview, thereby compromising the integrity of the interview and limiting the interviewers' ability to make a sound and fair assessment of the interviewee at the end of the interview
- spending valuable interview time asking questions to obtain information that could easily be obtained from the résumé or application
- failing to observe inconsistencies between what the applicant reports orally in the interview and what the applicant has stated in his or her application (which may be an integrity issue)
- missing opportunities to develop probe questions on relevant aspects of the applicant's employment and education history.

To improve the interview process, interviewers need to have access to the file at least one day in advance. Information should be ordered in the same way on each file, and the files should contain the same type of information for each applicant. Most important, the file should contain only information relevant to the areas to be assessed in the interview. For example, commonsense dictates that it would be impracticable for QPS interviewers not to be provided with an applicant's résumé (i.e. previous work and education experience). Unlike for many other occupations, the majority of applicants are being interviewed for a job they have never done before; consequently, they cannot be

asked questions which directly relate to the job of policing (e.g. how have you managed abusive offenders?). Interviewers are required to elicit relevant information on the basis of the applicant's previous unrelated occupations and the formulation of probe questions may be dependent on the type of experience the applicant has had. Furthermore, the interview is a costly and resource-intensive process and it would be inefficient to have interviewers seeking information that can be provided more efficiently and cheaply by alternative means such as the résumé or from the application form (e.g. to identify positions that involved extensive contact with the public). Knowledge of employment history can also assist the interviewer in identifying issues that are relevant to areas covered in the interview (e.g. employment gaps or dramatic changes in career).

On the other hand, interviewers should not have access to information such as cognitive test results. McDaniel et al. (1994) found that an interviewer's access to cognitive test scores appears to decrease interview validity for predicting job performance. Observation of panel interviews showed that some interviewers commented on the psychometric scores for applicants and most typically commented on those applicants with lower scores. However, interviewers are generally not trained in the use and interpretation of psychometric test results. Interviewers can determine if a psychometric score is high or low (relative to other applicants), but do not have a clear understanding of the mechanics of the test, what it measures and how it is constructed. Furthermore, psychometric test results are used to reduce the applicant pool early in the selection process, and form one-third of the total score given to each applicant. Therefore, it does not seem logical nor fair to further consider test scores in the interview stage, especially when there is a possibility that they can be misinterpreted and may compromise the validity of the interview process.

Recommendation 21 — Provision of applicant information to interviewers

That interviewers not be given the entire applicant file, but only information about the areas to be assessed in the interview. This information should:

- include prior work and education experience and exclude test results (e.g. cognitive abilities or personality) or other information (e.g. medical reports) not directly relevant to the purposes of the interview
- be prepared specifically for the interview and be ordered in the same way for each applicant (e.g. application first, résumé second) to ensure that interviewers have relevant information readily available
- be provided to each panel interviewer in a timely fashion, one day in advance if possible, to allow interviewers sufficient time to read and become familiar with the applicant's education and employment history.

Interview format

The format of an interview may be structured (i.e. questions are predetermined and the same questions are asked of each applicant) or unstructured (i.e. no predetermined questions and questions are usually up to the expertise and experience of the interviewers). The QPS uses a format that may best be described as semi-structured — the interview schedule outlines predetermined questions, but not all questions are asked of all applicants and the interviewers can formulate their own questions if they believe it is necessary.

Recent research has shown that validity is greater for structured interviews than for unstructured interviews (Conway, Jako, & Goodman 1995; Huffcutt & Arthur 1994; Marchese & Muchinsky 1993; McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt & Maurer 1994; Weisner & Cronshaw 1988). Structured interviews provide a consistent sample of applicant performance and help interviewers rate more accurately (Conway et al. 1995). Structured interviews are better able to ensure that the interview is guided by job-related content rather than by the applicant, interviewer and/or situational attributes that may have little relevance to the applicant's suitability to the position. Unstructured interviews allow interviewers to confirm their own biases, stereotypes and first impressions (Dipboye 1989; Rowe

1989) and may expose the interview process to charges of unfair discrimination (Campion & Arvey 1989).

McDaniel et al. (1994) found that greater structuring of the interview resulted in increased validity. However, there is a point beyond which additional structure yields little or no incremental validity, suggesting a ceiling effect. McDaniel et al. suggest that a well-trained interviewer could gain better insights using careful, in-depth probing of a standard question rather than a highly structured interview schedule which does not allow interviewers to follow up areas of interest. Other researchers in the area of policing suggest starting with a predetermined set of job-related questions but, depending on the response of the applicant, allow further probe questions to clarify and elicit all relevant information from the applicant. Such an approach increases the reliability of the interviewer's evaluations (Gatewood & Feild 1994).

Recommendation 22 — Adoption of a structured interview process

That the QPS adopt a structured interview process to ensure the same questions are asked of each applicant, with probe questions used to clarify and elicit all necessary information from the applicant.

Interview content

Researchers in the field have pointed out that, while structured interviews improve the validity and reliability of the interview, it is essential that questions be job-related (Eder & Ferris 1989). Structured questions on the wrong content will seriously compromise the validity of the interview. According to Eder and Ferris (p. 310):

Structured questions on the wrong content are probably just as bad as no questions at all. For example, questions like 'do you prefer to work alone or in a group, what are your greatest strengths ... weaknesses, do you work well under pressure, do you make friends easily, where would you like to be in twenty years' ... merely invite the applicant's prepared answers and probably provide little indication of the applicant's potential for successful job performance.

This is supportive of the comments made by one observer who pointed out that questions such as 'what type of people or things annoy you and how do you cope with them?' and 'how would you react to a younger supervisor?' have obvious answers and did not appear to elicit responses that were particularly helpful to the panel members, nor did they differentiate between applicants. Other questions used in the interview also appeared to assess the applicant's knowledge of the handouts provided by the QPS (e.g. 'name the specialist areas within the QPS' and 'what do you understand of problem based learning?'). It is not clear what the benefits of asking such questions are and how they relate to the applicant's capacity and willingness to perform the job of a general duties police officer.

The interview questions used by the QPS cover a broad range of areas such as what the applicants are like (personal traits and characteristics), what the applicants have (knowledge, skills and abilities) and what the applicants can and will do (potential and willingness to perform job responsibilities). As noted by the observers of the interview process, it appears that the interview attempts to measure too many dimensions too briefly. It would be more effective to reduce the number of dimensions measured, but retain those that can be uniquely measured by the interview (e.g. potential and willingness to perform the job).

It was also noted by the observers that many applicants were sitting the interview for the second time. In some cases it was three months since the last interview, for others it had been one year. Of particular concern is the fact that the QPS currently has only one interview schedule and applicants being re-interviewed may have the added advantage of knowing what questions will be asked in the interview. Further to this point, it was also noted that interviewees wait together, for up to several hours, for their interviews. There is some concern that applicants who have already been interviewed may advise others, who are yet to be interviewed, of the interview content.

Recommendation 23 — Interview content

- (i) That the content of the interview to be revised, with specific attention given to:
 - the objectives of the interview
 - identification of appropriate evaluation criteria
 - the number of questions
 - the quality of questions.
- (ii) That this task to be completed by the external consultant employed to develop the interviewer training program. The external consultant should also develop a second schedule of interview questions. Interviewers should alternate between the schedules to ensure expertise is maintained in conducting both interviews. The applicant's file should record which schedule was used, for future reference.

Scoring the interview

The research literature makes it clear that the issue is not whether the interview should be scored, but rather *how* the interview should be scored (Dipboye 1992; Eder & Ferris 1989; Gatewood & Feild 1994). Generally, structured interviews employ a highly formalised scoring system where the use of behaviourally anchored rating scales provide an overall score or set of scores. The use of behaviourally anchored rating scales to evaluate interviewees' responses plays a role in the improvement of interview reliability and validity (Campion, Pursell & Brown 1988).

The QPS uses a scoring system in which applicants are rated on a scale of 1 (very unsatisfactory response) to 10 (very well thought-out response) for each selection criterion. However, as noted by the observers, there are two major weaknesses with the rating system in use:

- ratings are made on how well the interviewee meets the selection criteria rather than how well each interview question was answered
- interviewers tend to rate on the numbers rather than the criteria (e.g. 'this person is about a 6' rather than considering how well the applicant's response matches the criterion defined for a 6 rating).

As this report has recommended that the interview content be revised by an external consultant, it follows that the scoring system should also be revised. There needs to be a formally defined rating system, where each question has clear criteria for scoring the interviewee's response. Given the interviewers' tendency to rate by numbers rather than criteria, it may increase the validity of the process to provide interviewers with a descriptive rating scale with the numerical weights removed. The numerical weights could be added after the interview in order to calculate the interview score. The rating form should also provide space for comments about the applicant's performance and recording of applicant responses. The recording of comments and responses provides written documentation to support the ratings given by interviewers and affords a more legally defensible interview process.

The observers also noted that the rating system currently used by the QPS is extensive, having a range of 1 to 10. It appeared that interviewers found it difficult to use such a wide-rating scale effectively. Although the number of rating points on scales varies, a scale of between 4 and 7 points is the norm (Gatewood & Feild 1994).

Recommendation 24 — Procedure to record and rate the interview

That the criteria against which applicants are judged, and the scoring system used for the panel interview, be revised. The revised system should provide a descriptive rating scale for each criterion and require interviewers to support their rating by making comments and recording interviewee responses. The number of rating points should be reduced from 10 to between 4 and 7 points. The external consultant employed to develop the interviewer training program should make these revisions.

Independent versus consensus ratings

Another important aspect of panel interviews is the decision to use a consensus rating as opposed to individual interviewer ratings. There are apparent pros and cons for each approach and neither seems to provide significantly more valid interviews. Pulakos et al. (1996) points out that consensus rating derived after discussion of panel members represents a form of interactive ‘standardisation’ in cases in which one rater’s judgments are aberrant. However, the consensus approach can also allow a dominant panel member to have the greatest influence in determining the final rating. Of the research studies investigating consensus rating, all have found that consensus rating has little or no impact on interview validity (Sackett & Wilson 1982; Pulakos et al. 1996). As is pointed out by Pulakos et al. (1996), this raises the issue of the value added by incorporating a consensus approach given the additional time and money spent on a panel reaching a consensus. Furthermore, it is noted in the literature that using consensus ratings can prevent identification of aberrant raters who may compromise the validity of the interview process (Zedeck et al. 1983; Dreher et al. 1988).

Observation of the panel interviews showed that there is often a dominant panel member who will determine the final rating. One observer noted, ‘I do not think I saw one case where a decision on an applicant was not the decision that would have been reached by a single panel member’. In some cases, it was noted that interviewers compromised their ratings to a significant extent to reach consensus; in other cases, one panel member provided a rating which was accepted by the other two interviewers without discussion of the ratings they had made. It is clear that there should be a mechanism that allows each panel interviewer to contribute to the scoring of the applicant.

A strong argument for using independent interviewer ratings is that this allows continuous assessment and monitoring of interviewer competence. Comparisons of interviewer ratings (inter-interviewer reliability) can identify interviewers who have become aberrant in their ratings and require retraining.

Recommendation 25 — Interviewee assessment by individual interviewers

That the consensus approach for assessing the performance of applicants at interviews be abandoned. Ratings should be made independently by each interviewer and submitted to the Selection Committee. Comparisons of the independent ratings should be used to identify interviewers who require retraining.

Rejection of applicant

On some occasions, the interviewers may find reason to reject an applicant on the basis of disclosures or behaviours. Examples are:

- the applicant has disclosed information that may bring into question his or her integrity and, consequently, suitability for the QPS
- the applicant has disclosed information that casts doubt on his or her maturity to undertake some of the duties required of a general duties police officer
- the applicant demonstrates a complete lack of understanding and awareness of police duties and work.

It is therefore important that each interviewer is given the opportunity to recommend the rejection of an applicant. However, interviewers must be able to provide clear and descriptive reasons as to why the applicant is not suitable for the QPS. This is particularly important if the findings or ratings of the panel interview form the basis for rejection of an applicant.

Recommendation 26 — Rejection of applicants by interviewers

That interviewers have the opportunity to recommend the rejection of an applicant. In these cases, interviewers should be required to clearly state, in writing, their reasons for rejection.

Interview-panel membership

Currently, the panel comprises three interviewers, representing operational policing, the Academy and the community. The argument for having three members is that each represents a major stakeholder in the QPS:

- the community which is protected and served by the QPS should be involved in the selection process, and the community representative also provides an external viewpoint in the selection process
- operational policing is ultimately what the recruit will be employed to do and operational police should be involved both to consider whether the applicant is suitable for the 'real' demands of policing and to answer any job-related questions
- the Academy is where recruits will spend their first six months and Academy staff should be involved to consider whether the applicant is suitable for the recruit-training program and to answer any questions they may have regarding the recruit-training program.

Research on the number of interviewers is inconsistent; it is not clear whether there are any real benefits from having a greater number of interviewers (McDaniel et al. 1994; Wiesner & Cronshaw 1988). As outlined earlier, the more critical factors for increasing the validity of interviews include training of interviewers and structuring the interview process.

The observers of the interviews did not consider there to be much to gain in having three interviewers. Both observers considered that reducing the panel to two would provide a cost saving to the QPS without compromising the integrity of the interview process.

Given the lack of evidence of any benefit (in terms of validity or efficiency) from the three-person panel, some PEAC members questioned whether the third member was warranted given the associated costs. Retention of the larger panel would mean that a greater pool of interviewers would need to be trained, and then retrained when necessary, at considerable expense, when interviewers start to drift and/or when their inter-interviewer reliability begins to fall. In addition, if the Service moves to year-round recruitment (an assessment of which has been recommended in chapter 4), interviewers will be required to be available more often. Funds spent on having a third panel member could better be spent elsewhere to improve the recruitment and selection process.

There was general consensus among PEAC that, for the following reasons, the community member and the operational police officer should be retained were the panel to drop from three to two members:

- The community member is important not only to represent the views of the community whom the QPS serves, but also to provide a viewpoint from outside the organisation. This is a frequent practice for large organisations in the private sector, which often employ recruitment consultants to assist in the selection process.
- The operational police officer represents the area of the QPS which the applicant is applying to join. His or her presence emphasises the importance and value of the operational police officer and also provides a 'front line' worker to answer questions the applicant may have regarding general duties policing. The operational police officer brings to the interview a person with policing experience and, arguably, a clear idea of behaviours or traits that would render an applicant unsuitable for the job of policing.
- Because the educational profile of applicants has increased substantially, and because of the use of psychometric testing and language skills testing in other parts of the selection process, it can be argued that representation from the Academy may not be as necessary as it was some years ago. Information on the recruit-training program can be comprehensively described in the information booklet for recruits.

Another important point about the interview panel is its composition in terms of gender and race. The QPS should endeavour to ensure an appropriate gender and/or race balance on the panel where

possible (e.g. to ensure that one interviewer is female or one is from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background where possible, particularly where applicants from those groups are involved).

Recommendation 27 — Number of interviewers on each panel

That the QPS Board of Management consider whether panel membership should be reduced from three to two. Regardless of the number of interviewers per panel, the QPS should endeavour, where possible, to ensure an appropriate gender and/or race balance on the interview panel.

Interview conditions and practicalities

It was evident from the observation of panel interviews that the environment and conditions under which some interviews took place were less than optimal. This was a strong complaint from a number of panel members and one observer noted:

They are long days spent in cramped surroundings, with inappropriate and often damaged furniture ... the lack of a window adds to the oppressive atmosphere ... interviews require reasonable accommodation in a relaxed environment. The impression on applicants cannot be a good one.

Concerns regarding the schedule that interviewers are required to follow were also raised. There is a 'notional' hour allotted for each interview. During this time, the panel skims through the applicant's file, makes any comments they wish to, interviews the applicant, allots marks individually, and then discusses the marks before 'consensus' is reached. The convenor then completes the applicant's summary sheet. Between interviews, panel members take necessary toilet and refreshment breaks, which are not catered for in the timetable. The result is that less than an hour is available for each applicant. It was noted by one observer that the consequence of the strict timetable was that:

Questions and answers are most often a rushed affair. Not surprisingly, the average time for questions and answers for the Brisbane panels was: 1 minute 46 seconds; 1 minute 12 seconds; 1 minute 21 seconds; 1 minute 42 seconds; 1 minute 25 seconds. This is clearly not sufficient time for a question to be asked, an answer to be given, and necessary probing of that answer.

It is necessary for the interviewers to have sufficient time to read the applicant's file, conduct a comprehensive interview, and make decisions after the interview. It is suggested that there be no more than five interviews a day, with one and a half hours allocated to each applicant. In this one and a half hour period, the interviewers can peruse the applicant's file, formulate probe questions regarding education and employment experience, and conduct the interview. It would be expected that interviews would take 45 to 60 minutes.

Recommendation 28 — Interview arrangements

That the QPS make every effort to provide more suitable rooms for the conduct of recruitment interviews. There should be a maximum of five interviews a day, with 1½ hours allocated to each applicant.

Pool of interviewers

On some occasions, there were problems in ensuring sufficient interviewers were available. One observer noted that untrained people were 'pulled in' at the last moment so that interviews could take place. This problem could be partly alleviated if the number of interviewers per panel is reduced. However, the QPS should ensure there is always a suitable pool of trained interviewers available. This should reduce the difficulty of finding an interviewer 'at the last minute'. There should also be a policy that if trained interviewers are not available the interviews will be rescheduled.

While police officers are currently 'pulled' to conduct interviews when necessary, once the interviewer training program is implemented only a certain number of officers will be able to be trained because of cost considerations. Consequently, these officers must be permitted to perform this duty as a priority, to ensure there is always a trained officer available for interviews.

Recommendation 29 — Policy to ensure adequate pool of trained interviewers

That an adequate pool of trained interviewers be established to avoid last-minute replacements by untrained people. QPS policy should also be amended to ensure that when trained interviewers are not available, interviews are rescheduled. Those officers who are trained in interviewing should be permitted to give priority to this duty to ensure that sufficient interviewers are available.

Interviewees with language difficulties

The observers noted that on at least two occasions applicants with very poor language abilities were interviewed. There is currently no formal system to identify and screen applicants who are likely to have poor oral and written communication skills (as discussed in chapter 5). This issue is particularly important as recruits are required to undertake a training program that is similar to many tertiary courses. Successful completion of recruit training requires comprehension skills and places heavy reliance on oral and written abilities. Accepting applicants with weaknesses in these areas is not only unfair to the applicants (e.g. they experience greater difficulty and hardships in completing the training program and the additional demand in working after hours) but also involves extra cost to the Service in providing tutoring to such applicants. As recommended in chapter 5, the QPS should develop a policy to identify applicants who may have language difficulties and to require those applicants to do a language proficiency test. However, on some occasions, an applicant with language difficulties may ‘slip through’ unnoticed. In those cases, it would also be beneficial for interviewers to have the capacity to recommend an applicant for language testing.

Recommendation 30 — Interviewees with language difficulties

That where an interviewee demonstrates difficulty with communication and comprehension in the interview, interviewers be able to recommend that the applicant complete a language test.

Adherence to QPS practices and policy

The HRM Manual has one section on the panel interview, which briefly outlines the composition of the panels and the selection criteria considered by the panel (sections 4.1 and 10.4). The Recruit Interview Panel Manual provides extensive information regarding the interview process. Topics covered in the manual include:

- selection guidelines (e.g. merit and equity, and legislation relevant to the interview process)
- function, purpose and composition of the interview panel
- guidelines on the interviewing structure and techniques.

Observation of the interview process indicated there were some inconsistencies between the guidelines stated in the manual and the practice adopted by the interviewers. Examples include:

- Interviewers are required, under normal procedures, to take notes in the interview to determine an applicant’s interview rating score and to document discussions during the interview concerning any incident or adverse information. It was noticed that some interviewers did not take notes during the interview and that sometimes the interviewers failed to record in writing a discrepancy between the applicant’s résumé and information given by the applicant during the interview.
- Interviewers are required to ensure that reasons for assessment are recorded in writing. On at least one occasion, the panel decided not to recommend an applicant but failed to provide written reasons for this decision.
- The manual emphasises that interviewers should not consider the applicant’s educational or occupational achievement or psychometric assessment as they are already considered in the selection process. However, there were several occasions when interviewers discussed this information prior to the interview.

It is desirable for interviewers to comply with the QPS guidelines and policies; however, no recommendation is made here because it is assumed that the introduction of a comprehensive interviewer training program will resolve these inconsistencies. It is also expected that the appointment of an external consultant to revise the interview process will result in the revision of the QPS policies, practices and guidelines.

Conclusion

The panel interview assesses the applicant's suitability for appointment as a police recruit. The principal concern about the interview is that it is a poor predictor of an applicant's performance in the recruit-training program (Burke 1994; CJC 1996a). Examination of panel interviews suggests that problems with structure, format and content may be the major factors causing this low validity. These findings are consistent with the research literature, which shows that panel interviews, particularly unstructured interviews, generally have low reliability and poor validity for predicting work and training performance.

Specific problems with the interview process include:

- questions often do not relate to selection criteria or requirements of the job
- interviewers are provided with excessive information, which increases the likelihood of biased decisions, different information is considered for different applicants
- there may be poor or no use of probe questions
- decisions to reject applicants may be made without reasonable basis or justification.

The research literature on panel interviews indicates that the validity of the process can be improved by ensuring that questions are job-related and by training interviewers.

This chapter recommends that all interviewers be trained and receive appropriate information about applicants, the interview format and content be reviewed, and the system for rating interviews be improved. In addition, it recommends that the QPS address the resource implications of continuing with three interviewers per panel, given the evidence that two interviewers could perform the function equally well.

Chapter 8: Integrity screening

Police officers are granted powers that exceed those afforded to other citizens, exercise broad discretions, often unsupervised, and are exposed, on occasions, to substantial opportunities to engage in corrupt activities. The Fitzgerald Inquiry in Queensland (1989) and, more recently, the Royal Commission in New South Wales (1997) highlighted the damage that can be done to public confidence and organisational morale if police abuse the position of trust they have been granted by the community.

Systematic integrity screening of police applicants is an important mechanism for promoting organisational integrity, along with measures aimed at modifying the attitudes and behaviour of serving officers, reducing opportunities for police to act improperly, enhancing supervision, and reforming the more negative aspects of the organisational culture (see CJC 1997). Improved screening at the ‘front end’ will make it easier to implement these other strategies. It is also much more cost-effective to exclude ethically suspect applicants at the outset than to have to deal at a later stage with problems that may result if such applicants become police officers.

The QPS, through initiatives such as the Project Honour Report (1996) and the establishment of the Ethical Standards Command (ESC) in 1997, is now taking a more proactive approach to promoting ethical behaviour and reducing misconduct within the Service. This chapter makes recommendations aimed at supporting the QPS’s endeavours in this area, while at the same time ensuring that the integrity-screening process operates fairly and without bias.

The chapter begins with an overview of current QPS integrity-screening procedures for applicants. The remaining sections of the chapter discuss issues relating to current procedures, recommend ways of improving these procedures, and evaluate possible additional strategies that could be incorporated into the selection process.

Current screening process for integrity and ethics

Extensive background checking of applicants was introduced by the QPS in the aftermath of the Fitzgerald Inquiry. Current QPS strategies to assess the integrity of applicants are set out in table 8.1 and discussed in more detail in the following text.

Applicants who are short-listed for an interview are required to complete and sign a standard waiver for the release of information. Additional waivers for service records are obtained where an applicant has current or previous service with the Australian Defence Forces. The information requested includes details of service record, charges and disciplinary action, and medical history.

Checks 1 to 6 are completed before the interview. The interview (check 7) is also part of the integrity-screening process and interviewers may ask applicants questions relating to any aspect of their criminal or traffic history. Any information disclosed during the interview that raises questions about the integrity of the applicant is brought to the attention of the Selection Committee. Checks 8 to 12 are completed after the interview. The Selection Committee considers all available information and makes a decision on whether to reject or accept the applicant.

Table 8.1 — Screening process

1. Criminal history check	7. Panel interview
2. Traffic history check	8. Fingerprint checks
3. Previous employer check	9. Police Gazette
4. Present residence check	10. ESC vetting
5. Referee checks	11. CJC vetting
6. Police referee checks	12. BCI vetting

Criminal and traffic history checks

Applicants for appointment to the QPS are required to declare all criminal convictions, and special provision to this effect is made under the *Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986*. Criminal convictions can be considered and taken into account even if the rehabilitation period of five or ten years has expired, and regardless of whether the charges were laid in Queensland or elsewhere. Section 9A of the Act also requires disclosure of convictions that, under any law, are deemed not to be convictions.

Under current policy, the QPS regards convictions for the following categories of offences as automatically excluding an applicant from further consideration in the selection process:

1. A conviction within the last ten years for an offence which is a crime or misdemeanour.
2. A conviction within the last five years for a simple offence under the *Criminal Code* or an offence under the *Regulatory Offences Act 1985*.
3. A conviction within the last twelve months for an offence, not being an offence which is either dealt with in number 2 above or dealt with under the *Traffic Act 1949*.
4. A conviction within the last five years for an offence of driving while disqualified.
5. A conviction within the last five years for an offence of failing to stop and/or supply false information at a road incident involving death, injury or property damage.
6. A conviction for an offence of driving/in charge of a motor vehicle while under the influence of liquor or drugs with a level of 0.15 per cent and over;
 - (a) once within the last two years
 - (b) twice where the last conviction was within the last five years.
7. A conviction of driving/in charge of a motor vehicle with a concentration of alcohol in the blood ($0.05\% < 0.15\%$) OR concentration of alcohol in the blood ($0.00\% < 0.05\%$) and < 25 years holding a provisional licence, learner's permit OR no licence OR concentration of alcohol in the blood ($0.00\% < 0.05\%$) whilst driving a truck, bus, semi, road train, dangerous goods vehicle, two truck, pilot vehicle, taxi, hire vehicle, driving instructor's vehicle)
 - (a) one offence, with a reading of < 0.05 , within the last six months
 - (b) one offence, with a reading of $0.05 < 0.15\%$, within the last twelve months
 - (c) two offences the last of which was within two years
 - (d) three offences the last of which was within five years.
8. An accumulation of twelve demerit points in a period of three years up to and including the date of the last offence AND one or more traffic offences in the year prior to the closing date of applications.
9. Six or more traffic offences (not including offences attracting one demerit point) in a period of five years up to and including the date of the last offence AND less than two years free of offences prior to the closing date of applications.

Applicants who have committed criminal or traffic offences in any other jurisdiction, which would have been an offence if committed in Queensland, are deemed to have breached these guidelines. Any applicant who discloses convictions that meet the conditions listed above is automatically excluded by the QPS Recruiting Section.

An applicant who has a previous conviction that does not result in automatic exclusion may remain in the selection process. The Selection Committee considers, in conjunction with other information gathered during the selection process, the recency and seriousness of the offence, and then decides whether or not to accept the applicant.

Previous employer checks

Each applicant is required to name all previous employers for the last ten years, each of whom is then sent a standard referee report. Current employers are not contacted so as to avoid jeopardising the

continuing employment of applicants. The report requires the employer to comment in writing on the applicant's suitability in terms of the selection criteria (police orientation, personal suitability, social maturity, communication, personal impact, integrity and so on). In addition, each previous employer is asked for information on the capacity in which the applicant was employed and dates of employment. Previous employers are also able to provide comments on punctuality/sick leave, attitude to work, maturity and responsibility. The Recruiting Section will remind referees to complete outstanding reports by either sending another written request or calling the referee directly (this is not done as an oral referee check but simply to request completion of the report). Current QPS policy requires all referee reports to be returned before the applicant can be appointed. Where this does not occur, the application is held over to the next intake.

Residence checks

A check is conducted on the current residence of all applicants from within Queensland. This process involves a police officer visiting the home of the applicant, noting any adverse impressions, and interviewing neighbours regarding the applicant's conduct. However, there is no process to ensure that checks are conducted comprehensively and consistently. Local station records are also examined for any adverse information, such as complaints made about the applicant or the residence which did not result in charges being laid. Similar checks are rarely conducted in relation to interstate applicants because of access difficulties and expense. An adverse residence report does not automatically exclude an applicant, but this information is brought to the attention of the Selection Committee.

Police and other referee checks

Applicants are requested to nominate two serving police referees, who may be interstate or Queensland officers. Applicants may also provide two personal referees. Nominated referees are requested to complete the standard referee report (described in the earlier section on previous employer checks). An adverse referee report will not automatically exclude an applicant but is brought to the attention of the Selection Committee.

Panel interview

The last selection criterion assessed in the interview is integrity. Although no weighting is given to this criterion in the overall panel-interview score, a panel may choose not to recommend an applicant to the Selection Committee (regardless of suitability on other criteria) if the applicant discloses information that raises serious doubts about his or her integrity, or ethical or moral values. Such disclosures would include statements made by applicants which conflict with their résumés, or responses to example problems or scenarios which are unethical or illegal. The Selection Committee is not bound to accept the panel's recommendation, but considers it along with other available information.

Police Gazette

All applicants who reach the panel-interview stage have their names, current residential address, occupation, birth date and place of birth, published in the Queensland Police Gazette. Members of the Service with knowledge of any matters concerning the character or conduct of applicants which would render their appointment undesirable are required to provide written advice to the Inspector of the Recruiting Section. Information indicating an integrity problem usually does not result in automatic exclusion, but is brought to the attention of the Selection Committee for its consideration.

Vetting and fingerprint checks

Applicants to the QPS are vetted by three agencies; the ESC of the QPS,⁷ the CJC, and the Bureau of Criminal Intelligence (BCI). Their respective functions in relation to applicants are as follows:

- the ESC provides a statement of the criminal history of each applicant, and recommends to the Selection Committee whether the applicant is suitable for the Service

- the CJC conducts a vetting process for all applicants born before 1970 (principally of intelligence holdings inherited from the Fitzgerald Inquiry)
- the BCI is asked if it is aware of any adverse information in relation to applicants.

In addition, all applicants who reach the panel interview stage are fingerprinted and a check is made against the National Computer Data Base by the QPS Fingerprint Bureau.

Any integrity issue raised by any of these checks may result in exclusion by the QPS Recruiting Section, or more typically, the applicant would be allowed to continue in the selection process, with reports being provided to the Selection Committee.

Integrity assessment by the Selection Committee

Integrity issues likely to proceed to the Selection Committee for determination include where applicants have:

- been convicted of a crime or misdemeanour more than ten years ago
- been convicted of a simple offence more than five years ago
- been cautioned or admonished on more than one occasion
- an extensive traffic history (but which does not fall within the exclusion criteria)
- been subject to a report or comments made by a referee or interviewer which questions their integrity
- failed to declare their criminal or traffic history
- provided false information in relation to their application or medical history.

Where there is insufficient information to fairly assess adverse information, the Selection Committee may decide that further background checks are required. When evaluating allegations of adverse conduct, the Committee considers whether the weight of available evidence supports the allegations. In relation to offences, the Committee considers the recency, gravity and circumstances of the offence, the applicant's age at the time, and any pattern or history which indicates behavioural problems or any specific problems involving alcohol, drugs or aggression. In addition, the applicant's lifestyle since the time of the offence (including employment and community involvement) is considered, along with any relevant aspects of the applicant's cultural background.

The Selection Committee is required to comply with the rules of procedural fairness which, put simply, require decisions to be made in a fair manner by an unbiased decision maker. Prior to a decision being made, an applicant is generally provided with a chance to respond to any issues arising from his or her application that may cause the Selection Committee to reject the applicant. Failure to give applicants this opportunity to respond, or to take into account explanations or mitigating circumstances concerning their conduct, may be grounds for a judicial review application (see discussion in chapter 2).

⁷ The ESC encompasses three basic units of operation. The Internal Investigation Branch (formerly the Professional Standards Unit), which liaises closely with the CJC, deals with complaints investigations and makes recommendations to the Commissioner of Police. The Inspectorate deals with proactive aspects of the Command, including internal audits, inspections, research and projects. The Ethical Practices Branch deals with training, internal witness support and integrity testing. This Branch is still in the formative stage and policies and procedures are being developed in consultation with other agencies including the CJC. Overall the Command reports directly to the Commissioner and is charged with enhancing the image of the QPS in terms of professional conduct, discipline and ethical practices.

Issues for consideration

The information used for this review of QPS integrity screening procedures consisted of:

- data from police complaint databases held by the ESC and CJC
- the findings of the Carter Inquiry into police and drugs in Queensland (CJC 1997)
- interviews with CJC and ESC staff involved in the screening process and consultations with senior ESC officers
- observation of Selection Committee processes for assessing integrity issues for applicants
- a review of the relevant research literature
- QPS policies and procedures governing the integrity screening process (as set out in the HRM Manual and advised by the HRMB and Recruiting Section).

The main issues arising from the review, and recommendations for improving the current integrity screening process (apart from referee reports and the referee checking process, which are discussed in depth in chapter 9), are discussed below under the following headings:

- the overall integrity assessment process
- procedures for when an integrity issue is raised
- grounds for automatic exclusion
- residence checks
- publishing of applicants' names in the Police Gazette
- drug testing
- financial checks
- other integrity measures.

The overall integrity assessment process

Currently, the Selection Committee is primarily responsible for determining whether an applicant should be excluded from the QPS on integrity grounds. The main concerns about this task being vested in the Selection Committee are as follows:

- Integrity issues are considered along with all other applicant information, such as psychometric test results, employment history and the results of panel interviews. The wide range of information which must be considered can make it difficult for the Committee to focus on integrity issues.
- Given the Committee's responsibility to ensure that the quota for each intake is met, there is a risk that, on some occasions, the importance of integrity may be regarded as secondary to the need to obtain the required numbers.
- The Committee, as currently constituted, does not include people with particular expertise in the area of integrity and ethics (such as representatives from the ESC). In most cases where integrity issues are raised, the ESC is asked to make further investigations and recommend whether an applicant is suitable. However, the Committee may reject this recommendation and there are no firm criteria for determining what weight should be given to the ESC's recommendations.
- Occasionally the Selection Committee is required to make decisions with incomplete information. This usually occurs when the applicant is from interstate or overseas and relevant information cannot be obtained.
- The lack of a documented standard approach leaves considerable room for inconsistency and unfairness in dealing with applicants. Currently, it is possible for applicants with similar integrity issues raised against them to be treated in quite different ways. The absence of clearly defined and consistently applied written guidelines about integrity issues, apart from the exclusion criteria for criminal and traffic offences, makes it difficult to ascertain if selection decisions are being made consistently and fairly.

To deal with these problems, an Integrity Committee should be created with responsibility for conducting a comprehensive evaluation of each applicant about whom an integrity concern is raised. The Integrity Committee would investigate the matter and ultimately decide whether or not the applicant should be rejected on integrity grounds. This process would reduce part of the current burden on the Selection Committee and promote the assessment of integrity independent of other selection decisions. In addition, the Integrity Committee, as the one group responsible for all decisions on integrity issues, would be better able to ensure consistent and fair decision making.

It is essential that the composition of the Integrity Committee reflects the priority and importance of this aspect of the selection process. Incorrect decisions about integrity issues can be financially costly and result in damage to morale and loss of public confidence in the Service. Consequently, decisions on integrity should be made after careful investigation and consideration, and by individuals who have significant responsibility and commitment to the organisation. The Integrity Committee should be constituted by senior management of the QPS, with particular representation of the ESC. Given the proposed senior composition of the committee, its decisions should be final. In cases where the Integrity Committee is unable to agree on whether to accept or reject an applicant, the matter should be referred to the Commissioner of Police for determination.

The Integrity Committee should develop detailed guidelines for determining when an application should be referred to it for consideration. Automatic referral should occur where:

- the applicant has a criminal record or evidence of behaviour related to criminal activity (e.g. cautions), but not convictions that justify automatic exclusion, which are discussed further below
- a written report from any source (such as an employer or personal referee) reflects adversely on the applicant's integrity
- adverse information is received from a police officer in response to the Gazette publication (see below)
- there are indications of work conduct which raise integrity concerns (such as excessive unexplained sick leave, complaints of sexual harassment, concerns regarding trust or confidentiality)
- there is evidence of a failure to disclose relevant information, or inconsistencies between the applicant's résumé and information provided at the panel interview.

To prevent the decisions being coloured by irrelevant considerations, the Committee should not be given access to information which is irrelevant to assessing an applicant's integrity (such as ability test results or medical examination reports).

Recommendation 31 — Establishment of Integrity Committee

- (i) That the QPS establish an Integrity Committee to evaluate applicants who have an integrity issue raised against them. The Integrity Committee should not be given access to information that is irrelevant to assessing an applicant's integrity (such as ability test results or medical examination reports). A comprehensive set of criteria should be developed which define an 'integrity' issue and specify when an application should be referred to the Committee.
- (ii) That the Integrity Committee comprise the following:
 - Assistant Commissioner of the Ethical Standards Command as Chairperson
 - Chief Superintendent of the Internal Investigations Branch
 - Director of the Human Resources Division.
- (iii) That the decision of the Integrity Committee to reject an applicant be final. Where the Committee is unable to reach a consensus to reject or accept an applicant, the case should be referred to the Commissioner of Police for a final decision.

Procedures for dealing with a concern about integrity

A strategic approach should be adopted for defining and dealing with each integrity issue referred to the Integrity Committee. In many cases, it will be necessary to consider whether there is other evidence of problem behaviour to support the piece of negative information obtained. For example, if one referee reports the applicant is dishonest, are there other referee reports or a criminal history which lend support to the allegation? Simply relying on one negative piece of information is problematic because the validity or accuracy of the information may be doubtful (Jones & Terris 1991b).

Given the importance of integrity and ethics to policing organisations, time and attention should be devoted to a full investigation and evaluation of each applicant for whom a concern has been raised. The process should not only seek to verify any negative information (e.g. raised by a referee report) but should evaluate all aspects of the applicant's history (e.g. by contacting neighbours from previous residences, or calling all previous employers and referees). Other assessment strategies may include a full psychological assessment, completion of paper and pencil honesty tests and an integrity interview with the applicant (see below).

Both positive and negative information should be considered when assessing an applicant. Similar cases should be treated with as much consistency as possible, and all investigations should be conducted in a fair and unbiased manner. The best way to achieve this is for written guidelines to be developed which set out in detail the types of investigations to be undertaken in particular categories of cases, and the factors to be taken into account when assessing applicants. The Integrity Committee will be best placed to produce those guidelines, and should do so as soon as possible after it has been formed.

To maintain consistency and confidence in the decision-making process, it will also be very important to ensure that the guidelines formulated by the Integrity Committee are actually followed by the Committee. This can be achieved, firstly, by making sure that all incoming members of the Committee are made aware of the guidelines; secondly, by requiring that decisions of the Committee — and the reasons for them — are properly documented; and thirdly, by ensuring that the operations of the Committee are subjected to periodic external validation and evaluation.

Recommendation 32 — Integrity Committee investigations

That a strategic approach be adopted for conducting integrity investigations. All information, both positive and negative, should be considered when evaluating an applicant. The Integrity Committee, as a matter of priority, should develop written guidelines on how it will investigate and determine integrity issues, and should document the measures it will take to ensure those guidelines are applied consistently and fairly.

The criteria for automatic exclusion

The current criteria for automatically excluding applicants who have been found guilty of committing an offence are problematic in several respects:

- Even applicants convicted of very serious crimes such as murder or rape are not automatically excluded if they were convicted more than ten years ago. While it is extremely unlikely that a person who had committed such an offence would ever be admitted to the QPS, it is undesirable that the formal policy should allow this as even a hypothetical possibility.
- The categories are very broad, grouping together many offences without consideration of the differences in seriousness between them.
- The exclusion period for drink-driving offences is relatively short, especially when compared to non-driving related offences. For example, an individual convicted of driving with a BAC greater than 0.15 per cent more than two years ago would not be automatically excluded, whereas someone convicted of failing to pay for services would be excluded. This approach to dealing with drink-driving is arguably out of step with community standards.
- The criteria only relate to criminal and traffic offences. However, many 'quasi-criminal' offences

in other statutes are arguably of as much relevance to integrity issues; for example, selling underweight meat, or committing environmental offences.

The criteria were reviewed by a subcommittee consisting of QPS and CJC representatives and with input from the ESC. The subcommittee considered that the range of offences for which persons should be excluded from the QPS — either permanently or for a set time — should be extended. However, the subcommittee recognised that there also needed to be some flexibility to allow extenuating circumstances to be taken into account; for example, where the offence was committed when the applicant was a juvenile and had been subjected to strong peer pressure to engage in the offence behaviour. In addition, the subcommittee considered that there had to be some correspondence between the offences which were deemed as justifying exclusion from the QPS and those which were considered by the Service as sufficiently serious to warrant the dismissal of serving officers.

The subcommittee's approach was to designate three categories of offences:

Category A — offences where a guilty verdict would warrant permanent exclusion from the QPS

The subcommittee considered that this category should be restricted to *Criminal Code* and *Drugs Misuse Act 1986* offences that indicate serious disregard of the law, property rights, and/or individuals' rights. This category should include offences involving serious violence, sexual offences, offences which indicate dishonesty and/or involvement in corruption, and drug trafficking and other serious drug offences.

Category B — offences where a guilty verdict would result in automatic exclusion if committed in the last five years and a rebuttable presumption against admission if committed more than five years ago

Included in this category are all other *Criminal Code* and *Drugs Misuse Act* offences, offences under the *Regulatory Offences Act* and comparable offences committed under other Acts.

Category C — offences where a guilty verdict would not lead to automatic exclusion but would create a rebuttable presumption against admission to the QPS

Vagrants, Gaming and Other Offences Act 1931 offences and minor offences under other Acts are classified under this category.

~~Categories B and C refer to a rebuttable presumption. This means that an applicant who has been found guilty of committing the offence in question would be automatically referred to the Integrity Committee, which would then be responsible for determining whether the person represents an integrity risk. The applicant would have to satisfy the committee that he or she was a suitable person for admission to the QPS.~~

Determining which specific offences should be allocated to the above three categories proved to be a difficult task because of the very large number of offences that had to be considered, the overlap between different Acts, the lack of consistency in penalty structures, and the broad scope of some offences. The subcommittee, as part of its deliberations, produced a comprehensive listing of offences, which will be made available to the QPS. Responsibility for finalising this list, and updating it where necessary, should lie with the QPS's ESC and HRD.

On the specific issue of drink-driving offences, the subcommittee considered that any person should be excluded from further consideration if found guilty of driving a motor vehicle with a BAC exceeding 0.1 per cent in the preceding five years, or with two or more convictions for driving with a BAC less than 0.1 per cent within the previous five years. The subcommittee also considered that two or more convictions for driving over 0.1 per cent should be grounds for permanent exclusion from the QPS. In the view of the subcommittee, these revised exclusion criteria would better reflect the seriousness with which the community now regards drink-driving.

Recommendation 33 — Automatic exclusion of applicants

- (i) That applicants who have been found guilty of offences (including attempted offences) against the *Criminal Code* and/or *Drugs Misuse Act* that indicate serious disregard of the law, property rights, and/or individuals' rights be permanently excluded from consideration for appointment to the QPS.
- (ii) That applicants who have been found guilty of other offences under the *Criminal Code* or *Drugs Misuse Act*, offences against the *Regulatory Offences Act*, or of equivalent offences under other Acts, be automatically excluded from consideration for appointment to the QPS if the offence was committed in the last five years. If the offence was committed more than five years ago, the applicant should be excluded unless the Integrity Committee determines that the person does not present an integrity risk.
- (iii) That applicants who have been found guilty of simple offences under the *Vagrants, Gaming and Other Offences Act*, or minor offences under other Acts, be excluded from consideration for appointment to the QPS unless the Integrity Committee determines that the person does not present an integrity risk.
- (iv) That applicants who have been found guilty of driving a motor vehicle with a BAC exceeding 0.1 per cent in the preceding five years, or who have two or more convictions for driving with a BAC less than 0.1 per cent within the previous five years, be excluded from consideration for appointment to the QPS. Two or more convictions for driving with a BAC over 0.1 per cent should be grounds for permanent exclusion from the QPS.
- (v) That an applicant who has been found guilty of an offence which may result in exclusion, but who argues special circumstances, may submit in writing a case for the exclusion criteria to be waived. The decision on whether to accept this submission will be made by the Integrity Committee.
- (vi) That the Ethical Standards Command and the QPS's Human Resources Division be responsible for determining which specific offences belong in the various exclusion categories, having regard to the work done by the PEAC subcommittee.

Failure to disclose relevant information

On some occasions applicants knowingly fail to disclose relevant information on their application form or in their medical assessment. This is clearly an integrity matter, which should be taken seriously because of the applicant's demonstrated willingness to deceive the QPS even before joining the organisation.

Recommendation 34 — Failure to disclose relevant information

That applicants who knowingly fail to disclose relevant information on their application form and/or in their medical assessment be automatically excluded from the selection process. The consequences of failing to disclose relevant information should be made clear to all applicants.

Provision of information to applicants

Applicants should be encouraged to exclude themselves from the application process if they do not meet the minimum criteria. In the case of work experience and education requirements, applicants are provided with information stating the minimum criteria, but this practice is not followed where integrity issues are concerned. It is not cost-efficient for the QPS, or fair to the applicant, to allow applicants to undergo the selection process only to discover part way through that they have failed to meet the minimum criteria for the integrity screening process. For these reasons, a summary of the exclusion criteria — including examples of offences which warrant exclusion — should be included in the information booklet given to prospective applicants (see chapter 4).

Recommendation 35 — Provision of exclusion criteria to applicants

That a summary of the exclusion criteria be provided in the information booklet for applicants.

Insufficient information

On occasions, the records of interstate or overseas applicants cannot be accessed for some reason. Where this occurs, or where background checks are not possible, the safest course of action is for the QPS not to consider the application further, rather than ‘taking a chance’ and admitting the person. To avoid any unfair discriminatory effect, this policy will need to be applied with discretion: for example, if only one of the usual checks cannot be made, and all other information is available and raises no integrity concerns, then it would not be reasonable to exclude the applicant. However, exclusion would clearly be justified where no criminal checks, employment checks or other referees are available in relation to the applicant’s recent past. Given the small numbers of applicants who are not able to be assessed on integrity issues, a policy of automatic exclusion should have little impact on recruitment figures.

Recommendation 36 — Procedure when insufficient information available

That where there is insufficient information available to assess an applicant’s integrity, the application be considered no further.

Residence checks

The current procedures for conducting residence checks of applicants raise some concerns:

- As is the case with referee checks, the questions asked of the officer completing the check are very general.
- The officer completing the residence check form is asked to record ‘impressions of home environment and persons living at residence’. The type of information sought is unclear; and the question seems to invite value judgments by the individual making the assessment, which may not reflect the values desired by the QPS, and may be based on the individual biases and preconceptions of the officer making the check.
- There are no criteria for the selection of the officer performing the check and no training is provided. In many cases it is likely that the task is regarded as low priority and diverted to junior officers of limited experience.
- There is no mechanism for ensuring consistency in the checking process. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is relatively common for the actual check not to be performed, with reliance being placed only on a check of station records.
- There is no standard set of questions asked of neighbours, or allowance made for neighbourhood disputes or other factors indicating a tendency towards bias on the part of neighbours.
- Previous residences are not assessed and the tests are not conducted at all for interstate applicants.

Although costs have not been calculated, it seems safe to assume that undertaking numerous residence checks is a costly selection device, relative to the value of the information obtained. Anecdotal evidence provided by the Inspector of the QPS Recruiting Section suggests that only 5–10 per cent of applicants receive an adverse residence check — and some of these result from personal clashes rather than being indicative of behaviour which may reflect adversely on the integrity of the applicant.

It would be more cost-efficient and effective for residence checks to be performed at the discretion of the Integrity Committee when other integrity issues have been flagged. In this way, there would be some independent justification for conducting the residence checks and interviews with neighbours.

The checking of station records can be retained within the normal selection process. Recruiting Section staff can send an enquiry form requesting any information which may be relevant to the

individual's application (e.g. repeated call-outs for domestic violence or noise). Any information provided by the local station, along with the applicant's file, should be referred to the Integrity Committee. The Integrity Committee, in assessing that information, will need to consider the fact that the information may comprise unsubstantiated allegations only, and, furthermore, may not relate specifically to the applicant. In most circumstances, applicants should be given the right to respond to such reports before any adverse decision is made regarding their application.

Recommendation 37 — Residence checks of applicants

- (i) That residence checks be no longer performed as part of the normal selection process. When an integrity issue is raised, the Integrity Committee should have the discretion to order residence checks for particular applicants. No applicant should be rejected on the sole basis of a negative report from a neighbour.
- (ii) That the QPS Recruiting Section should send an inquiry form to the local station nearest to the applicant's current place of residence. If any adverse information is provided concerning the applicant, the file should be forwarded to the Integrity Committee for further investigation and assessment. No applicant should be rejected solely on the basis of information provided by a local station.

Publishing of names in the Police Gazette

Anecdotal evidence from the QPS Recruiting Section indicates that some applicants who do not have a criminal record, but who nevertheless have had integrity questions raised about them, have been identified through the Gazette. Such reports are infrequent, but when they have been received they have tended to have some substance, resulting in the applicant being rejected or subjected to further integrity screening. The main concern about this procedure is that the behaviour that is reported may relate to unproved allegations and complaints and other untested observations, and therefore carries some risk of unfairness and bias. It is also possible that personal bias and antipathy could lead some police to make adverse reports about some applicants. For these reasons, it is important that such information is properly assessed by the Integrity Committee and the applicant given an opportunity to respond.

Recommendation 38 — Publishing of names in Police Gazette

That the practice of publishing the names of applicants in the Police Gazette be retained, but any information received as a result be carefully assessed by the Integrity Committee to establish its validity.

Screening for drug use

A recent national drug survey (Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy 1997) found that 31 per cent of Australians aged 15 years and over have used marijuana at some time in their lives, and more than one in eight report using marijuana in the last 12 months. This study also found that 62 per cent of 20–24 year-olds and 53 per cent of 25–34 year-olds — the groups from which QPS applicants are most likely to be drawn — had used marijuana at least once. Use of other illicit drugs is significantly lower in comparison to marijuana, with less than one in 10 Australians reporting that they have ever used hallucinogens or amphetamines and considerably fewer having ever used heroin or cocaine. Again though, use of these other illicit drugs is greatest among under 35 year olds.

Although illicit drug use has become more widespread in Australia in recent years, alcohol is still by far the most widely used drug and the most likely to be consumed on a regular basis. According to the National Drug Strategy Report, 76 per cent of Australians aged 15 years and over reported that they were current consumers of alcohol, with more males (80%) than females (72%) reporting current drinking. The societal cost of alcohol use is substantial with an estimated 3,642 Australian deaths from alcohol-related causes in 1995. A further 86,137 hospital separations were due to conditions related to alcohol. Alcohol is also often implicated in violence and property loss or damage.

Drug use or abuse can have the following consequences for the workplace:

- *Poor work performance.* Substance abuse has been recognised as a factor in theft, violence, reduced productivity and lateness and absenteeism in the workplace. Drug use is not always the direct cause of poor work performance, but it may be one facet of other problematic behaviours characterised by social nonconformity, rebelliousness or irresponsibility, which may in turn have a negative impact on workplace productivity.
- *Reduced safety in the workplace.* When employees are affected by drugs, there is a higher risk of them placing themselves, their co-workers and the public in danger. One example is the risk of using operational equipment, such as police vehicles, while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- *Potential corruption.* While public officials at all levels and positions have been found to be involved in drug activity, the greatest overlap between drugs and corruption seems to occur in the area of law enforcement (O'Donnell 1993). If a person is using drugs, he or she may be in contact with drug dealers, which enhances the potential for drug-related corruption and for that officer to be compromised.

The Carter Inquiry (CJC 1997) into police and drugs in Queensland reported that it was quite common to hear evidence of police officers using drugs such as cannabis and anabolic steroids (p. 71). The Inquiry recommended that in the light of its findings, and given the obvious corruption risks associated with illicit drug use by police officers, the QPS should develop strategies to prevent and deter applicants who use illicit drugs on a recreational basis, or who have a drug abuse problem, from applying and/or successfully being appointed to the QPS.

The QPS, along with other Australian police services, is paying increasing attention to the problem of drug and alcohol abuse. The National Guidelines for Police Workplace Alcohol Policy (Fenton, Davey & Mann 1997) has been formulated and the QPS has recently established a working party to formulate a drug and alcohol policy for current serving police officers. However, at present the QPS does not use a comprehensive drug screening procedure in the selection process. The medical questionnaire currently completed by applicants has one question on the use of intravenous drugs, but there is no requirement for applicants to indicate drug consumption using alternative forms of administration (e.g. by oral or nasal means) and no formal policy on how an applicant should be managed if they do give a positive response.

There are three strategies that can be considered for ascertaining whether an applicant has a history of drug use — direct questioning, paper and pencil tests, and drug testing.

Direct questioning

The question of an applicant's drug history is somewhat problematic for policy makers. The Bureau of Justice Assistance (1989) has discussed the area of an applicant's prior drug history in depth, and raised the following questions:

- Should the department only consider applicants who have never used an illicit drug?
- Is honestly admitting to trying marijuana acceptable?
- If so, how much is 'experimental' use?
- Is a period of abstinence required?

Policies relating to an applicant's drug history vary across the many jurisdictions in the United States. The Louisville Police Department, for example, disqualifies anyone who admits having used or sold marijuana within three years of application or any other controlled substance within six years of application. The District of Columbia rejects applicants who admit having used marijuana more than 15 times, although recency of drug use is also considered. In Chicago, prior experimental drug use is permitted if the applicant passes the Inwald Personality Inventory. In Miami, experimental marijuana use (but not harder drugs) is permitted. The Bureau of Justice Assistance (1989) sets out statistical data in chart form to aid decisions on applicant selection for those with a previous drug history.

The most significant disadvantage of this approach is that applicants are not likely to admit to drug use if they believe it may exclude them from selection. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to develop decision-making rules, particularly for applicants who admit drug use in the distant past. For these reasons, direct questioning does not appear to be an effective strategy for preventing and deterring applicants with a record of illicit drug use from entering the QPS.

Paper and pencil tests

Examples of tests which directly address drug-taking behaviours include overt tests such as the Reid Report (substance abuse) and the Personnel Selection Inventory (version 7) (drug avoidance). Other indirect measures (or veiled purpose tests) such as the Personnel Reaction Bank and the Hogan Reliability Scale address domains such as hostility to rules, thrill seeking, impulsiveness and conscientiousness, which in turn may be used to identify a potential for 'unacceptable behaviour' which might, but not necessarily, include drug taking.

There is a possibility that individuals will distort their responses to scales of this type. However, while overt tests have been considered to be more open to distortion than veiled tests, research suggests that people are surprisingly willing to admit to a variety of misdeeds, especially if they think that their responses will be checked. The validity of the tests seem to be highest when subjects are aware that the investigators have access to other sources of information about their honesty, such as chemical tests.

As with direct questioning, there is a significant disadvantage in overt tests because applicants are not likely to admit to drug use if they think that to do so may exclude them from selection. Secondly, these types of tests are argued by some researchers to have low predictive validity. Although there are few costs in administering such tests, most need a clinical psychologist to aid in the interpretation of the results.

Drug testing

The most direct means of testing for recent drug use is through analysis of urine samples. This procedure can be costly, particularly if done on a large scale. However, the cost of drug testing must be weighed against the high costs of drug use at work, including increased industrial accidents, absenteeism, theft and other forms of counter productivity. Several studies of the costs and benefits of pre-employment drug-testing programs have indicated that substantial costs could be avoided by screening out applicants who test positive for illicit drugs (Normand, Salyards & Mahoney 1990; Zwerling, Ryan & Orav 1992), although the utility of drug testing will vary with such factors as the prevalence of drug use among a given population, the cost of testing, and the stringency of the analytical methods employed.

Drug testing in police recruitment and selection and in the workplace is becoming increasingly common, particularly in the United States (US Department of Justice 1987; Smith 1990; Nelson 1992). In Australia, both the NSW Police Service and the Australian Federal Police have implemented random drug-testing programs. The NSW policy, implemented on 1 September 1997, involves management of substance abuse in the workplace through offering counselling and, if necessary, inpatient treatment fully paid for by the NSW Police Service. To date, more than eight hundred NSW police officers have been tested for drug use (*Sun Herald*, 12 April 1998, p. 6).

Research on attitudes towards drug testing suggest that testing is regarded most favourably in jobs in which impaired performance could threaten the safety of co-workers or the public, and when the tests are perceived to be very accurate. Because of the clear and compelling need to ensure high levels of integrity in police work, the use of such tests may be less controversial than in jobs where there is less of a premium on personal honesty and integrity.

The costs of undertaking a drug-testing program are determined by a number of factors such as the cost of suppliers and the method of test administration. For example, some commercial testing firms

charge around \$120 per test (including confirmation of results) to test for cannabis, cocaine, opiates and amphetamine, whereas some workplaces do on-site urine testing themselves, at a cost of around \$25 per test (with an extra \$50 per test for a follow-up if a positive result is obtained).

Implementing a drug-testing strategy would be cost-effective for recruitment and selection particularly since applicants are required to undertake a medical examination in the selection process (thereby enabling the doctor to oversee the test). Because the Police Academy has a registered nurse on staff, the costs for random testing during training would also be relatively low. Additional considerations, such as how an applicant or a recruit who tests positive should be handled, are best dealt with in the context of the formulation of a Service-wide drug and alcohol policy.

Although the focus of this review is restricted to the recruit selection process, this process cannot be viewed in isolation. Testing of recruits will assist in screening out current drug users from entering the QPS in the future but, of itself, will have little effect on usage patterns among existing serving police officers. The deterrent effect of testing will also be weakened if recruits know that, once they get past this first stage, there is no prospect of being tested again. It was therefore the view of PEAC that the QPS should consider implementing some form of random and targeted alcohol and drug testing on a Service-wide basis, as recommended by the Carter Inquiry (CJC 1997).

Recommendation 39 — Drug testing of recruits

That the QPS drug test applicants when they have their medical examination and conduct random alcohol and drug testing during the recruit-training program at the Academy. In addition, the Service should consider introducing a similar substance-abuse policy for currently serving QPS officers and staff.

Financial checks

Police are often placed in a position where they are responsible for the management of evidence, money or saleable items such as drugs. Clearly, an officer experiencing financial difficulties, whose income is not sufficient to service his or her financial debts and liabilities, may be tempted to take the 'easy cash'. One strategy that has been proposed for identifying applicants who may be at risk of succumbing to such temptations is to implement a system of financial or credit checking (Bureau of Justice Assistance 1989; Jones & Terris 1991b). It needs to be borne in mind, however, that such checks have the capacity to intrude on the privacy of individuals, and as shown in the literature, can have a disproportionately adverse impact on particular racial groups (Jones & Terris 1991b).

A recent report by the Victorian Police Service (1997) observed that:

... concerns have been raised by the Ethical Standards Department relating to the ongoing financial problems applicants may have prior to joining the Force, and bring with them. There is very strong evidence coming from Operation BART, indicating that a substantial number of members involved with shutter service companies, have considerable financial debts that could not be serviced by their incomes. (p. 10)

The QPS Project Honour report also addressed the issue of financial checks (QPS 1996):

While the repealed Police Rules made provision for officers who were bankrupt to show cause as to why they should not be dismissed, the current legislation does not bar any person who admits bankruptcy from employment with the QPS. Each case is examined on the circumstances and may only require action should some issue relating to fraudulent conduct be detected ... applicants are already required to sign a waiver clause to enable some existing background enquiries to be carried out. The addition of a credit card check to the waiver clause would not be unreasonable and such checks are already a feature of background enquiries of some federal agencies. The financial conduct of some applicants has already been identified as dubious in the past during the existing background enquiry process. (p. 112)

There are two types of credit checks that the QPS could carry out on applicants. First, the QPS could ask applicants to volunteer information regarding their financial circumstances and/or credit history. Since 1989, the New South Wales Police Service has required certain officers to make a statement of private interests designed to reveal possible conflicts of interest and assist in ascertaining if officers are living beyond their means. The statement requires officers to declare the private interests of themselves and their immediate family in relation to matters such as: other substantial sources of income, investments, assets, real estate, share holdings, trusts/nominee companies, directorships in companies, partnerships, gifts/sponsored travel/hospitality, and liabilities. Similar statements are already required in Queensland of Members of Parliament and public servants in senior or sensitive positions. Such a statement could be extended to require information about, for example, bankruptcies, suits by creditors, and defaults under a loan or credit card contract.

Secondly, the QPS could try to obtain credit reports on each applicant from a credit reporting agency or credit provider. Credit reporting agencies maintain credit files on individuals and trading organisations. The agencies sell credit reports to credit providers such as banks, finance companies, and credit unions. Credit files are kept on most people who have applied for credit during the past five years and/or who have defaulted under credit contracts during the past five years.

Most credit reporting agencies produce three types of credit reports:

- Commercial credit reports, which contain information about the commercial credit history of an individual or business entity, including, for example, information about a commercial loan taken out by a sole trader.
- Consumer credit reports containing information about an individual's consumer credit history; for example, information about an individual's personal credit card or home loan account.
- Reports that are compiled solely from publicly available information. The report may, for example, contain information about whether an individual has ever been sued by a creditor or declared bankrupt.

The Commonwealth *Privacy Act* and the Queensland *Invasion of Privacy Act* both regulate who can be given access to an individual's consumer credit report. No legislative restrictions apply to either commercial credit reports, or reports compiled from publicly available information; however, some credit reporting agencies have developed their own internal restrictions and will not provide an employer with any commercial credit information about a prospective employee.

The Commonwealth *Privacy Act* restricts access to an individual's consumer credit file to the individual or authorised agents of the individual in connection with a loan application (section 18H). An employer or prospective employer, therefore, is not entitled to access the information, even with the individual's authorisation. The Act also prevents a credit provider from disclosing a consumer credit report to any person who does not fall within one or more of a number of listed categories.

The Queensland *Invasion of Privacy Act* appears to allow a much wider group of people to access an individual's consumer credit file, including a properly authorised prospective employer (section 16), but to the extent that the two provisions are inconsistent, the Commonwealth provision overrides the Queensland provision.

The effect of privacy laws, then, is to prevent credit reporting agencies and credit providers from giving consumer credit reports to employers, even where the individual gives authorisation. However, nothing in the legislation prevents prospective employers from requiring as part of the job application a copy of the individual's consumer credit file, which the individual is able to obtain, generally free of charge, from the agency.

The Privacy Commissioner appointed under the Commonwealth Act has recently issued *Credit Reporting Advice Summaries*, which make clear the Privacy Commissioner's disapproval of employers (whether existing or prospective) obtaining access to consumer credit files and reports:

Certain businesses which are not credit providers, such as insurers and real estate agents, have asked whether an individual may obtain a copy of his or her own credit report under section 18H of the Act, and then provide the report to the insurer or real estate agent in support of an application for insurance or tenancy. While the Act does not restrict an individual's use of a credit report, the Privacy Commissioner considers it would be an undesirable practice for any non-credit provider to request an individual to furnish it with a credit report for purposes unrelated to the granting of consumer credit.

... the policy intention of the legislation [is] that the use of consumer credit information is restricted to legitimate uses in connection with the provision of credit. Attempts by non-credit providers to gain access to consumer credit information via the individuals with whom they deal would be seen as a contravention of the intention of the legislation.

... there are no grounds under the *Privacy Act* under which a credit provider would be permitted to use a credit report issued by a credit reporting agency for the purposes of assessing an individual's suitability for employment.

The objections of the Privacy Commissioner to the use of consumer credit files and reports by prospective employers are noted, but there are good arguments for regarding such use by the QPS as a special case:

- police occupy a special position in the community and need to be subject to extra checks and balances compared to the rest of the community
- there is a strong link between police facing financial difficulties and corrupt behaviour — the public interest in preventing corruption outweighs the individual's interest in his or her privacy
- applicants who object to providing their credit file can protect their privacy by discontinuing their application
- the credit file will not be used to determine any application, but merely placed before the Integrity Committee as relevant information
- it appears that some other police services in Australia are currently obtaining access to consumer credit information by requiring applicants to sign a written authority for permission to obtain the information.

Taking account of these considerations, PEAC recommends that all applicants should be required, at the time they submit their original application, to complete a statement similar to the New South Wales statement of private interests, and also to declare whether they, or their immediate family, have ever been declared bankrupt, sued by a creditor, or defaulted under a loan or credit card contract. In addition, all applicants who reach the interview stage of the selection process should be required to supply the QPS with a copy of their consumer credit file (if one exists). These obligations may lead some potential applicants with a 'bad' financial background to elect not to proceed with their application, thus preserving their privacy while at the same time saving the recruitment and selection process considerable time and expense.

Once the QPS has obtained financial and credit information about applicants, there should be a clear protocol for the treatment of this data. Any information that raises potential integrity issues should be referred to the Integrity Committee as the body responsible for integrity evaluations. As part of the guidelines already recommended for the Integrity Committee, there should be clear criteria developed for when financial information should be regarded as an integrity issue, and how such issues should be further investigated.

It will also be important to ensure that all financial information is regarded as highly confidential, and appropriate arrangements made to ensure the privacy of such information.

As a longer term strategy, consideration could be given by the QPS to seeking an amendment to the PSA Act to include a provision to the following effect:

The QPS is authorised to obtain access to an applicant's consumer credit file from a credit reporting agency.

The Commonwealth *Privacy Act* permits a credit reporting agency to disclose information from an individual's consumer credit file if 'the disclosure is required or authorised by or under law'. The Act does not specify that the provision applies only to Commonwealth laws, and it is therefore possible that such an authorisation in the Queensland Act could be sufficient to entitle the QPS to access consumer credit files.

Alternatively, perhaps in conjunction with police services in other jurisdictions, the QPS could make submissions to the Commonwealth to have the *Privacy Act* amended to specifically authorise police service access to an applicant's consumer credit file.

Recommendation 40 — Financial checks of applicants

- (i) That all applicants to the QPS be required, at the time they submit their original application, to complete a statement similar to the New South Wales statement of private interests, and also to declare whether they, or their immediate family, have ever been declared bankrupt, sued by a creditor, or defaulted under a loan or credit card contract. All applicants who reach the interview stage of the selection process should be required to supply the QPS with a copy of their consumer credit file (if one exists).
- (ii) That any financial information that raises concerns about an applicant's integrity be referred to the Integrity Committee as the body responsible for integrity evaluations.
- (iii) That as part of the guidelines already recommended for the Integrity Committee, there be clear criteria developed specifying when financial information should be regarded as an integrity issue, and how such issues should be further investigated.
- (iv) That appropriate arrangements be made to ensure the privacy of all financial information about recruits.

Other strategies for integrity screening

Paper and pencil integrity testing

The importance of integrity to police work has generated considerable interest in the use of paper and pencil integrity tests. These tests provide an alternative strategy to screening out applicants who represent a high risk of dishonesty. The tests operate on the assumption that people have stable characteristics which determine their propensity to commit dishonest acts (Saxe 1994). This is the opposite of the view that dishonest acts are primarily dependent on situational factors (e.g. ease of stealing) and that perhaps most people would act dishonestly if placed in the right situation.

Paper and pencil tests are used commonly in the United States (Sackett 1994) and generally fall into two categories: *overt* and *personality-based* measures. Overt tests contain transparent items to elicit information on attitudes primarily about theft or other property-related issues. Personality-based tests measure traits such as trustworthiness, responsibility and conscientiousness believed to be linked to a range of work behaviours.

The reliability and validity of these kinds of tests have been debated, with concerns being expressed about the consequences of the large misclassification rates of honest employees (US Congress 1990), and the possibility that the test results may be confounded by variables other than integrity (Camara & Schneider 1995). However, other researchers have argued that the tests have resulted in positive outcomes for those organisations which use them (Jones, Slora & Boye 1990; Ones et al. 1993;), that they do not discriminate between groups (Jones & Terris 1991b), and that, properly used, false responses can be prevented (Jones & Terris 1991b; LoBello & Sims 1993). Indeed, Ash (1991) argues that there is a long history and a large body of published research relating to the use of integrity testing and that, with the demise of polygraph testing in the United States, such tests have an important role to play in the assessment of integrity. Murphy (1995) argues that while integrity tests have been the focus of a great deal of controversy, these tests can be helpful if used with appropriate caution and are likely to be preferable to most

available alternatives, such as the integrity interview.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (1989) has recognised several psychological tests for use in the selection process, and has recommended the preparation of a psychological report on each recruit. Psychological tests and interviews are used in several United States police departments in conjunction with other measures aimed at assessing the integrity of the applicant (such as drug testing, polygraph tests and background investigations). Other States have included tests aimed to elicit applicants' views on sexuality, the role of women in society, and racism (Nelson 1992).

Following a review of the research, the NPRU (Hogg & Wilson 1995, p. 8) concluded that the validity of written integrity tests as a selection tool remained uncertain due to 'conflicting findings; the overlap between what is measured by personality and integrity tests; and the lack of research within the policing environment'. The authors recommended that thorough background checks, personality testing and structured interviews be utilised until the validity of the tests has been fully documented.

It has already been recommended in chapter 6 (psychological screening and assessment) that the 16PF questionnaire be used in the selection process. It is important that, where an applicant has had an integrity issue raised against him or her, as much information is gathered as possible to assist the Integrity Committee in reaching a decision on the suitability of the applicant. Therefore, where suitable, personality and integrity tests should be administered to questionable applicants by a registered clinical psychologist.

Recommendation 41 — Written integrity tests

That personality and integrity tests be used, in conjunction with other integrity-screening measures, where an integrity issue has been raised about an applicant. This will require a registered clinical psychologist experienced in the area of psychometric testing to administer the tests and provide interpretation.

Integrity interviews

Structured integrity interviewing, an approach devised by Wilson (1988), involves a series of questions requiring applicants to report instances where they were honest or dishonest in another job. In addition, applicants are provided with scenarios involving employee theft and asked what they would do in each situation. Probing questions are recommended where applicants appear reluctant to answer integrity-type questions. Interviewers are required to undertake training in order to conduct the questioning.

Jones and Terris (1991b) report that structured integrity interviewing has a much higher validity than the traditional open-ended style of interviewing, although the normal cautions relating to interviewer biases, prejudice and belief in stereotypes must be reiterated in relation to the use of such interviews (Nelson 1992). As discussed in chapter 7, poor training, lack of interpersonal skills, and poorly chosen questions may seriously compromise the validity of an interview.

Given the financial costs of conducting these types of interviews, this form of testing is not recommended for routine screening. However, an integrity interview may be appropriate where further information is required from an applicant. For example, the Integrity Committee may need to interview an applicant regarding an incident when there is incomplete information or the source is questionable. As discussed in chapter 7, Committee members would need to be trained for interviewing in this way; their training could be done by the consultants designing the training for panel interviewers.

Recommendation 42 — Integrity interviews

That suitably qualified interviewers conduct a second interview with applicants for clarification on integrity issues where there is incomplete information or when the source of the information may be unreliable.

Integrity monitoring while in training

There is a limit to the ability of recruitment and selection processes to ensure the integrity of applicants. It is therefore important that the Academy takes an active role in monitoring and dismissing those recruits who may be unsuitable for the QPS.

The PROVE program

All police recruits are employed under a contract with the QPS. This contract requires all recruits to comply with the Service's Code of Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Police Recruits, Standing Orders and Academy Rules.

The contract provides the Commissioner, or his delegate, with the power to terminate recruit contracts where the recruit:

- is charged in Queensland with a criminal offence or outside Queensland with an offence which would be an offence in Queensland
- fails to observe the Police Academy Rules
- fails to maintain the standards set by the Code of Conduct for Police Recruits
- fails to obey an order or comply with instructions given by an officer or staff member of the Police Service
- fails to achieve the level of skills required of a successful police recruit as determined by the Commissioner
- fails to achieve the academic standards required
- fails to achieve the physical standards required
- fails to pursue a full study program
- for any other reason is determined by the Commissioner to be unsuitable for appointment.

The Commissioner has delegated the power to terminate recruit contracts to the Director of the HRD, the Chief Superintendent of the HRDB and the Superintendent of the Initial Service Program. Since July 1997, these matters have been dealt with by the Superintendent of the Initial Service Program.

Where a breach of contract is detected and is such that termination may result, a full internal investigation is conducted. The recruit is then required to show cause as to why his or her contract should not be terminated by the delegated officer. This process mirrors the Service's discipline-hearing procedure.

Less serious matters are dealt with through the management by guidance process, supervisory correction and objective setting aimed at dealing with or correcting specific behaviours. Relevant show cause hearings conducted for the period 1995–1997 are outlined in table 8.2. A Recruit Board of Studies, comprising the Inspector of the PROVE program and relevant staff, interviews all recruits twice during their program to review their progress and deal with any issues that may have arisen.

In the view of the QPS, the current process allows sufficient flexibility and fairness in the process of dealing with integrity, discipline and performance issues. This view is generally accepted by PEAC, but the Integrity Committee should be notified of any instances where a recruit is asked to show cause for a disciplinary reason, so that the Committee can be kept informed about the effectiveness of QPS integrity screening processes.

Recommendation 43 — Integrity monitoring for the PROVE Program

That the discipline process for the PROVE program continue in its current form, but the Integrity Committee be informed about all cases where a recruit is asked to show cause on disciplinary grounds.

Table 8.2 — Number of show cause hearings for the prove program for the period 1995–1997

Reasons for show cause	Number	Result
Failed to meet physical skills requirement	42	Inducted after remedial training (36) Resigned (5) Adjourned (1)
Misconduct/serious breach of discipline	11	Reprimanded (2) Community service (3) Resigned (2) Terminated contract (4)
Failed to meet academic requirement	5	Inducted after remedial training (3) Resigned (1) Terminated contract (1)
Failed to meet the requirements of a successful recruit	2	Terminated contract (2)
Failed to complete FOST	1	Inducted after remedial training (1)

Source: HRDB, QPS

The First Year Constable program

After the residential training program, police officers enter a 12-month training and probationary period in the First Year Constable (FYC) program. Over this time, FYCs are assessed on their performance in the workplace, based on 26 core competencies. Integrated within these competencies is a requirement to display ethical practice. The Service Code of Conduct and discipline process applies to FYCs as it does to all other police officers.

Discipline sanctions which may merit the termination of a FYC's appointment are considered by the Executive Director of Operations. The normal avenues of review under the Police Service (Review of Decisions) Regulations 1990 are available to sanctioned officers.

Since the revision of the current FYC program in 1995, three officers have appeared before the Executive Director. One officer's employment was terminated for work performance reasons and the remaining two had their probationary period extended.

The Executive Manager of the HRMB has also been delegated the authority to extend the 12-month probationary period. This delegation is primarily used in performance-related matters and where officers have an unresolved investigation which may affect their continuation in the Service.

Again, PEAC accepts that the current process is adequate, but considers that the Integrity Committee should be notified of any instance where disciplinary action is taken against a FYC.

Recommendation 44 — Integrity monitoring for the FYC Program

That there be no changes to the current processes or delegations for dealing with performance and integrity matters within the FYC program. However, the Integrity Committee should be notified of any instances where disciplinary action is taken against an officer in the FYC program.

Conclusion

Screening applicants on integrity is one of the most crucial aspects of the selection process. Misconduct or unethical behaviour can damage staff morale and public confidence in the QPS. The selection process, in conjunction with other strategies (e.g. complaints investigation), can help to minimise misconduct and corruption.

The current process is quite comprehensive and includes criminal and traffic history checks, previous employer checks, present residence checks, character and police referee checks, panel interview, fingerprint checks, publication of applicant names in the Police Gazette, and vetting by the ESC, the BCI and the CJC.

The current automatic exclusion criteria are inconsistent in their treatment of offences of various types and degrees of seriousness. In addition, the criteria do not indicate which offences should exclude an applicant for life, and do not apply to ‘quasi-criminal’ offences.

This chapter has proposed a new exclusion policy, involving three categories of offences:

- offences which exclude an individual from application for life (e.g. serious sexual offences, trafficking drugs);
- those which exclude applicants for five years (e.g. less serious offences under the *Criminal Code*); and
- other offences which do not lead to automatic exclusion but create a rebuttable presumption against the applicant.

To reflect the importance of integrity screening, it is proposed that an Integrity Committee, comprising very senior management, should be created with the sole purpose of conducting comprehensive evaluations of each applicant who has an integrity concern raised against them. This process would separate integrity issues from ability issues and create a body that is responsible and accountable for integrity decisions.

It is also proposed that the QPS introduce drug testing of applicants. The costs of drug testing must be weighed against the high costs of drug use by police, in terms of both efficiency and increased likelihood of misconduct. The use of such testing in selection should also deter current users from applying, and send a message to the wider community about the stance of the QPS on drug use.

In addition, it is recommended that the QPS introduce financial and credit checks for applicants. The rationale for conducting these types of checks is that applicants with past or current financial difficulties may be at greater risk of serious corruption. While the potential intrusiveness of such checks is a concern, they may provide important information in determining the suitability of an applicant for the QPS. The Service should request applicants to provide a statement of private interests and declare whether they have ever been declared bankrupt, been sued by a creditor, or defaulted under a loan or credit card contract. The Integrity Committee should develop guidelines on the treatment of such disclosures.

Chapter 9: Referee checks

Referee checking is another selection device frequently used to determine an applicant's suitability for the job being applied for. It involves collecting information about the applicant from people who have had contact with the applicant.

There are many different types of referee checks ranging from letters of reference to personal interviews with the referee. Referee checks can provide important information for determining the suitability of the applicant. This is particularly important for law enforcement agencies, which need to select applicants who hold a high level of integrity and honesty.

In this chapter, the role and purpose of referee checks are discussed. The first section describes how referee checks are used in the selection process. The major concerns with the structure and content of the referee report and the process in general are described. The remainder of the chapter proposes several strategies to improve the referee checking process.

Current referee report

For each applicant, the QPS requests a referee's report from all previous employers over the last ten years, two current serving police, and two acquaintances. The report requires the referee to comment on the applicant's suitability in terms of the selection criteria (e.g. police orientation, personal suitability, social maturity, communication, personal impact, and integrity). Previous employers are also asked to comment on punctuality, sick leave, attitude to work, and maturity and responsibility. The referee report used by the QPS is given below:

<p>Applicant: _____</p> <p>The above applicant for appointment as a police recruit indicates employment with: _____ as _____ from _____ to _____</p> <p>Please provide the following information:</p> <p>Do you or any members of your current staff remember the applicant as an employee?</p> <p>Period of employment: From.....to</p> <p>Capacity in which employed:</p> <p>Punctuality/sick leave:</p> <p>Attitude to work:</p> <p>Did the applicant have a mature and responsible attitude?:</p> <p>Please provide comment on the following areas:</p> <p>1. POLICE ORIENTATION (e.g. motivation, professional development, adherence to authority, attention to detail)</p> <p>2. PERSONAL SUITABILITY (e.g. practical intelligence, vigilance, endurance, perseverance, stress tolerance, resilience)</p> <p>3. SOCIAL MATURITY (e.g. interpersonal sensitivity, interpersonal skills, community policing skills, equity awareness — gender, social, racial and cultural)</p> <p>4. COMMUNICATION (e.g. oral communication skills, fluency, clarity, listening skills, written communication, negotiation and conflict management)</p> <p>5. PERSONAL IMPACT (e.g. dress and grooming, confidence, presence, impact)</p> <p>6. INTEGRITY (any known integrity issues which would affect the appointment of the applicant)</p> <p>SUITABILITY FOR APPOINTMENT AS A POLICE OFFICER</p> <p>As a member of the general community, would you be happy to have the applicant as a member of the Queensland Police Service?</p> <p>Any other comments you feel are relevant:</p> <p>Signature:.....Date:</p> <p>Name:.....Position Held:.....Telephone No:</p> <p>OPTIONAL TO COMPLETE — CONFIDENTIAL — Freedom of Information Act</p> <p>"I do not wish the information provided by me to be released to any person as it is provided to the Queensland Police Service on a confidential basis for the express purpose of assessing the applicant's merit for appointment as a constable in the Queensland Police Service"</p> <p>Signature:.....Date:</p>

If a referee fails to return a report, the Recruiting Section will either send another written request or remind the referee directly by telephone (note: this is not an oral referee check but simply a request to complete the report).

Currently, QPS policy requires all referee reports to be returned before the applicant can be appointed. Where this has not occurred, the applicant is held over to the next intake.

Referee reports are used to uncover adverse or negative information about applicants so as to weed out unsuitable applicants. They are not currently used to discriminate between otherwise suitable applicants.

Issues for consideration

Referee reports serve ‘(a) to provide verification of information provided during other parts of the selection process, (b) to assist with the prediction of the individual’s likely success on the job, and (c) to reveal background information about the applicant that may not have come out in other ways (e.g. criminal records)’ (Gowan & Gatewood 1995, p. 188). In reviewing the use of referee reports by the QPS, we considered the extent to which the process meets each of these purposes. The process of referee checking was also reviewed in terms of its validity, practicality and cost-efficiency.

Examination of the referee report process identified three major areas of concern, relating to:

- providers of referee reports
- the referee check as an integrity measure
- the structure and content of the referee report.

These concerns are outlined below, followed by a discussion of how the referee-checking process can be improved.

Providers of referee reports

Currently, the QPS obtains referee reports from all previous employers over the last ten years regardless of whether the employer was nominated as a personal referee or not. This approach is broad and aims to gather information to provide an accurate depiction of the applicant’s personality and consistency in job performance. Obtaining referee reports for the last ten years also increases the likelihood of detecting behaviour or actions in the applicant’s past that may be relevant in the evaluation of the current application (e.g. dishonesty at work which was not reported to the police).

Applicants are requested to nominate two serving police referees who may be interstate or Queensland police officers. It is not clear how applicants who do not personally know any police officers are able to meet this requirement. It is suspected that in the process of making inquiries (e.g. with the local station) and/or during the course of lodging their application, applicants become familiar with those police officers who provided assistance and request those officers to be their referees. In this case it is questionable how informative the referee check is. Additionally, as with all types of nominated referees, it is unlikely that applicants would nominate a police officer who would give them an unfavourable report. Anecdotal evidence from the Recruiting Section suggests that adverse comments and/or unfavourable reports provided by police are usually in response to the publication of the names of applicants in the Police Gazette (see chapter 8).

Applicants are also requested to nominate two acquaintances to provide personal referee reports. Obviously when given the choice, applicants will choose personal referees who they believe will provide a positive report. Examination of completed referee reports provided to the QPS found, not surprisingly, that the overwhelming result was in favour of applicants. The kinds of personal referees provided by applicants included a fellow member of a lifesaving club, a school friend, a neighbour and a football team member. It is questionable whether such referees can provide useful information for the selection process.

Research has also shown that personal referees (e.g. friends and relatives) are more lenient when compared to previous employers (Gatewood & Feild 1994), suggesting there may be little value in obtaining reports from personal acquaintances of the applicant. It has been suggested that the most informative insights into the character of an applicant are from those people who were not nominated by the applicant, but with whom they spend a good deal of time, such as co-workers, supervisors and teachers (Hibler & Kurke 1995). However, a personal referee will occasionally give information that may be of interest to a potential employer.

Obtaining referee reports from employers not only provides information regarding the applicant's work performance but also minimises the bias that is introduced when friends or unfamiliar acquaintances provide referee reports.

Recommendation 45 — Types of referee reports to be provided by applicants

- (i) That the QPS continue to obtain referee reports from all of an applicant's employers for the last ten years.
- (ii) That the practice of obtaining two police and two personal referee reports be abolished but applicants be able to submit one character referee report.
- (iii) That the applicant may submit a character referee report from a person with good standing in the community (e.g. police officer, business owner) who must have known the applicant for a minimum of two years.

Use of personal referees

In some cases, an applicant may not have an extensive work history (e.g. has been a full-time student) and may therefore have very few referees. In these cases it will be necessary to seek reports from other individuals who have known the applicant. To minimise the risk of friends being nominated, it is suggested that certain requirements be met before an individual is considered suitable to act as a referee.

Recommendation 46 — Use of personal referees

That where there are insufficient employer referees (i.e. because of limited employment history), the QPS request the applicant to provide personal referees. In this case, the nominated referee(s) must have known the applicant for a minimum of two years, and have some formal relationship with the applicant (e.g. university lecturer, group leader, business associate or supervisor during an internship).

The referee check as an integrity measure

One of the more useful aspects of the referee report is to identify any inconsistencies between the information provided by the applicant (e.g. in résumé/application) and the employer or supervisor. This is an additional integrity-screening device which is not currently used by the QPS. Given the importance of ensuring that only applicants with the highest level of integrity and ethics are appointed to the QPS, a formal process should be adopted to evaluate the accuracy of applicant information. This would involve requesting information from the employer (e.g. dates of employment and main job duties) and comparing this information with the individual's résumé or application. Inconsistency of information is clearly an integrity matter that should be referred to the Integrity Committee.

Recommendation 47 — Use of referee reports for integrity screening

That a systematic process be developed to use referee reports as a means of verifying the accuracy of the information provided by applicants. Where there is inconsistency between the information sources, the applicant's file should be referred to the Integrity Committee.

Problems with referee checks

The referee report has several weaknesses that reduce the validity of the report and limit the usefulness of the information elicited from referees:

- The report is very general; it lacks questions about specific behaviour and/or job performance that may be important and relevant to general duties policing (e.g. a question about the level of supervision that the applicant required in a previous job).
- There are no definitions or guidelines on the specific information requested and how it relates to general duties policing (e.g. the standard of written communication skills that are necessary for general duties policing; or the information the QPS requires regarding the applicant's sick leave record).
- An employer may not be able to comment on the specific information requested regarding knowledge and/or skills (e.g. many referees may not be in a position to comment on the community policing skills of the applicant).
- Information on integrity issues (which may affect the applicant's appointment to the QPS) is requested without examples of what integrity issues are, or provision of a definition. This may result in employers providing the wrong information or omitting relevant information (e.g. an employer may not be aware that allegations of sexual harassment at work, or problems with trusting the applicant with confidential business information, are relevant integrity issues). It is likely that most referees would think integrity issues related to criminal matters.
- There are no questions relating to how effective the applicant was in performing the duties of the position. Referees are also not requested to list the main duties and responsibilities of the position, which could serve as a cross-reference on the accuracy of the information provided by applicants in their résumé or application.
- The report fails to identify whether the individual completing the referee report was the applicant's immediate supervisor (e.g. what was your working relationship?, did you directly supervise the person?, for how long did you have the opportunity to directly observe his/her job performance?). This information can assist in determining the usefulness of the comments made about the applicant's work performance (e.g. if the referee indicated he or she had rarely worked with the applicant, the validity of the report might be questioned).
- Reports are not able to be quantified (rated), thus preventing any objective comparison of referee comments, either in the form of a comparison of several referees for one applicant or a general comparison between several applicants.

In summary, the referee report lacks specificity and therefore elicits different information from referees because the referees make subjective decisions regarding the type of information that should be provided to the QPS.

Very little research has been conducted on the reliability and validity of reference data. 'Of the ten or so studies reporting validity data, their findings generally show that the relationships between reference ratings and measures of employee success (performance ratings and turnover) are low to moderate at best' (Gatewood & Feild 1994, p. 464). There are a number of strategies that may be considered to improve the validity and usefulness of the referee checking process. These include reconsidering the general process of referee checking, reviewing the structure and content of referee checks, and deciding how to evaluate information provided by referees.

Reconsidering the general process of referee checking

A strategy for improving the referee-checking process is to perform interviews over the telephone rather than written referee reports. There are distinct advantages for the telephone reference check:

- referees can be questioned and ambiguous comments clarified
- information may be provided orally that would not be given in writing

- the reference checking process can be speeded up
- it is easier to ensure the comments are being provided by the supervisor rather than an administrative assistant or secretary
- the way oral comments are given (e.g. voice inflections, pauses) can cue the interviewer to ask further questions or may be revealing of what the person really thinks
- the personal nature of the telephone check contributes to the greater responsiveness of the referee (Gatewood & Feild 1994)
- like the panel interview (chapter 7), the validity of the process can be greatly enhanced by moving toward a structured format using job-related questions.

Although the use of semi-structured telephone interviews with referees may provide the greatest validity and reliability, the financial and time costs associated with this process for base-level entry positions make it prohibitive. For example, to conduct four, 15-minute referee checks for only 300 applicants will take 300 working hours, not including the additional time (e.g. checking files, making repeat calls back to employers) and costs (e.g. long-distance calls to employers in other States or countries) associated with this process. Anecdotal evidence from the Recruiting Section suggests that few applicants are currently excluded from the selection process on the basis of the referee reports alone, which casts doubt on the benefits of performing oral referee checks on all applicants.

An alternative strategy to maximise the utility of referee checks while still maintaining cost-efficiency is to use a combination of oral and written referee checks. If there is a concern regarding the applicant's integrity or ability to perform the job of a general duties police officer raised by a written referee report, then it would be appropriate to contact the referee to obtain further information. If the issue is related to work performance, the Recruiting Section should carry out the telephone interview — if it is an integrity issue, the applicant's file should be passed to the Integrity Committee to perform the referee check.

It is suggested that written referee checks, followed up by a telephone interview when a concern has been raised, is the most cost-efficient strategy to improve the utility of the referee checking process.

Recommendation 48 — Develop a systematic process for referee checking

That a systematic process for referee checking be adopted. Initially, all employers for the last ten years should be requested to complete a written referee report. If a concern is raised in a written report, a follow-up telephone interview should be conducted with the referee. If the matter is performance-related, the interview should be conducted by the Recruiting Section; if it is an integrity issue, the interview should be conducted by the Integrity Committee.

Reviewing the structure and content of the referee check

As suggested earlier, there are obvious problems with the current structure and content of the written referee report. The research literature provides some suggestions on how to improve the validity of the written referee report:

- The questions asked in the report must be job-related. Making questions as specific and focused as possible will guard against allegations that the information was inappropriately applied (Moriarty & Field 1994).
- Reports are more likely to be useful in predicting employee success when completed by an applicant's previous *immediate* supervisor.
- Prediction is better when the referee has had a suitable opportunity to observe the applicant's work performance.
- A uniform approach should be taken so the same information is collected for each applicant.
- Given the value of the referee report in providing information regarding an applicant's integrity

that may not be detected by other selection techniques (e.g. criminal checks), there should be a section which specifically and clearly addresses the integrity issues.

- Additional questions that may be of benefit for the future employer include:
 - Why did this person leave your company?
 - Would you hire this person again?
 - Does this person have what you would consider a ‘normal’ attendance record?
 - Was this person required to supervise other employees?

There is a clear need for a new written referee’s report to be developed based on the job requirements of general duties policing. Since the principles underlying the development of a valid panel interview process (outlined in chapter 7) also apply to the written referee report, the external consultants employed to review the panel-interview process should also be given the task of developing a new referee report.

The information requested from an employer should be different from the information requested from a personal referee. The structure and content of the referee report should reflect these differences.

Recommendation 49 — Revise structure and content of the referee report

That a new written referee report be developed using the guidelines specified in this chapter. The information requested from an employer should be different from the information requested from a personal referee. This task may be undertaken by the external consultants employed to review the panel interview process.

Telephone interview

When a referee provides adverse information or questions the ability of an applicant to perform general duties policing, the referee needs to be contacted directly to obtain further information. The process of performing oral referee checks is exactly the same as the panel-interview process except that the telephone interviewer will rely more heavily on probe questions as the interviewer is seeking information about a particular matter. Therefore it is recommended that the consultants reviewing the panel-interview process also develop the telephone-interview training program. For the Recruiting Section, it would be cost-efficient to have panel interviewers perform this task. Integrity Committee members will also need to receive training in this area.

Recommendation 50 — Introduction of a telephone-interview training program

That a telephone-interview training program (for referee checking purposes) be developed. Panel interviewers and members of the Integrity Committee should be trained in this area. The external consultants reviewing the panel-interview process should be requested to develop this program.

Deciding how to evaluate referee reports

As with other aspects of the recruiting and selection process, the changes to the referee-checking process need to be evaluated in the future to determine whether it is an effective and useful process. It is suggested that the written referee check be rated using a five-point scale, as shown below. Comments would still be requested from each referee, but, where specific questions are asked, a rating scale could be used (such as that described in chapter 7). For example:

What level of supervision was required to ensure the applicant performed his or her job effectively?				
A high level of supervision required	A moderate level of supervision required	An average level of supervision required (same as peers)	Little supervision required	No supervision required
1	2	3	4	5

In addition to scoring referee reports, a record should be made if a referee report results in the applicant being referred to the Integrity Committee or rejected. Future evaluation will help determine the value of referee reports in the overall selection process, but particularly in the integrity-screening process.

It is also important to note that low validity may result because the referee report is most often used as a negative selection device which detects unqualified or unsuitable applicants, as opposed to identifying and/or discriminating between qualified and suitable applicants. By quantifying the referee report, the QPS can determine if referee reports distinguish between selected applicants in terms of training and work performance.

Recommendation 51 — Introduce ratings for referee reports

That written referee reports be rated so that future evaluations can determine the value and importance of these reports in the selection process.

Conclusion

Close examination of the QPS referee-checking process identified several problems that may reduce the value of the referee check to the overall selection process. There is quite a reliance on police and personnel referee reports which have arguably lower validities than those from employers. There is no formal or systematic procedure to follow up on unfavourable reports. The reports are also of variable value, with the most useful being those from previous employers.

The QPS should continue to obtain referee reports from previous employers but only one personal/character referee report should be obtained, from a person of good community standing who has known the applicant for at least two years. The QPS also needs to revise the structure and content of the written referee reports so that they specifically relate to the selection criteria and requirements of general duties policing. As the integrity-screening process is one of the more critical aspects of the selection process, the referee check can also serve as valuable tool in this process. It is recommended that the QPS use referee reports to check also the accuracy of information provided by applicants in their applications. Where inconsistencies are apparent, the applicant should be referred to the Integrity Committee.

Although oral referee checks have some advantages over written referee checks, it would be extremely costly to the Service to conduct oral checks for all referees for each applicant. However, there is justification to contact a referee who indicates concerns about an applicant's suitability for policing. To obtain maximum benefits from the referee-checking process, it is recommended that in cases where a concern is raised, a trained interviewer conduct a follow-up telephone interview to obtain further information.

Chapter 10: Physical fitness and ability testing

Physical fitness and ability tests are used by most Australian police organisations as part of the selection process for recruits. These tests have generated much debate, with critics arguing that some of the tests are invalid, irrelevant, and potentially discriminatory against certain categories of applicants, such as females. The QPS Review 1996 expressed concern at the status of such tests and recommended that:

... the PEAC subcommittee reviewing the current recruit selection process include the physical competency test as part of its review. Particular attention should be given to whether these tests discriminate against female applicants. (Recommendation 43, p. 98)

This chapter addresses that recommendation. The chapter begins by describing the physical fitness and ability test currently used by the QPS and follows with a discussion of the issues arising from that test. The chapter concludes with a description of the options available to the QPS for physical fitness and ability testing and makes recommendations aimed at achieving a valid, fair and legally defensible assessment process.

Current physical-fitness and ability-testing process

The QPS uses both the medical assessment (see chapter 11) and the PCT to assess applicants' physical fitness. The PCT is meant to measure applicants' suitability for the duties of operational constables, as this is the position for which all recruits are trained. Applicants for POCC are not required to undertake the PCT, on the basis that their prior policing experience has proved their fitness for operational duties, as discussed further in chapter 14.

The current fitness test reflects a shift away from the previous reliance on minimum height and weight criteria (discussed in chapter 1). As with police services throughout Australia and similar jurisdictions overseas, this shift was motivated largely by anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity concerns. Height and weight conditions for applicants were removed by the QPS in May 1989. In early 1990, a timed 2.4 kilometre run was introduced in conjunction with a firearms handling test. To be considered for selection, applicants had to complete the run within specified times adjusted for age and gender.

In 1993, the QPS replaced the timed run with the PCT as part of the selection process for recruit intakes commencing in 1994. At that time many jurisdictions both nationally and internationally were introducing obstacle courses for the selection process. Such obstacle courses were meant to reflect the actual physical tasks required of general duties police officers, and therefore to have greater job relevance and validity than the more arbitrary, timed 2.4 kilometre run.

The PCT covers a 630 metre course consisting of a 320 metre outer circuit followed by 14 obstacles (as set out in table 10.1) spread over 310 metres. Applicants are required to negotiate each obstacle successfully. The original intention was to require completion of the course within four minutes. However, that cut-off was never applied and, instead, applicants were required to complete the course as quickly as possible. PCT times were then considered by the Selection Committee, along with advice from staff administering the test, who recorded notes on individual performances, taking into account age and fitness levels.

After amendment of the test to include steps at obstacles 2 and 4b (discussed further below), the Selection Committee now expects males to complete the test in four minutes and females in four and a half minutes. Failure to do so does not lead to automatic rejection of the applicant, but is a factor taken into account by the Selection Committee. Failure to negotiate any of the obstacles is regarded as failure of the PCT, and applicants must either attempt the test again, or be rejected.

Table 10.1 — The 14 obstacles to be negotiated in the PCT

obstacle 1	negotiate a two-rung 0.8m timber rail fence
obstacle 2	scale a 1.65 m paling fence
obstacle 3	climb a 1.5 m solid wall
obstacle 4a	climb through a window opening 1 m above ground level
obstacle 4b	climb through a window opening 1.6 m above ground level
obstacle 5	climb 8 steps on the approach side to a 1.78 m wall and jump from this level
obstacle 6	crawl through a crawling frame 6 m long and 0.6 m high
obstacle 7	climb a 2 m high mesh fence
obstacle 8	negotiate a series of eight agility bars to simulate dodging around objects
obstacle 9	climb a three-rail pine log fence 1.75 m high
obstacle 10	traverse a low balance beam 5.5 m long
obstacle 11	run and jump off a concrete ramp 0.43 m high
obstacle 12	drag a 50 kg human shaped dummy for 10 m
obstacle 13	climb a 1.4 m paling fence

Source: HRMB, QPS

Early work of the PEAC subcommittee highlighted some urgent concerns with the PCT. In particular, two obstacles appeared to discriminate unfairly against women, as evidenced by the fact that a much greater proportion of women than men failed to negotiate these obstacles. Given this apparent unfairness, and the lack of research to validate the PCT (as discussed in detail below), the subcommittee, in an internal interim report to the QPS in April 1997, recommended that obstacles 2 and 4b (1.65 m paling fence and 1.6 m high window) be removed as an interim measure. In response, in October 1997 the QPS decided to place a step in front of obstacles 2 and 4b to ease negotiation by shorter applicants. The QPS considered this response addressed the PEAC subcommittee's immediate concerns without requiring a substantial interim modification of the PCT, or a reassessment of cut-off times.

Issues for consideration

The PCT was evaluated by:

- reviewing relevant research literature
- discussing issues with current serving police officers
- examining policies and practices relating to the physical fitness requirements of current serving QPS officers.

Two previous research reports were particularly helpful in this review: a recently completed the NPRU report (Circelli & Wilson, in press) entitled 'A Physical Activity Profile of General Duties Constables: Implications for Applicant Selection' and a joint CJC–QPS report *The Physical Requirements of General Duties Policing* (1998). Both reports are referred to extensively in the discussion below.

The primary issue of concern identified by this review is whether the continued use of the PCT as a recruit selection device can be justified. Of particular concern is whether the PCT:

- is validly based on genuine physical requirements of operational police
- indirectly discriminates against women and other categories of applicants (particularly in relation to height)
- promotes inequality by requiring higher standards of recruit applicants than of currently serving operational police officers.

Each of these concerns is discussed below.

The validity of the PCT

It is important that the validity of selection devices such as the PCT is able to be demonstrated, mainly for reasons of good organisational decision making. Devices that are not valid risk screening out otherwise acceptable applicants, and consume expensive time and resources which may be better devoted to other areas of recruiting. In addition, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation now place a very clear obligation on employers to demonstrate that their selection practices are valid and non-discriminatory. As discussed in chapter 2, this means that employers must be able to show that criteria relied on for selection decisions represent genuine occupational requirements of the position to be filled.

The PCT and most other obstacle courses used for police selection are intended as simulations of the backyard pursuit of an offender. However, the requirement for demonstrable validity needs more than simple assertions that officers have to be able to engage in such pursuits, or that officers have to be fit to perform their job, and that the PCT tests fitness. Instead, the QPS needs to be able to show that:

- operational constables are required, as an inherent part of their job, to perform certain sorts of physical activities, at a certain level of frequency and intensity
- the PCT specifically and fairly tests applicants' ability to perform the identified tasks in a similar environment to that of operational policing.

The physical requirements of policing

One of the major problems in validating the PCT is the difficulty in determining the physical requirements of policing. This difficulty arises in part because:

- until recently, little research had been undertaken into the physical requirements of policing in Australia or overseas
- policing involves a large range of different tasks, the frequency, criticalness and intensity of which vary according to factors such as geographic location, rostering practices (particularly whether police operate singly or in pairs), and the rank and gender of individual officers
- there are many common, unproved assumptions centring on the need for police to be of imposing physical stature, and able to engage in difficult chases on foot (Circelli & Wilson, pp. 1–2).

In Australia, the only published research to identify and describe the physical requirements of general duties policing systematically and quantitatively is contained in the NPRU report and the CJC–QPS report.

The NPRU report is aimed at objectively identifying the physical demands of general duties policing. A range of officers (in Western Australia, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory) completed a behavioural checklist to record physical behaviour as they undertook patrol activities. The main results, as summarised in the report's executive summary (p. v), were:

- The most frequent physical activities undertaken during a tasking are those that can be described as less demanding, or simple: driving under non-emergency conditions, getting into and out of a car, and walking short distances (i.e. up to 30 metres).
- The more demanding physical activities that may be undertaken during a tasking are: running short distances; restraining a person; pulling oneself up onto and jumping down from an obstacle, generally of a medium height (i.e. 1–2 metres); hurdling an obstacle of low height (i.e. up to 1 metre); wrestling and handcuffing a person. These activities are very rarely performed and are not all undertaken during the same tasking.

As part of the research for the report, the body mass index (BMI), a gross measure of obesity and general physical health, was taken for all participants and compared to that of the general population.

The report notes:

There were no differences found between the two groups indicating that police currently performing patrol duties are no fitter than the general population. Furthermore, the results indicated that participants who were classified as being overweight or obese were as physically active as those officers who were classified as being of a normal weight, or underweight. (p. vi)

The CJC–QPS (1998) report presents findings from a survey of operational police (of constable and senior constable rank) in Queensland that examined the physical requirements of police work. Key findings given in the executive summary include:

- 75 per cent of respondents gave their main duties during the last shift as patrol work. Other duties were administrative (14%), watchhouse (6%) and investigative (4%).
- Most of the shift was spent sitting in a police vehicle or at a desk, with the rest of the time spent walking or standing; vehicles were climbed in and out of about 15 times and stairs used about 4 times.
- Over the previous year, almost all respondents reported struggling with an offender (96%), with about half saying they had used either the lateral vascular neck restraint or a pressure point control tactic, though not often.
- Around 85% said they had been required to carry/move and restrain a person in the previous year.
- Around 70% reported having to break up fights and control crowds in the previous year.
- Many reported having to carry objects, push cars, change tyres, climb fences, climb through windows, or run more than 30 metres at some time in the previous year.

The report also investigated group differences for physical activities and injuries, by gender, age, rank, location, area of duty and rejoinder status. The major findings included:

- There were no significant differences between males and females in the frequency with which the majority of activities were performed (including the management of offenders, using restraints and breaking up fights), although more males than females reported moving furniture, climbing into ceilings, changing tyres and being the driver in a high speed pursuit. Similarly, there were no significant gender differences in the number of assaults and injuries incurred by respondents, indicating male and female general duties officers were exposed to similar occupational hazards.
- Younger officers were more likely than older officers to chase offenders and carry/move noncompliant people. Younger officers also reported being kicked or injured more often. It may be that younger officers are more inclined, or more frequently requested, to perform more physical activities while on duty than their older colleagues. Studies in the community in general tell the same story: physical activity and associated injury tend to decline with age.
- Rejoiners were found to use handcuffs and other restraints more often than other respondents. A greater number of rejoiners were assaulted or injured (e.g. a strain or sprain).
- More constables than senior constables reported using a physical restraint other than handcuffs, carrying or moving a noncompliant person, or pursuing an offender on foot. Constables were also likely to spend more time in a police vehicle.
- More officers working in country stations or Aboriginal communities reported spending time in their vehicles. Fewer reported carrying or moving a noncompliant person when compared to provincial or metropolitan officers, possibly reflecting different policing styles and the absence of backup support in smaller communities.
- Officers involved in criminal investigation were less likely than general duties officers to report assaults or injuries or to have engaged in restraining an offender or dealing with public disturbances (such as breaking up a fight, crowd control or use of pressure point tactics) (p. viii)

The findings from both reports suggest that general duties policing requires repeated, regular performance of several low-demand physical activities: driving, getting in and out of police transport, and sitting. Officers are also regularly required to move or restrain offenders or noncompliant persons. Less commonly, officers may be required to engage in short bursts of moderately demanding activity,

such as lifting and carrying objects, moving furniture, pushing cars, changing tyres, running up to 30 metres or occasionally further. Such activities rarely occur in a prolonged sequence (CJC–QPS 1998, pp. 8–11).

The NPRU report concluded that general duties policing involved only a minimal physical requirement, with an occasional need for physical strength and endurance. The report also drew attention to other desirable skills and attributes for policing:

... but the skill and ease with which [officers] perform a tasking depends on a number of factors beyond these: underlying strength and endurance; the officer's conflict resolution skills; the adequacy of restraint techniques learnt through training; and these same skills in the officer's partner (if present). Since the obstacle courses currently used by jurisdictions as a selection tool do not consider these factors, their content validity is questionable. (p. vi)

As described at the beginning of this chapter, the PCT is an obstacle course requiring the negotiation of 14 separate obstacles or hurdles in one uninterrupted course. Of those obstacles, nine focus on climbing or jumping, two on crawling through or dodging obstacles, two on traversing balancing beams, and one on dragging a 50 kilogram dummy.

The NPRU research and the CJC–QPS research suggest that the PCT is not an accurate test of the genuine physical requirements of general duties policing. This is because, first, these duties consist mostly of non-demanding activities such as driving, getting in and out of vehicles and sitting. Even when more demanding duties arise, they tend to involve restraining, lifting and moving persons and objects, rather than a sustained series of highly demanding activities with a particular focus on hurdling and climbing. Although individual obstacles included in the PCT may represent a task a police officer may occasionally be required to do, the research indicates it is highly unlikely that an officer would be required to run and negotiate all of those obstacles in a single pursuit.

Secondly, certain aspects of how the test is conducted further reduce the validity of the PCT. Applicants wear a track suit and running shoes and are required to negotiate each obstacle without assistance. In the field, most general duties officers in a foot pursuit would be wearing their uniform (which is fitted to size), a utility belt, and boots or ordinary shoes as issued by the QPS. It is also likely that in pursuits and the performance of other physical activities (e.g. climbing a fence), officers would have support from a partner or have the option of utilising items in the natural environment to negotiate any obstacles (e.g. using a rubbish bin to get over a fence).

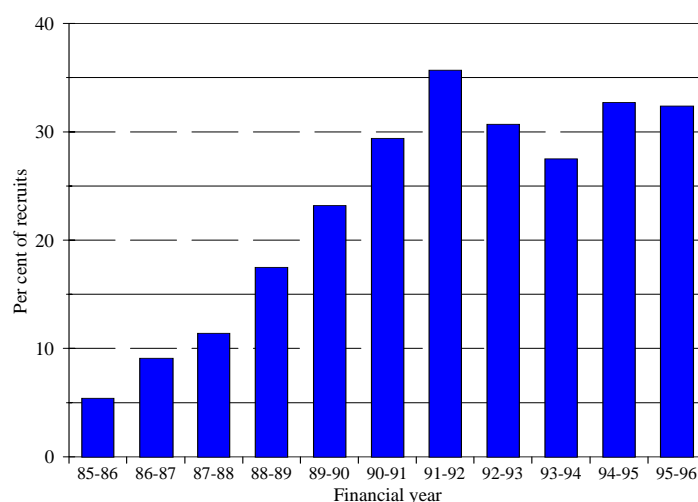
Thirdly, the PCT makes no allowance for the use of non-physical skills and attributes in responding to policing tasks, such as the use of negotiation, conflict resolution and other communication skills. Further, it takes no account of operational equipment such as batons, capsicum spray, firearms and handcuffs.

Fourthly, the PCT is directed at testing for fitness to perform operational duties. However, operational duties are only performed after extensive recruit training, which includes substantial physical skills training. It is reasonable to expect that this training will result in a significant improvement in the level of fitness of some recruits. This makes the more appropriate point for testing for fitness for operational duties the end of recruit training, with any pre-entry selection test directed instead at assessing fitness to undertake the physical skills education (PSE) program.

This low validity of the PCT becomes crucial when considering its potential discriminatory impact on certain categories of applicants, particularly women.

The discriminatory effect of the PCT

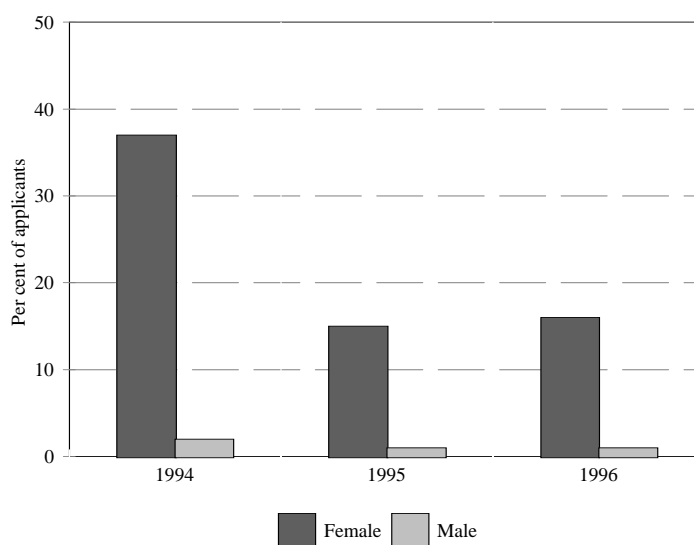
Since its introduction in 1993, a strong criticism of the PCT has been its apparent discriminatory impact on categories of applicants, particularly women. Figure 10.1 shows the proportion of females in intakes of recruits from 1985 to 1996. It can be seen that the introduction of the PCT in 1993 approximately coincided with the reversal of a trend to increasing proportions of women in each intake.

Figure 10.1 — QPS recruits: Proportion of females in intakes (1985–86 to 1995–96)

Source: HRD, QPS

Notes:

1. For 1985–86 to 1990–91, the figure shows the proportion of cadets and probationaries appointed who were female.
2. For 1991–92 onwards, proportions are based on the number of recruits appointed during the financial year, excluding lateral recruits.

Figure 10.2 — Percentages of applicants who failed to negotiate at least one obstacle

Source: HRD, QPS

Notes:

1. Female n=733 Male n=1804
2. Relates to first attempt at PCT

At the same time, analysis of applicants who failed the PCT shows that a significantly greater number of women than men failed on their first attempt, as shown in figure 10.2. These results together suggest that the PCT may have played some part in reducing the numbers of females who succeeded in becoming recruits.

Closer examination of failure rates (see figure 10.3) indicates that females had problems negotiating particular obstacles, especially obstacle 2 (1.65 m paling fence), obstacle 3 (1.5 m brick wall), obstacle 4b (1.6 m high window) and obstacle 13 (1.4 m paling fence). The common factor with these obstacles appears to be that they rely on the ability to negotiate high barriers, an ability which is affected in turn by the individual's own height and upper body strength.

The failure rate for these obstacles indicates that their practical effect is to screen out proportionally more women than men. The obstacles may have a similar effect on shorter men, and this in turn may have an indirectly discriminatory effect on men of certain races. However, data are not available to establish whether this has happened.

In addition, applicants suffering from certain physical disabilities, such as leg, back or arm injuries, are likely to experience difficulty in negotiating these obstacles. As discussed previously, discrimination against such persons is only permissible if the test represents a genuine occupational requirement. As also discussed previously, the research suggests that policing involves only a minimum level of physical activity. Therefore, it is feasible that some applicants with physical disabilities could perform the genuine occupational requirements of policing but would fail the PCT and be excluded from the QPS, in breach of the *Anti-Discrimination Act*. Unfortunately, data are not available to establish whether this currently occurs.

Modifications were made to the PCT in October 1997 as a result of this review. Steps were placed before obstacles 2 and 4b. Examination of failure rates suggests the introduction of the steps has reduced to some extent the potential discriminatory effect of these obstacles in relation to females (see figure 10.4).

However, figure 10.4 shows that there still are a disproportionate number of females compared to males who fail the PCT, whether because of continuing problems with obstacles that have not been modified, or the inherent design of the test. In addition, there are no data to reveal whether the steps have alleviated any difficulties with the PCT experienced by applicants suffering from certain physical disabilities, or by shorter males.

In these circumstances, it is highly likely that the PCT continues to have a discriminatory effect on the basis of gender, possibly race, and possibly physical impairment, contrary to the requirements of the *Anti-Discrimination Act*.

As yet, there appears to have been no Australian discrimination case based on a police service physical ability test. However, in the United States, decisions in discrimination cases regarding physical competency tests have led to a trend for law enforcement agencies to cease such tests and rely instead on a general health test for selection purposes (Prenzler 1996, pp. 319, 321).

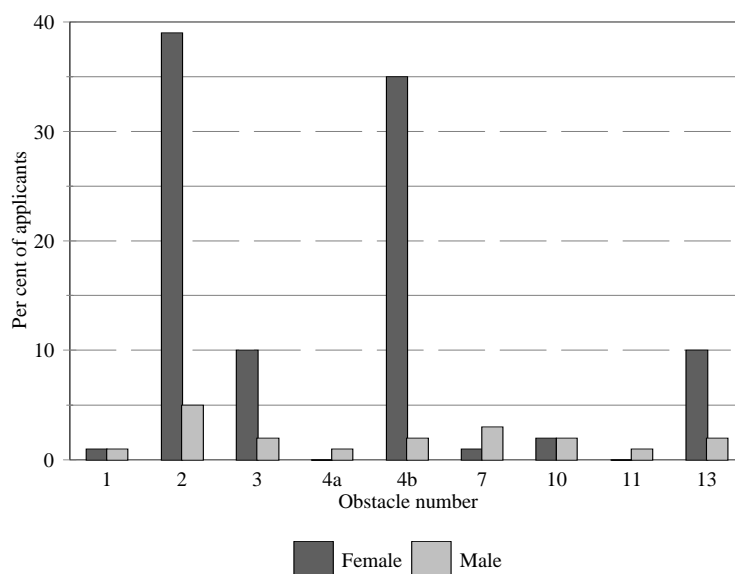
One of the organisational consequences of the PCT's effect on women is the loss of other skills which women bring to the job of policing. A behavioural observation study (Wilson & Braithwaite 1996) found that female officers were more likely to be indirectly aggressive (e.g. to reject the statement of a citizen) while male officers were more directly aggressive, both verbally and physically. Furthermore, female officers were more supportive of citizens than male officers, and less likely to threaten and use physical force. Further supporting these findings, a CJC report (1996b) found that, in Queensland, male officers receive significantly more complaints of assault than their female counterparts.

This research indicates that the value of physical ability needs to be placed in context as just one of the skills necessary to the job of policing. Of equal, if not greater, importance are conflict resolution and communication skills, which the PCT plays no part in testing.

Inequality between applicants and current serving police officers

A final issue for consideration in discussing the validity of the PCT is the effect of requiring different standards of physical fitness for recruit applicants, serving QPS officers and recruits to POCC who currently are not required to complete the PCT or any other test of physical fitness (see chapter 14).

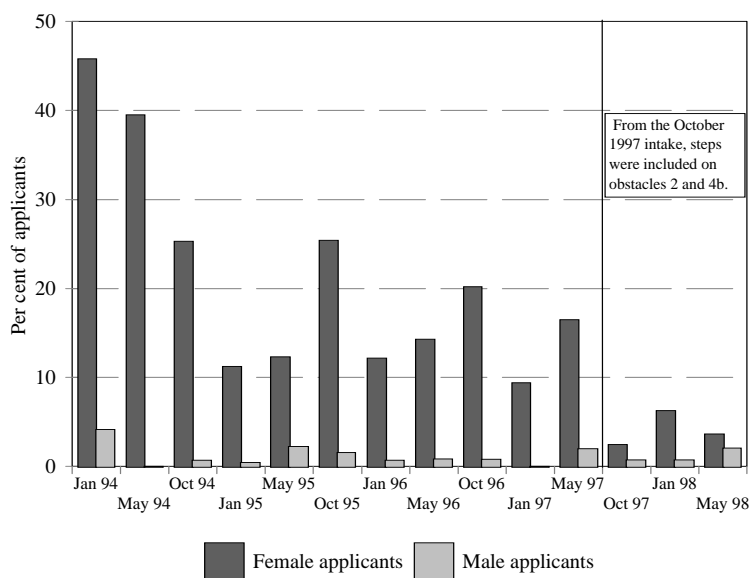
Currently, the only compulsory physical fitness requirements imposed by the QPS are the successful completion of the PCT prior to acceptance as a recruit, and of the physical skills program during recruit training (prior to recruits being confirmed as constables). A new QPS policy not yet implemented

Figure 10.3 — Percentage of applicants who failed to negotiate individual obstacles (intakes 1 and 2, 1994)

Source: HRD, QPS

Notes:

1. Female n = 139 Male n = 377
2. Data for obstacles 5, 6, 8, and 9 have not been included as all applicants successfully negotiated these obstacles.
3. Data not available for any other intakes.

Figure 10.4 — Percentage of applicants who failed to negotiate at least one obstacle

Source: HRD, QPS

will also require completion of fitness training as part of the FYC program, to be completed on each monthly training day (as is already the practice in some regions). The first recruit intake to be subject to this new policy is the January 1998 intake, who will graduate from the Academy in August 1998 and complete their field training in August 1999.

In addition, a further new QPS policy, still to be implemented, will result in fitness training forming part of the voluntary Constable Development Program, which is a prerequisite for promotion to the Senior Constable rank. The QPS has indicated that in the future it also intends introducing a health and fitness component into other promotion programs, such as the Management Development Program, which again is done voluntarily.

There is no further, general, requirement of officers to maintain any level of physical fitness. No data are available to assess the level of fitness of current operational officers; however, it seems safe to say that there are a significant number who could not pass the PCT, yet remain to perform operational duties, presumably to a satisfactory standard. The NPRU research indicates that the officers included in its study were no fitter than the general population (p. vi). Furthermore, that study noted that although officers under the age of 35 were generally less likely to be overweight or obese than members of the general population, after this age the trend was reversed among male officers (p. 42). The report concluded:

The finding that the physical ability and fitness of the police population does not differ markedly from the general population is not a new one ... It is apparent that while the average officer graduates from the Academy in excellent physical condition, the normal sedentary nature of the officer's job leads to rapid deterioration in physical fitness. A number of other studies have confirmed the generally average fitness of younger officers and the lower physical fitness of and heightened coronary risk of older officers ... (p. 42)

The lack of continued compulsory physical fitness testing in the QPS is matched by the lack of any continuing medical testing (see chapter 11). These circumstances make it even more difficult for the QPS to defend successfully any anti-discrimination or judicial review application brought in relation to the PCT. An applicant who is rejected because of an inability to pass a test that also could not be passed by a significant number of already serving, general duties officers, who are apparently still able to perform their duties to an adequate level, could well establish the discriminatory or unfair nature of the test.

It is not the task of this review to consider whether any requirement for ongoing physical fitness should be applied to serving officers of the QPS. However, it can be said that in the absence of a general fitness requirement, it is difficult to justify any requirement for physical fitness on the part of recruit applicants. This is exacerbated by the current lack of any test of physical fitness applied to POCC recruits (see chapter 14).

Other considerations

Other relevant considerations arising with the PCT include concerns about the testing of untrained and potentially unfit applicants. Currently, all applicants undertaking the test must produce a certificate signed by a medical practitioner. The certificate summarises the PCT, and certifies that the applicant is fit to undergo the test. The problem with such a general certificate is that it assumes the medical practitioner involved has a full knowledge of both the PCT and of the physical and medical condition of the applicant. Yet the information given about the PCT is very slight, and contains no detail about the extent of exertion or stress required of applicants of various ages and levels of fitness. Similarly, there is no guidance given as to the extent of examination required to assess the applicant, or the criteria which indicate the applicant may be unfit to undertake the test.

To date, a small number of applicants attempting the PCT have suffered injuries. While staff administering the test have CPR qualifications, more extensive medical assistance is not immediately available. Applicants are required to sign a waiver indemnifying the QPS from liability for any injuries suffered during the test; however, that waiver is likely to be of little legal effect if applicants

are not given full and complete information about the test and its possible effects. These circumstances raise a real prospect of the QPS being held liable for damages in negligence if unprepared applicants sustain serious or permanent injuries while undergoing the PCT.

In addition, the QPS has obligations under the Queensland *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* to ensure that the health and safety of certain non-employees, such as recruit applicants, are not affected by the way the QPS conducts its operations (section 28(2)). If an applicant were injured because of a failure by the QPS to comply with this obligation, the QPS could be faced with both a criminal liability and a civil liability for breach of statutory duty.

Another consideration is whether the PCT represents the best human resource practise. The NPRU report questions how much weight should be attached to physical factors compared to psychological and educational variables when considering job performance. This is particularly so when a significant component of the recruit-training program is directed at physical skills education, to improve the fitness level of all recruits.

The QPS is currently engaging consultants to review the PSE program, and specifically to determine what type and level of fitness police recruits should have at the completion of their training program, given the physical tasks they may be required to perform. The recommendations of the consultants as to the appropriate curriculum for PSE for recruits will have an important bearing on the fitness required of recruits at the beginning of their training. This relationship between the physical requirements of operational policing, the physical skills education received by recruits, and physical fitness tests in the selection process is shown below. The relationship depicted suggests that the critical issue for recruit selection purposes is ensuring that applicants are physically and medically fit to undertake the PSE program. It would then be the responsibility of recruits to complete that program successfully during their training, and to attain a level of physical skills sufficient to perform the duties of general duties policing.

THE PCT, PSE TRAINING, AND THE PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS OF OPERATIONAL POLICING

The selection process

ensures

applicants are physically fit to complete PSE training.

(critical issue: what level of fitness and health is required for PSE training)

The content and emphasis of PSE training

ensures

recruits can meet the physical demands of general duties policing.

(critical issue: what are the relevant demands and their frequency, intensity and criticalness?)

Options for the QPS regarding physical fitness testing

The discussion in this chapter suggests a number of possible options for physical fitness testing in the QPS, including:

- The current PCT could continue to be used, at least until the almost inevitable legal challenge to it by a rejected applicant. This option needs to be balanced against the desirability of an organisation such as the QPS complying with its obligations under the law.
- The PCT could be retained and adapted to test for the genuine physical requirements of policing in a non-discriminatory way. Such a test would need to relate to the sort of medium-level activities found by the NPRU's research and QPS-CJC research to be required of police on an occasional basis, particularly restraining and carrying persons, and dealing with medium-height obstacles. The major problem in devising such a test would be in making allowance for other variable factors, such as the presence and capacity of a partner, use of non-physical skills such as communication and negotiation, and the need for training before allowing applicants to be tested in the use of restraints and standard equipment such as firearms and batons.

- Other measures to determine physical fitness could be used, such as measures of muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance or the BMI index. Such tests would need to be carefully designed to ensure they accurately reflected actual occupational requirements. This would be difficult unless the same tests were also applied to serving officers and POCC entrants. In addition, there may be cost implications in applying some of these tests to large numbers of applicants, as they would need to be administered by qualified persons.
- The requirement for physical fitness could be repositioned to the end of the recruit-training program, and a health-screening process relied upon to select applicants who are fit to undertake the PSE program. This option would require the PSE program to train recruits to the standard of physical fitness necessary for operational policing. This would mean that recruits who do not meet that standard at the end of their training would be required to undertake extra training until they can do so, or be found to have failed their training and dismissed. The option also depends on the current consultancy examining the PSE to determine a valid and reliable program that is non-discriminatory and directly related to the real requirements of policing.

Overall, the findings of the only relevant Australian research do not support the use of obstacle courses in their current form. Both the NPRU report and the CJC–QPS report concluded that any requirement of operational constables to make long pursuits on foot or negotiate multiple difficult obstacles was infrequent, and unlikely in the sort of combinations that arise in the PCT. In addition, applicants are being tested prior to their period of training, and in circumstances that do not reflect the actual policing environment. These factors — combined with the prospect of discrimination and negligence actions, potential liability for breaches of workplace, health and safety laws, and the cost of administering the test — all suggest that the PCT should be abandoned as a recruit selection device.

The removal of physical fitness testing from the selection process was the favoured option of the NPRU report, which suggested that physical competence be incorporated as a training responsibility. In practice, applicants would be selected on the basis of their psychological fitness and work and educational experience, and would then be required to gain the necessary physical skills during their training at the Academy (p. vi). The report concluded:

The benefits of this approach are that it would mitigate against the adverse impact on minority groups (e.g. women) associated with the current procedures and eliminate the risk of injury to applicants. Furthermore, such an option does not attach a disproportionate amount of importance to physical abilities, but conveys the impression that police are performing a professional rather than manual function in which knowledge, skills, and abilities are more important than sheer physical prowess. It must be emphasised that this option does not dismiss the need for a physically fit workforce, but it recognises that required abilities can be easily attained through training. The challenge for the police service is to ensure that they are subsequently maintained. (p. vii)

The CJC–QPS report reached a very similar conclusion:

... it has been argued that:

- some PCTs require a competency level that is considerably higher than that demanded of officers in the field
- many tests do not realistically represent what general duties officers do in the field
- such tests do not recognise the importance of teamwork to negotiate environmental obstacles
- some tests are unlawfully discriminatory.

The survey results lend weight to some of these criticisms. They confirm that police are exposed to a wide range of physical demands (such as moving noncompliant persons, running short distances and crawling under houses), but such demands are infrequent, generally less than once per month, and are usually short bursts rather than long engagements. Furthermore, survey respondents were rarely required to negotiate difficult obstacles, as required in PCTs, and most episodes were one-off rather than a series of events.

These findings suggest that a better approach may be to use a general health test, which requires an average level of fitness and an absence of illness, rather than requiring completion of a specific set of physical tasks that may not be representative of the everyday demands on police.

Given the discussion in this chapter, it is considered that the use by the QPS of the current PCT as a selection device should cease as soon as practicable, and no later than 1 March 1999. Instead, a health-screening process should be developed to identify those applicants who are unlikely to have the physical capacity to complete the training program successfully and only those applicants should be rejected on the basis of a lack of physical fitness.

The consultants selected to review the PSE should, as part of that review, address suitable ways of assessing the fitness of applicants, to detect those who are unlikely to be able to complete the new PSE program. These recommendations should then be discussed by the PSE Review Steering Committee, the EEO Unit of the QPS and PEAC before submission to the Commissioner of Police.

A handout providing guidance on pre-Academy training should be written to be made available to all applicants to the QPS. Guidelines may encourage some applicants to undertake physical fitness training prior to the commencement of their recruit training, thus improving their prospects of successfully completing the PSE program. Applicants should be strongly encouraged to undertake physical fitness training prior to acceptance to the QPS.

The QPS should also address the issue of continued, compulsory, fitness screening of officers, or at least those officers performing operational duties. Until such screening is introduced, the QPS will remain at risk of being found to be discriminatory in its treatment of recruits.

Recommendation 52 — The development of a health-screening process for selection

- (i) That use of the current physical competency test as a selection device cease as soon as practicable, and no later than 1 March 1999, being replaced by a health-screening process to be developed to identify those applicants who are unlikely to have the physical capacity to complete the training program successfully.
- (ii) That the consultants selected to review the physical skills program address, as part of that review, suitable ways of assessing the fitness of applicants, to detect those who are unlikely to be able to complete the new physical skills program. These recommendations should be discussed by the PSE Review Steering Committee, the QPS's EEO unit and PEAC before submission to the Commissioner of Police.
- (iii) That applicants be strongly encouraged to do physical fitness training before acceptance to the QPS. The information booklet given to applicants should include a guide to the type and frequency of training recommended before commencement of the recruit-training program.

Conclusion

The use of PCTs or obstacle courses for police service selection has attracted considerable criticism. Of particular concern is whether the PCT used by the QPS is validly based on the genuine physical requirements of operational policing. Two recent reports (Circelli & Wilson, in press; CJC-QPS 1998) that have examined the physical requirements of policing have found that general duties policing requires repeated, regular, performance of several low-demand physical activities (e.g. driving, getting in and out of police transport, and sitting). When more demanding duties arise, they tend to involve restraining, lifting and moving persons and objects, rather than a sustained series of highly demanding activities with a particular focus on hurdling and climbing, as tested by the PCT.

In addition, there is evidence indicating that the PCT discriminates against women and possibly also against men from certain racial backgrounds, and people with physical impairments who may be able to perform the genuine physical requirements of policing, but are unable to complete the PCT. Such discrimination would not only breach the *Anti-Discrimination Act*, but also run counter to the QPS's own EEO policies, particularly as there is currently no compulsory physical fitness testing for serving officers.

Because the PCT lacks validity and is potentially discriminatory, it is recommended that the use of the test as a selection device should cease by 1 March 1999, and be replaced by a health-screening process developed to identify applicants unlikely to have the physical capacity to complete the training program successfully. That screening process should be developed by the consultants engaged to review the PSE component of the Academy's recruit-training program.

Chapter 11: Medical screening

Medical screening of potential recruits is part of the selection process of all Australian police services. Currently, each jurisdiction sets its own medical standards for applicants, although the NPRU is endeavouring to establish appropriate national guidelines for such screening.

The rationale for medical screening is to ensure that persons considered for selection as police recruits are able to meet the demands of operational policing. The level of fitness necessary for operational policing sets the standard, because all QPS recruits are trained to become general duties constables. Medical screening, therefore, operates in tandem with physical competency testing (chapter 10) to check the physical fitness of applicants, and with psychometric assessment (chapter 6) to test applicants' psychological and emotional fitness.

This chapter examines medical screening by the QPS, particularly those parts of current processes that expose the QPS to potential anti-discrimination and judicial review actions (as discussed generally in chapter 2). The chapter includes recommendations aimed at assisting the QPS to meet its legal and ethical obligations, while also ensuring that potential recruits can meet the demands of their future job as police constables.

Current medical-screening process

The objective of medical screening is not to identify all applicants with a medical condition, but those with a condition that will prevent or restrict them in fulfilling the functions of a general duties constable. These duties have been discussed in detail in chapter 3. The medical screening process is directed at those duties, but also takes into account that QPS officers may potentially be required to:

- work anywhere in the State, including areas where medical services may not be readily available
- work at any time, including for occasional prolonged periods
- work alone
- occasionally work under conditions of great physical and emotional stress.

Currently, the QPS makes medical assessments of recruit applicants in the following way:

- All applicants must complete a detailed medical questionnaire (reproduced in appendix C) and return it with their applications to the QPS Recruiting Section.
- Recruiting Section staff make an initial assessment of those questionnaires, identifying any which indicate 'exclusion factors' (i.e. factors regarded as justifying rejection of the application).
- The manager of the Recruiting Section may reject applicants whose questionnaire responses include any of the exclusion factors. More usually, the manager will call on applicants to provide specialist reports on their condition for referral to the Government Medical Officer (GMO). The GMO advises whether, on the basis of the completed questionnaire and the specialist reports, the applicant should be permitted to proceed through the further stages of the selection process.
- The completed medical questionnaire and any specialist reports are placed on the applicant's file, which is then made available to the interview panel and the Selection Committee.
- Applicants selected for a panel interview are examined by the GMO. The GMO is supplied with completed questionnaires and any available medical reports, completes a medical evaluation report (see appendix C) and advises whether the applicant is able to carry out the duties of a general duties constable. The GMO may ask applicants to obtain further specialists' reports to assist in this determination. The GMO's report is placed on the applicant's file, and made available to the interview panel and Selection Committee.

- Questionnaires and medical reports relating to successful applicants form part of their personnel file, which is initially held at the police Academy. On completion of training, personnel files are sent to the relevant regional personnel officer, and then follow officers throughout their QPS career. Such files are accessible to a wide range of senior officers and clerical staff.
- Questionnaires and medical reports on unsuccessful applicants are kept on file for three years in most circumstances, and the information on them is used if applicants reapply.

The exclusion factors referred to in these procedures are conditions or injuries regarded as justifying the rejection of applications on medical grounds. As described above, the decision to reject on the basis of exclusion factors is made either by the manager of the QPS Recruiting Section, on receipt of the application, or by the Selection Committee after the GMO's medical examination and report.

The factors considered sufficient to disqualify applicants from further consideration are described on the questionnaire (p. 4) as follows:

Any medical condition which could suddenly and unexpectedly render a person incapable of carrying out duties as a police officer would make that person unsuitable for appointment as a police officer. Some medical conditions which would cause an applicant to be marked unfit for police service are:

active asthma	epilepsy
deafness	impaired vision
diabetes	mental instability

Normal colour vision is required and applicants must have visual acuity of 6/6 in each eye with or without corrective lenses. If corrective lenses are worn applicants must have:

- uncorrected vision in the better eye not less than 6/12; and
- uncorrected vision in the other eye not less than 6/18.

Applicants are considered on an individual basis, and where necessary, advice from relevant medical specialists is sought before a final decision is made by the Government Medical Officer.

The last paragraph quoted is slightly misleading, in that the decision to reject is not made by the GMO but by the manager of the Recruiting Section or the Selection Committee, as discussed above. No data are available to indicate the extent to which the advice of the GMO is followed, or indeed the extent to which applications are rejected on medical grounds.

The list of exclusion factors on the questionnaire is incomplete, in that the Chief GMO has indicated several other conditions that he considers could possibly prevent a person from performing the functions of a police officer:

- any medical condition that requires regular access to treatment or medical management where the absence of treatment or facilities would exacerbate the medical condition, particularly under adverse or abnormal conditions for extended periods of time, such as chronic illnesses, including incurable cancerous conditions
- diseases of the locomotor system such as rheumatoid arthritis, other chronic bone and joint conditions, paralysis or missing limbs, and chronic injuries impairing the locomotor system
- lack of a 'good physique' affecting the applicant's ability to assist injured persons or apprehend offenders
- medical conditions that could affect the health of persons assisted or apprehended, such as communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS and active hepatitis B and C
- a medical condition likely to be affected by policing duties, including mental illness, or conditions likely to be aggravated by stress (see appendix D: letter from Chief GMO).

Issues for consideration

The medical-screening procedures of the QPS were evaluated for this review by:

- examining documented procedures
- obtaining further information on procedures from the chief GMO (see appendix D)
- examining policies and practices in relation to serving officers
- assessing the impact of anti-discrimination and judicial review law (as discussed generally in chapter 2) on current procedures.

In addition, a comparison by the NPRU of medical criteria for police applicants for all Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions except New South Wales was considered. That comparison indicated substantial variations in the way each jurisdiction assesses various conditions. Apart from this lack of any consistent approach, practice in other jurisdictions is also of little relevance if those jurisdictions have a substantially different legislative regime affecting employment decisions.

These matters will undoubtedly be pursued in the course of the current NPRU project (Circelli & Wilson, in press) to develop national guidelines. Once those guidelines have been produced, QPS practice will need to be reassessed. In the meantime, this review has considered QPS policies largely by themselves.

The main issues arising from the review are the legality, fairness and appropriateness of some of the steps in the medical screening process. Particular concerns arise about:

- the potentially discriminatory and unfair nature of the exclusion factors as currently defined
- the apparent lack of documented, verifiable standards applied by GMOs in exercising their discretion to mark applicants as medically unfit
- the irrelevance and potentially discriminatory nature of much of the questionnaire
- the apparent discrimination in standards of medical fitness applied to serving officers as compared to applicants
- privacy.

Potentially unfair nature of the exclusion factors

Most of the exclusion factors, as currently expressed, lack explicit linkage with the duties of operational constables. As discussed in chapter 2, decisions to reject applicants because of certain characteristics or conditions risk being unfairly discriminatory. However, such decisions may be permissible if they are based directly on the ability of the person to perform identified functions of the relevant position — in this case, training as a police recruit and then employment as a general duties constable. This means that each of the exclusion factors should relate directly to one or more of such duties (which are discussed in detail in chapter 3). General assertions that various conditions prevent the performance of police functions do not meet this requirement.

There is considerable case law illustrating the insufficiency of simple assertions that a particular condition prevents the performance of duties. This is especially so if the specific capabilities of the individual have not been taken into account, including the person's capacity to perform duties with the assistance of either an aid routinely used (such as glasses, a hearing aid or medication to control a condition such as epilepsy), or a special service or facility reasonably capable of being provided by the QPS (such as special work allocations); or if other police officers with similar conditions continue to be employed by the QPS and to fulfil their duties. Examples of decisions to reject applicants that have been overturned include:

- An applicant had lost one eye, but could still pass high-speed-driving tests and other tests of physical skills. Two officers in the same police service suffered a similar condition but continued to be employed.⁸

⁸ *Clinch v. Commissioner of Police* (1987) EOC 92–203.

- An applicant with diabetes mellitus had never experienced hyperglycaemia or hypoglycaemia attacks in the course of previous, stressful, law-enforcement related employment, and was able to control his condition by always having sugar and self-injectable insulin on hand.⁹
- A QPS applicant who was short-sighted did not have a particular standard of uncorrected vision even though he had ‘normal vision’ when wearing contact lenses, and even though such lenses were commonly worn by serving officers.¹⁰
- The QPS was ordered to reinstate a recruit whose employment was terminated following an epileptic seizure. With appropriate medication, the recruit could perform all the essential duties of a police officer.¹¹
- An applicant for a position as a prison officer who had suffered from Hodgkin’s disease and recently been pronounced cured was rejected because of a policy that required applicants to have been cancer-free for two years.¹²

These and many other cases illustrate that it is not enough to say that a condition might interfere with performance of a police officer’s duties. There needs to be a much stronger linkage between the condition and a particular duty, say high-speed driving or the ability to apply physical restraints to offenders.

Some of the existing exclusion factors do not meet this test, at least as they are currently expressed. For example:

- It is not clear why deafness should be regarded as a blanket exclusion factor, if it is capable of correction by the wearing of a hearing aid, particularly if any serving officers currently wear such aids.
- The fact that an applicant suffers asthma in itself is unlikely to justify exclusion, given that for many sufferers symptoms are largely controllable, to the extent that many athletes competing in very stressful circumstances perform well despite being asthmatics.

The relevant factor is whether applicants suffer from a condition to the extent that there is a real prospect of it affecting their performance of a stated duty of a police constable. Similarly, it is not sufficient to state that an applicant requires ongoing medication that may be difficult to obtain in some possible postings. Instead, it must be shown that such postings are an inherent duty of all officers, rather than a mere possibility, and that no reasonable arrangements can be made to ensure a continuous supply of the necessary medication. There are likely to be few areas of Queensland where such arrangements could not be made.

As part of this review, the Chief GMO was asked to describe the conditions likely to affect the performance of the inherent functions of a constable. His response, set out in appendix D, begins by stating factors considered to be inherent to the role of a constable, such as the need to undertake operational duties, for extended periods, perhaps with no backup, which may be affected by a requirement for regular access to medication, or conditions which would be exacerbated by operational requirements. While these may be relevant factors in some decisions, they do not describe the actual duties of a constable on which rejection decisions must be based. Such duties are described in detail in chapter 3.

The Chief GMO asserts that some conditions may render a police constable incapable of undertaking duties, such as epilepsy, diabetes mellitus, and active asthma, diseases and chronic injuries of the locomotor system and mental illness, but without saying which particular duties are likely to be impeded by each condition and how. For example, he states that applicants with AIDS or hepatitis

⁹ *Burrows v. NSW Commissioner of Police* (1994) EOC 92–654.

¹⁰ *Flannery v. O’Sullivan* (No. 2).

¹¹ *Stevens v. QPS*.

¹² *Barry v. State of Victoria* (1994) EOC 92–598.

may be affected in assisting injured persons or apprehending offenders. Even if such functions are part of the inherent duties of a constable, rather than a possible incidence of employment, some real impairment in capability to perform the duty must be shown, rather than a mere possibility of capacity being affected.

There is no evidence to suggest that most GMOs have any particular knowledge of the duties of a police constable. Knowledge of the medical condition of the applicant is not enough, unless the GMO also has a current and realistic understanding of the requirements of operational constables. Only with that information can the GMO accurately and fairly assess whether the medical condition in question actually has the necessary limiting effect on the capacity of the applicant. Such knowledge needs to be more specific than a general idea of what police do, perhaps gained from occasional calls to police jobs, duties at the watchhouse, or even from television. Instead, to be able to defend their advice, GMOs need to have knowledge of specific duties expected of operational constables and how they are performed, how often and under what conditions they are likely to be performed, the physical capabilities necessary to perform such duties safely, and any reasonably practicable alternative methods of achieving similar outcomes.

The importance of medical practitioners conducting pre-employment examinations having such knowledge has been emphasised in a series of Australian discrimination cases. A recent such case¹³ pointed to the need for medical assessments to be:

- performed by a practitioner with access to and knowledge of the duty statement for the particular position
- job specific, in that examinations for different positions need to be tailored to the specific needs of each position
- performed by a practitioner who is aware of relevant anti-discrimination principles as they relate to pre-employment medical assessments
- related to the individual's current state of health, and the degree of management of any impairment, rather than focusing on previous history as an indicator of future problems
- performed by an independent practitioner if there are conflicting medical opinions.

There is no specific training which GMOs undergo to give them this knowledge, and no written guidelines or references available to them on the legal aspect of their duties. Given their many other functions and lack of specific policing knowledge, it is unreasonable to expect GMOs to acquire this knowledge themselves.

To redress this situation, the QPS should produce a guide, using a mix of specialist knowledge of policing functions; specialist medical expertise relating to many different conditions; input from specialists with human movements or biomechanics expertise to define the physical elements of specific policing duties; and legal expertise relating to anti-discrimination law. The guide should be directed to informing GMOs, and any other medical practitioner who may perform medical assessments of recruit applicants, about the occupational, legal, physical and medical aspects of operational policing.

The guide should contain not just a list of medical conditions capable of affecting performance of a constable's duties, but should indicate for each condition particular policing functions which might be reasonably and significantly impaired and ways of verifiably measuring the extent of impairment of individual applicants (as discussed further below). For example, epilepsy might be identified as a condition capable of hindering capacity to operate police vehicles. The individual capacity of applicants with epilepsy could then be considered in relation to the number and severity of seizures suffered by the individual, and the effect of medication on the management of the individual's condition.

There is considerable material easily available to assist in the production of such a guide. One source

¹³ *Gehrig v. McArthur River Mining Pty Ltd* (1997) EOC 92–872.

sets out the main features of a non-discriminatory medical test as including:

- the medical test relates specifically to the particular duties and responsibilities of the job
- the specific physical attributes required for the job are accurately identified
- ways of accommodating people without these attributes have been considered
- any facilities or services required by applicants with disabilities are provided if it does not cause unjustifiable hardship to do so
- any assessment of a person's ability to perform the inherent requirements of the job is made after these facilities or services have been provided
- the test only assesses current ability and does not attempt to predict any future deterioration (Australian and New Zealand Equal Opportunity Law & Practice 1996, p. 14.890).

The same source contains a list of points relevant to the design of pre-employment medical assessments:

- the medical officer conducting the assessment must be aware of anti-discrimination laws and understand that the test must relate to specific job requirements
- applicants with a disability must be tested using any service or facility they routinely use to perform the essential duties of the job (e.g. a hearing aid or medication)
- for applicants with a disability, only the attributes relating to the essential duties of the job can form part of the assessment
- medical tests cannot be used to screen out applicants with past injuries or disabilities, or those with a family history of certain illnesses or disabilities, as current ability is the only relevant factor
- medical tests cannot be used to screen out applicants with past workers compensation claims or those considered at risk of making such claims in the future
- medical tests to determine eligibility to join superannuation funds are not relevant at the pre-employment stage, and may only be used for superannuation purposes and not to determine eligibility for employment.

Another source notes that a medical practitioner's report or recommendation should not simply be 'rubber stamped' by a Selection Committee. A Selection Committee's assessment of an applicant's capacity should be based on all available information, and not just on a medical practitioner's views (Public Sector Management Commission 1993).

The recommended guide for medical practitioners should be produced urgently, as current procedures clearly place the QPS at considerable risk of litigation. There would be much value in providing the guide, or a summary or abbreviated form of it, to potential applicants. In this way, applicants could be accurately informed about conditions which might lead to the rejection of their application, and this may lead to some people deciding not to pursue their application.

Recommendation 53 — Develop written guide to medical conditions relevant for selection

That the QPS urgently produce a detailed, written guide to medical conditions that may affect the performance of particular duties of operational police. The guide should be produced with specialist policing, medical, human movements and legal expertise and be made available to medical practitioners conducting medical assessments and also, in summary form, to potential applicants.

Medical examination basis of rejection

The problems of the current exclusion factors are exacerbated by the process which enables some applicants to be rejected by the manager of the Recruiting Section, without any physical examination having taken place to test individual abilities and limitations. It is unlikely that there are many medical conditions where a blanket rejection in this way can be justified, and certainly many of the conditions

currently described as exclusion factors require some assessment of the individual circumstances of the applicant.

It seems to be current practice that most applications suggesting exclusion factors are referred to the GMO for advice prior to rejection. This practice should be formalised by removing the possibility for the manager of the Recruiting Section to reject an applicant on medical grounds. All recommendations for such rejection should be made by the GMO, another medical practitioner or specialist, and only after a medical examination of the applicant to assess individual circumstances. That examination must be directly related to the duties of a constable, and the person conducting the examination must be made aware of the nature and extent of those duties.

Recommendation 54 — Medical examination to be basis of rejection on medical conditions

That rejection of applications on medical grounds be made only on the advice of a medical practitioner, and only after a medical examination of the applicant has been carried out to determine the degree of impairment directly relevant to performance of the duties of a constable.

Lack of standards in exercising GMO's discretion

As well as lacking sufficient linkage to the duties of a constable, most of the current exclusion factors are expressed in such vague and general terms as to give rise to considerable potential for unfairness. Individual GMOs are vested with wide discretion as to whether or not to recommend rejection on medical grounds.

The only condition for which clear criteria for the exercise of this discretion is set down is visual acuity. In all other cases, the discretion appears undefined and unfettered. In particular, there appears to be no means of ensuring that persons suffering from a similar degree of impairment from a condition will have their applications treated in a similar way. This potential for unfairness is compounded by the fact that several different medical practitioners fulfil the functions of GMO, and no measures appear to be in place to ensure uniformity in their assessments. This situation is exacerbated further now that some GMOs are located in Townsville, making consistency of criteria even more difficult to achieve.

The potential for unfairness is serious, partly because it may give rise to a right of judicial review (as discussed generally in chapter 2). That is, an applicant rejected as medically unfit, who is able to show that other applicants suffering from similar conditions have not been dealt with similarly, may succeed in a Supreme Court action to have the decision set aside.

This situation would be largely resolved if the guide produced for medical practitioners, as recommended above, also addresses the need for appropriate, verifiable criteria for the exercise of the discretion to exclude applicants. Apart from the reference to a standard of uncorrected vision,¹⁴ the visual acuity guidelines provide an example of how such criteria can apply. It seems feasible to devise similar guidelines for most of the conditions currently included as exclusion factors. Criteria could be based on either a measurable degree of impairment suffered (e.g. in relation to deafness) or numbers of incidents requiring substantial medical intervention suffered in a given period (e.g. in relation to asthma, epilepsy or diabetes). It must be remembered, however, that these criteria only provide a technique to measure incapacity. As discussed above, there is still an overriding requirement to show that the incapacity as measured directly affects particular, specified duties of an operational constable.

The production of such criteria would not remove entirely the discretion of the assessing medical practitioner, who would still need to determine whether individual applicants come within the

¹⁴ According to the Tribunal in *Flannery v. O'Sullivan (No. 2)*, this is not a genuine occupational requirement for operational policing.

guidelines. However, clear, written standards will go some way to ensuring consistency and fairness in such decision making.

Recommendation 55 — Develop specific, verifiable criteria for rejection on a medical basis

That the guide to medical conditions relevant to selection include specific, verifiable criteria measuring the degree of impairment suffered by applicants.

Irrelevance and potentially discriminatory nature of the medical questionnaire

The medical questionnaire (as set out in appendix C) accompanies the initial application kit, and is returned by applicants to the QPS Recruiting Section. The questionnaire is very detailed and requires responses to 80 questions concerning the health and medical history of the applicant, including whether the applicant:

- has ever suffered from any of 48 listed diseases or injuries, ranging from cancer and heart disease to hay fever, haemorrhoids and varicose veins
- has any vision defects, infections or conditions
- smokes, drinks alcohol or has experienced recent weight alteration
- has ever suffered any injury through accident, or has undergone or requires surgery
- uses any medication
- has been rejected, deferred or loaded for life insurance, received workers' compensation, been discharged from employment on medical grounds, or been absent from work or education for illness or injury for more than one week within the last five years
- has tested HIV positive, or been tested for or suffered from hepatitis
- has any physical disabilities, or has ever suffered from a breast disorder
- has a history of any diseases in the family
- has ever attempted suicide
- suffers from any other medical condition, or is subject to any other health circumstances which may interfere with satisfactory discharge of the duties of a police recruit or officer.

Applicants are also required to give details of their most recent medical examinations and tests, and sign a waiver authorising the GMO and Police Commissioner to access their medical records, including those from any police or armed service agency.

The first issue arising from the questionnaire is whether its wide-ranging nature is consistent with the stated objective of medical screening, namely to identify those applicants not capable of fulfilling the duties of a constable. That objective requires only the identification of conditions that diminish performance of those duties, not other conditions which, although perhaps serious in themselves, do not have that effect.

A related issue concerns the way in which most questions are framed so as to ask about not only current conditions or injuries, but also those suffered in the past, and even diseases which 'run in the family'. Apart from the fact that this last phrase is not clear (how many family members need to have suffered the condition?, how far does the meaning of family extend?, how many past generations need to be included?), there is considerable doubt about the legal relevance of any condition that is not current. The important consideration is whether the applicant's present ability to perform functions is affected, not whether it may have been in the past or may be in the future. The only relevance of past conditions is if there is some real likelihood of present (but not future) recurrence.

Some of the questions of doubtful relevance are also extremely intrusive. For example, questions about past suicide attempts (particularly if the attempt was made many years before, or because of circumstances having no connection with policing duties), or past incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, may relate to conditions now completely cured, or very unlikely to recur, have no apparent connection with current capacity to perform policing functions, and cause great embarrassment or concern to those having to declare them. This is particularly so given the current treatment of questionnaires which makes them freely accessible to large numbers of QPS personnel (as discussed further below in relation to privacy).

Issues concerning the content of the questionnaires are important for two reasons. First, considerable administrative time and expense must be consumed in producing, distributing and assessing such a detailed questionnaire. That cost needs to be justified by showing that the questionnaire makes a valid and valuable contribution to the screening of applicants.

Second, the questionnaire must comply with the legal obligations of the QPS. Of particular relevance is section 124 of the *Anti-Discrimination Act*, which prevents persons from being requested to provide information on which unlawful discrimination might be based, unless the information is reasonably necessary for a purpose not involving discrimination. The example given in the Act suggests that an employer who asked all applicants for jobs whether they have any impairments would contravene the Act, whereas it would be permissible to ask applicants for a job involving heavy lifting whether they have any physical condition indicating they should not do such work.

In summary, it is unlawful to ask any questions other than those directly related to the essential functions of the job. For example:

... applicants for a job as a driver cannot be asked for details of vision impairments, but can be asked if they have a current driver's licence of the applicable class. Similarly, applicants for a job as an apprentice cook can be asked whether they have any allergies which might affect the practice of cooking, but not for a general medical history. An employer could, for example, attach a job description to the application form with information about specific job functions. Provided that these relate to the essential functions of the job, it is lawful to ask all applicants whether they can perform these essential functions and if not, whether they would be able to perform them with some adjustments being put in place. In this way, the issue of a person's disability will not unlawfully enter into the selection process. (Australian and New Zealand Equal Opportunity Law & Practice 1996, p. 13.595)

On that basis, several of the questions on the questionnaire clearly contravene the Act, particularly those asking general questions such as details of physical disabilities (question 72), illnesses suffered other than those that are minor or transient (71), diseases running in the family (73), medical conditions not specifically referred to in the questionnaire (75), matters relevant to life insurance (64), workers' compensation claims (65), discharge from previous employment (66), or absences from work (67).

Many other questions are likely to contravene the Act, in the absence of any apparent evidence to show the information sought is reasonably necessary for a purpose not involving discrimination; that is, it is directly related to a particular duty of the job.

The legal obligations regarding the questionnaire are not affected by the fact that the information is used by GMOs in their medical assessment of applicants. This circumstance appears to give the questionnaire the character of a medical history; however, the GMO is not a medical practitioner treating a patient, but rather an agent of the QPS assisting in its selection process. This means that both GMOs and the questionnaire may ask only questions directly related to specific policing duties, and only to enable assessment of the extent of current impairment in relation to those duties.

Clearly there is a need to recast the questionnaire to ensure its compliance with the legal obligations of the QPS. The new form should describe or refer to the specific duties of operational constables, and then ask questions directly related to those duties. For example, instead of asking if applicants suffer from epilepsy or diabetes, the questionnaire should note that it is a duty of all operational

police to be able to operate police vehicles,¹⁵ and ask whether any medical condition is suffered that might reasonably affect that duty. Examples could be given of the way in which certain conditions could affect the duty, such as a person regularly suffering, without warning, epileptic seizures causing blackouts, where the condition is not controllable by medication.

Questions framed in this way focus on the relevant duty, rather than the condition, and only seek information from those who may be lawfully excluded from the selection process because of a genuine occupational requirement.

The design of the new form will require contributions from a range of specialist medical, legal and policing experts, and should be developed at the same time as the guide for medical practitioners recommended above. It is clear that continued reliance on the existing questionnaire places the QPS at considerable legal risk. For this reason, as already stressed, the guide and the new questionnaire should be developed as a matter of urgency.

Finally, there is a need to review the way in which the questionnaire is processed. Currently, it is received and assessed by recruiting staff, then passed to the GMO. Given the recommendation that all assessments of medical conditions be made after examination by a medical practitioner, it would be unnecessary for questionnaires to be first viewed by the Recruiting Section. Any recast questionnaire meant to inform the medical assessment should not be sent with the initial application to the Recruiting Section, but should be given by the applicant directly to the relevant medical practitioner. In that case, questionnaires would need to be completed only by applicants who reach the medical examination stage of the selection process.

Recommendation 56 — Development of a new medical questionnaire based on job requirements

That a new medical questionnaire be developed, directed at medical conditions that will substantially affect performance of the job requirements of operational constables. The questionnaire form should be developed at the same time as the guide for medical practitioners, with contributions from medical, human movements, legal and policing specialists. Applicants should give the completed questionnaire directly to the medical practitioner who performs the medical assessment.

Differing medical standards for applicants and serving officers

Currently, the only explicit requirement of serving officers regarding their medical condition is that set out in Commissioner's Circular No. 01/01491, reproduced in appendix E. That circular is directed at ensuring competent operation of police vehicles or motor vessels, and to this end prohibits officers diagnosed as suffering from one of several listed conditions from driving such a vehicle or vessel. These officers must give their officer in charge a medical certificate showing the nature of their illness. The circular contains further conditions on each of the specified illnesses, such as requirements for the renewal of medical certificates.

None of the conditions is listed in the circular as requiring or justifying termination of employment. For example, officers diagnosed as suffering from epilepsy are directed not to drive police vehicles or vessels unless they can produce a medical certificate stating they have been free of seizures for two years and are fit to drive such vehicles. This standard is clearly different from that specified for recruit applicants, for whom epilepsy is expressed to be an exclusion factor justifying rejection of the application.

Apart from this circular, there appears to be no other requirement for serving officers to notify the QPS of the development of medical conditions such as most of those listed as exclusion factors in relation to recruit applicants. There is no testing of serving officers' continued medical fitness to perform their duties.

¹⁵ Subject to the decision in *Stevens v. QPS*, as discussed in chapter 2.

This difference in treatment of applicants and serving officers compounds the difficulty of the QPS in successfully defending anti-discrimination or judicial review litigation. An applicant rejected because of a medical condition that is also suffered by serving officers who are apparently still performing their duties, and who are not even required to have their condition medically assessed, is likely to argue that the condition is not a real barrier to the application.

It is beyond the scope of this review to assess whether the QPS should institute any requirement for regular medical assessment of serving officers. However, it can be said that such a process, at least for those officers in operational positions, would improve the prospects of successfully defending future anti-discrimination and judicial review actions on the grounds just discussed. In addition, there are likely to be good organisational grounds for maximising effectiveness and efficiency by requiring ongoing standards of medical fitness, and testing, of serving officers.

In these circumstances this review makes no recommendation, but suggests that the Commissioner consider requiring serving officers who develop or sustain a condition likely to affect the performance of their duties, to report that fact and undergo a medical examination. Alternatively, consideration could be given to requiring annual or biennial medical examination of all serving officers to assess their continued capacity to perform their duties.

Privacy

The final major concern identified by this chapter relates to privacy. Even though, as already noted in chapter 2, there is currently no Commonwealth or Queensland legislation that specifically regulates the privacy of employment-related documents, it is still desirable that the privacy of individuals be respected where possible.

One concern about privacy would be removed by implementation of the recommendation above to replace the current medical questionnaire with a form given directly to the assessing medical practitioner rather than to the QPS Recruiting Section. There appears to be no justification for such personal information to be available to staff who have no function or expertise to assess it.

The second aspect of the privacy issue relates to the placement of the medical report on the applicant's general file, which is then made available to the interview panel and the Selection Committee. Only the Selection Committee makes any decision in relation to the medical report, with the interview panel having entirely different functions (see discussion in chapter 7). Given the personal nature of the report and any related questionnaire, this material should be maintained as separate, confidential, sealed files and be made available only to the relevant Selection Committee.

The third aspect of the privacy issue relates to what happens to medical information on applicants after the selection process is over. Currently, medical information relating to successful applicants is placed on the recruit's personnel file kept at the Academy, and ultimately on the personnel file that follows officers throughout their QPS career. There seems little reason for such personal and private information to be so freely available to a large range of senior officers and clerical staff wherever the individual is posted from time to time, particularly when no future medical testing is required of serving officers.

Several other Queensland government departments and agencies have a policy of destroying job applications, including applications by successful applicants, 12 to 18 months after the appeal period for unsuccessful applicants has expired. Prior to destruction, access to such job applications is limited to only a few authorised personnel. This policy is consistent with the guidelines on recruitment and selection issued by the Office of the Public Service (OPS Directive No. 5/97 — see chapter 2).

Any other use to which the information is put, such as to identify officers likely to have special needs or require counselling, needs to be weighed against the potentially intrusive nature of the information, and the right of the individual to privacy. If, as recommended above, medical information about applicants is stored on a separate, confidential, sealed file maintained centrally by the HRMB, it

could be made available in appropriate circumstances. For example, the officer's consent could be obtained to the release of the information, or the file could be released only to a Human Services Officer or other appropriately qualified person.

Finally, there is no apparent justification for the retention of medical information on unsuccessful applicants. Their medical files should be returned to them at the end of the selection process. The only exception arises in respect of rejected applicants who intend to reapply, where retention of medical information may simplify the selection process in relation to the next application, by exempting the applicant from another medical examination. Unsuccessful applicants should be advised in writing that they may elect to authorise the QPS to retain their medical information on file. Such authorisation should be given by the applicant in writing, and applicants making this election should be given written notification of how their information will be stored and used by the QPS; who will have access to it; and their entitlement to request the return of the information at any time.

Recommendation 57 — Management of medical information records

- (i) That all medical information and reports on applicants be maintained as confidential files by the Human Resource Management Branch and be available only to the relevant Selection Committee and, after the selection process, to designated personnel in limited, appropriate circumstances.
- (ii) That medical information on unsuccessful applicants be returned to them at the end of the selection process, but such applicants be advised in writing that they may elect to authorise the QPS to retain their medical information on file. Any authorisation should be in writing, and applicants making this election should be given written notification of how their information will be stored and used by the QPS and who will have access to it. Applicants should also be advised that they may request the return of the information to them at any time.

Conclusion

In recent years, anti-discrimination law has had a major impact on the way in which pre-employment medical examinations may be conducted and their results applied. The legal position now is that an applicant's medical condition may only affect the recruitment decision if:

- the applicant has been individually examined by a medical practitioner familiar with the duty statement and physical requirements of the relevant position
- the condition would prevent the applicant from performing the inherent occupational requirements of the position, having regard to any aids or services used by the person or which the employer could reasonably be expected to provide
- the medical assessment relates only to the applicant's current condition, and not to previous problems or the possibility of future deterioration.

Current QPS procedures do not comply with these requirements. It is therefore recommended that the QPS, with appropriate external assistance, produce a detailed guide to medical conditions and injuries which may affect specific duties of operational police. This guide should form the basis of all future medical evaluations. The current medical questionnaire also needs to be reviewed to ensure that it complies with anti-discrimination law. Finally, the way in which the QPS treats medical information about applicants and serving officers should be changed to ensure proper regard is paid to the privacy of individuals. These issues should be addressed with urgency to ensure that the QPS complies with its lawful obligations.

Chapter 12: The Selection Committee

The previous chapters in this report have described the various procedures through which applicants must pass in the selection process. All applicants who successfully complete these stages are considered by the Selection Committee, which recommends which applicants should be appointed as QPS recruits.

This chapter discusses the role and procedures of the Selection Committee, beginning with a description of the current Committee composition, role and processes. Issues of concern are then identified and discussed, and recommendations made to improve this important part of the selection process.

Current Selection Committee process

Currently, the Selection Committee, which assesses applications for the PROVE program (the POCC selection process is dealt with separately in chapter 14), comprises the following members:

- Inspector in charge of recruitment
- Superintendent in charge of the Initial Services Program (ISP)
- community representative
- Manager of the QPS planning and development section.

From time to time, Committee meetings may also be attended by advisors (e.g. the convenors of interview panels, or physical skills education staff responsible for administering the PCT).

Committee members have access to all available information collected throughout the selection process. This includes the entire application file comprising:

- the application form and medical questionnaire
- medical reports and results of the medical assessment
- psychometric test results, raw scores and standardised scores
- PCT result, along with any comments from staff who administered the test
- integrity check results and reports
- education/employment details and score
- references from various sources
- recommendation, notes, comments, and raw and standardised scores from the interview panel.

In addition, the QPS Recruiting Section provides the Selection Committee with an overall ranking of all applicants who have not been rejected previously in the selection process. That ranking is achieved by rating applicants according to their standardised scores on the psychometric test, education/employment matrix and panel interview, with each score weighted at one-third of the total rating.

The Selection Committee's task is to use this information to decide which applicants should be appointed as QPS recruits. On average, this will require consideration of about 300 applications per intake (which represents about one-third of all applications initially made per intake). From the 300 applications it considers, the Committee will recommend 140 to 180 appointments to the PROVE program each intake.

The Selection Committee must determine which applicants are most likely to succeed at policing and to fit the recruit profile desired by the QPS. In doing so, the Committee must bear in mind that all the applicants being considered have passed each of the various selection procedures and, therefore, are qualified for appointment to the QPS.

The Selection Committee begins its task by identifying all the applications before it that are from females, Aboriginals, and Torres Strait Islanders. These applications are assessed separately in an attempt to maximise the number of appointments made from these EEO target groups (as discussed in chapter 2). Only those applicants from the target groups who have passed all relevant selection procedures and are therefore qualified for appointment are considered. NESB applicants are not treated separately in this way, because the QPS is currently meeting its targets for that group through its ordinary processes.

All remaining applications are then considered, beginning with those at the top of the overall ranking and moving downwards, until enough have been selected to fill the necessary intake quota. The Selection Committee then makes its recommendations to the Chief Superintendent of HRD, who has delegated authority from the Commissioner to make the actual appointments.

The Chief Superintendent reserves the right to overrule recommendations of the Selection Committee. The current incumbent in that position advises that his practice is to review all decisions of the Selection Committee personally. In particular, he reviews those cases where the position of the applicant on the overall ranking was such that a recommendation for appointment would normally be expected, but was not made. The Chief Superintendent advises that if he is not satisfied with the decision of the Selection Committee in such cases, he would generally discuss the matter with a member of the Selection Committee before exercising his authority to overrule the Committee's recommendation. In general, this process would occur without the knowledge or involvement of the particular applicant, or of other members of the Selection Committee.

Applicants are not formally advised of any internal review mechanisms available if they are dissatisfied with the selection process. However, many such applicants contact the Commissioner, the Director of HRD, or the EEO unit. Generally, in such cases the Director of HRD will conduct an informal review of the matter, and refer any concerns to the Chief Superintendent of HRD for further consideration.

External review of selection decisions is available to applicants. Applicants may lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman who has power to investigate the appropriateness of administrative decision making and recommend changes. Alternatively, if grounds exist, an application may be made for judicial review of the selection decision, or a complaint may be made to the Anti-Discrimination Commission (see chapter 2).

Issues for consideration

Observation of Selection Committees was conducted by a member of the PEAC review subcommittee. The observer sat in and took notes on the Committee process, without participating in the process in any way. The observer's role was to note any problems with the selection process as well as any inconsistencies between stated policy and guidelines and actual practice. Selection Committee members were aware of the purpose of the observation sessions and told that their names and comments would not be identified in this report. The notes from the observations were summarised and form the basis of this chapter. A review of the literature on strategic decision making was combined with the findings of the observation sessions to formulate the recommendations in this chapter.

The following issues of concern arising from the Selection Committee process have been identified:

- There appears to be no cut-off point on the ranking of applicants, so that even those who have scored badly on each measure remain eligible for selection by the Committee, based on its overall judgment concerning such applicants.
- The Selection Committee often considers incomplete, inappropriate or irrelevant information, some of which is of doubtful validity, which will have a tendency to skew or bias judgmentally based decisions. Additionally, undue weight is given to the judgment-based panel-interview score, as opposed to the more objective data contained in education, employment and psychometric scores.

- Referee reports are treated inconsistently and sometimes unfairly.
- The Committee's decision is not by majority vote but by consensus, which can lead to dominance in judgment-based decisions by more vocal or influential members.
- There is no formal point of contact within the QPS where applicants may obtain and discuss feedback about their performance in the selection process.
- Applicants tend to be considered for the current intake only, rather than being made offers for appointment at the most convenient time (for the QPS and the individual).
- Despite the complex and specialised skills involved in selection decision making, particularly given the size of QPS recruitment and the complex legislative and policy environment, Selection Committee members receive no formal training in how to perform their task.
- The present role of the Chief Superintendent of HRDB to overrule Committee recommendations is unrestricted, not formally documented, and there is no requirement to consult with the relevant Selection Committee.

Each of these issues is discussed below.

Cut-off point

Currently, all applicants who are not excluded for failing the initial assessment criteria, having insufficient education or employment experience, or failing to complete the PCT, are ranked on their psychometric, interview and education/employment scores, and proceed to the Selection Committee stage. Therefore, it is possible for an applicant who has scored badly on each of the three facets of the ranking to nevertheless be considered by the Committee, and even theoretically to be accepted into the QPS, particularly if the applicant pool for the relevant intake is small.

Such a practice is not conducive to the selection of high-quality recruits. It would be unfair to reject an applicant simply because of one poor score — for example, a low panel-interview score, perhaps caused by nervousness at the interview. However, if an applicant rates badly on all three scores, it seems safe to assume that his or her prospects for success in the QPS are small. Further consideration of this application is a costly waste of the Committee's time.

In addition, there is an observable change in the attitude of the Committee as it progresses down the ranking of applicants. Those applicants towards the end of the list appear to be treated with less stringency than those at the top. Standards and stringency also vary considerably with each intake, so that applicants who are successful in one intake may well have been rejected for the previous intake.

These concerns would be dealt with by the introduction of minimum criteria, and in particular, a cut-off point on the overall ranking, below which applicants will not be considered by the Committee. The only exception to the application of such a cut-off should be in considering applicants from EEO target groups such as Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Some flexibility should apply to the consideration of such applicants who are just below the cut-off point, but otherwise meet all requirements for appointment to the QPS.

Recommendation 58 — Determination of an overall cut-off score for Selection Committee

That the QPS apply a cut-off point on the overall ranking of recruits, so that applicants scoring below that point will be rejected before the Selection Committee stage. The cut-off point should be based on all scores included in the ranking formula, and not just the overall ranking, and be applied consistently to all intakes. However, some flexibility should be exercised with applicants from EEO target groups who are just below the cut-off point but otherwise meet all requirements.

Information considered by the Selection Committee

As outlined above, as well as being presented with a ranking of all applicants qualified for selection, the Selection Committee has access to all information on the application files. There are several problems with this approach, as discussed below.

Unsystematic approach

As described in chapter 7 on panel interviews, application files tend to be bulky and messy, containing masses of disorganised information. Selection Committee members are presented with these files, a large number of which must be considered during the relatively short time set aside for the selection process.

The Committee has developed no formal, systematic way of processing this information; for example, it has no policy to consider all information on all applicants, or only certain information on all applicants. As a result, the information is considered in an ad hoc, inconsistent way, with some applicants being assessed on one or two issues only, and others being considered much more thoroughly.

In particular, although the Selection Committee is given an overall rating incorporating interview, psychometric and education/employment scores, the Committee also has access to individual scores relating to each of these components. As a result, there is a tendency to ignore the overall rating and to focus instead on the interview score, because of an apparently shared belief among Committee members that this is the best technique for predicting who will perform well in policing. In fact, as discussed elsewhere in this report, the interview has low validity when compared to the more objective selection devices. Despite this, in many cases the Selection Committee simply accepts the findings of the panel, regardless of the applicant's other scores.

As well as resulting in poor decision making, such an unsystematic approach also has great capacity for bias and unfairness, especially where it is not apparent why some applicants have been treated differently from others. These problems would be minimised by the development of a standard policy about what information the Committee should take into account in considering applications. That policy, or a summary of it, should also be given to all applicants to help explain to them the operation of the selection process. It would be appropriate to include that summary in the recruitment information booklet recommended in chapter 4.

It would also be appropriate for the Selection Committee's policy to make specific reference to the merit process it is required to observe, under the PSA Act (see discussion in chapter 2), and to articulate in some detail how the merit process is applied throughout the selection process.

Recommendation 59 — Develop process and policy for the Selection Committee decisions

That the Selection Committee develop a policy specifying the information it considers in making its decisions. The policy should give due weight to all valid selection criteria, be applied fairly and consistently, and be made available to all applicants. The policy should include a formal statement of the way in which the QPS applies the merit process to recruit selection.

Insufficient information

While the Selection Committee is often swamped with too much information in the form of bulky files, it is also common for the Committee not to be given information necessary or even vital for informed decision making. Theoretically, the Selection Committee is the last step in the selection process; however, often material, including referee reports or integrity check results, may still be outstanding, or the applicant may still have to do or re-do the PCT.

In addition, some information from applicants may be missing or incomplete; for example, academic records may not have been supplied as required. As a result, applicants may be accepted, subject to provisos about the supply of the outstanding material, but with that material never being considered

by the Selection Committee. While this may be acceptable for purely formal documents, it is a flaw in the process to allow Selection Committee decisions to be made in the absence of any information that might affect the outcome of that decision. Any decisions made in these circumstances are of questionable validity.

The Selection Committee policy should specify that selection decisions should not be made, even provisionally, unless all of the material set out in the recommendation below is available to the Committee.

Recommendation 60 — Procedure where there is insufficient applicant information

That the Selection Committee policy specify that applications will not be considered by the Committee, even provisionally, unless all necessary information, including that set out below, is available to the Committee:

- confirmation from the Recruiting Section that the applicant has met all initial assessment criteria, including criminal and traffic history checks, citizenship or permanent residency, driver's licence, minimum education and employment experience, first aid and keyboard certificates
- standardised psychometric tests score
- standardised panel interview score
- confirmation from the Integrity Committee that any integrity concerns about the applicant have been resolved
- all required referee reports
- confirmation that the applicant has passed the PCT, or whatever test or procedure replaces it
- medical assessment report.

Irrelevant information

On some occasions the Selection Committee considers irrelevant information. This occurs largely because the Committee is supplied with material already assessed at a prior stage in the selection process, and which bears no relationship to the function of the Selection Committee. Alternatively, Committee members may raise issues not related to selection criteria. Examples include:

- Personal observations that an applicant is underweight, made after reference to medical information setting out details of weight and height which have already been considered in the medical assessment.
- Reference to the age of applicants, in terms of 'because of their age we'll only get 10 years service from them', when there is no selection criterion relating to age. Discrimination on the basis of age is also unlawful under the *Anti-Discrimination Act* (see chapter 2).
- Reference to the applicant's sick leave record in past employment to assess the applicant's health, which has already been considered in the medical assessment. Discrimination on the basis of an applicant's past health is also unlawful under the *Anti-Discrimination Act* (although the Act does not necessarily prevent the use of sick leave records as an integrity check, to assess the likelihood of the applicant having made untruthful claims).

Irrelevant considerations should not be raised by the Selection Committee, particularly where they duplicate some previous step in the selection process, or where they involve potentially discriminatory matters. It should be the responsibility of the Chair of the Selection Committee to ensure such matters are not raised.

There is also a need to address the formal comments made by interview panels for consideration by the Selection Committee. Some comments relate to entirely irrelevant matters; for example, the need for an applicant to develop public speaking skills, when such skills are not part of the selection criteria. Some panels recommend that applicants visit police stations or go to blue light discos to

demonstrate initiative and interest in policing, even where applicants have already demonstrated such an interest in other ways; for example, by doing a degree in justice studies. Many such comments have more to do with the personal biases and perceptions of the panel member than the quality of the applicant.

This problem should be partly solved by the introduction of training for panel members (recommended in chapter 7), but, at any rate, the Chair of the Selection Committee should ensure that any irrelevant comments by panel members are disregarded by the Selection Committee.

Recommendation 61 — Responsibility of the Chair of the Selection Committee

That the Chair of the Selection Committee be responsible for ensuring that irrelevant considerations are not raised, particularly those based on an attribute of the applicant that could be the basis of unlawful discrimination, or those which raise issues already dealt with in the selection process. The Committee Chair should also ensure that any irrelevant comments by interview panel members are disregarded by the Selection Committee.

Too much information

The problem of the Selection Committee considering irrelevant matters would be minimised by ensuring that the Committee is given only the information necessary for the performance of its function, rather than entire application files. For example, the Selection Committee should be given confirmation from the Recruiting Section that all initial assessment criteria have been satisfied, and from the Integrity Committee that there are no unresolved issues, rather than receiving all documents relating to those matters. Similarly, the Committee should receive only standardised scores and formal comments relating to panel interviews and psychometric tests, rather than being given raw data and interview notes.

Particular problems concerning the consideration of irrelevant material have arisen in relation to information from the panel interview. There have been instances of Selection Committee members referring to particular responses given to interview questions, and making adverse findings against applicants on that basis. Making such determinations without full knowledge of the circumstances of the interview raises a considerable risk of the response being taken out of context, or otherwise treated unfairly, particularly when the applicant has no right of reply. It is the job of the interview panel to consider such matters, and to take them into account in awarding the applicant's score.

For similar reasons, Committee members should not have access to raw panel scores, but only the final score, which has been standardised for consistency. Understanding the statistical implications of referring to raw data, without knowledge of standard deviations and other relevant factors, is complex and time consuming, and simply not necessary once standardised scores have been prepared. Additionally, the Selection Committee sometimes tries to compensate for panel interviewers who are regarded as tough or easy. This is why panel scores are standardised, to make allowance for such variations in a systematic and consistent way, rather than relying on personal intuition or feelings. This problem would be minimised if the Selection Committee did not know the composition of the interview panel.

Similarly, it is common for the Selection Committee to consider significant differences in panel-interview scores as problematic (e.g. if the person improves 100 points in a second interview). This practice has the capacity to be extremely unfair to the applicant, as the Committee has no effective mechanism to determine which is the more reliable interview, nor information to determine whether the difference reflects different levels of interview skill, or represents real attainment on the applicant's behalf. Given this, the Committee should only have access to the final interview results.

Recommendation 62 — Withholding irrelevant information from the Selection

Committee

That the Selection Committee not be given irrelevant information such as psychometric test responses or raw scores, interview responses or raw scores or information relating to any earlier interviews, documents concerning integrity issues (apart from confirmation from the Integrity Committee that there are no unresolved integrity concerns regarding the applicant), or documents concerning the initial assessment criteria (apart from confirmation from the Recruiting Section that such criteria have been met).

Information from other sources

Irrelevant considerations may also arise when the applicant is known to a member of the Selection Committee. This may result in that member making comments about the applicant that do not arise from the material before the Committee and that affect the selection decision. Occasionally, and particularly in relation to rejoiners, Committee members actively seek out the comments of somebody known to have worked with the applicant but who has not been approached for a formal referee report.

Either of these circumstances is inappropriate and may give rise to the appearance of bias or unfairness. Committee members who know particular applicants should disqualify themselves from any decision regarding that applicant. Decisions should be made from the material collected by the appropriate selection procedures, and not from informal, ad hoc contacts, particularly those made without the knowledge or consent of the applicant.

Recommendation 63 — Exclusion of Committee members who know the applicant

That Committee members who know particular applicants must disqualify themselves from any decision regarding that applicant. Decisions should be made from the material collected by the appropriate selection procedures, and not from informal, ad hoc contacts.

Referee reports

There appears to be a heavy emphasis placed on police referee reports, at the expense of referees with knowledge of the applicant's actual work performance. In addition, there is no consistent approach to dealing with unfavourable or inconsistent referee reports. For example, in some cases one unfavourable report is considered sufficient to reject the applicant, whereas in other cases the other referee reports and interview results are also considered.

The recommended Selection Committee policy needs to detail precisely what weight should be given to referee reports, and how adverse reports should be treated.

Recommendation 64 — Selection Committee policy on weighting of referee reports

That the Selection Committee policy detail the weight to be given to referee reports compared to other selection factors, and set out a consistent and fair process for considering adverse referee reports.

Selection Committee's decision-making style

The issue of consensus as opposed to independent assessments of applicants has already been discussed in relation to panel interviews in chapter 7. Similar considerations arise with Selection Committee decisions. Again, observation of Committee meetings has revealed the risk of dominance of decision making by a vocal or insistent member, who effectively makes the decision for the Committee.

For the reasons set out in chapter 7, the consensus approach should cease, and applications should be determined on the basis of a majority vote, with the Chair having a casting vote, if necessary.

Recommendation 65 — Selection Committee to adopt majority vote system

That the consensus approach to Selection Committee decisions cease, and applications be determined by a majority vote, with the Chair having a casting vote, if necessary.

Feedback about the selection process

Currently, there is no formal mechanism for unsuccessful applicants to request feedback on their performance in the selection process. The provision of feedback is important to applicants, as it enables them to assess areas where skills or presentations need upgrading, and also to determine whether they should reapply after taking appropriate action.

In addition, formal feedback requirements serve a useful organisational purpose, as they require documentation of why the application failed. Currently, the reason for non-selection by the Selection Committee is not always clear. As discussed previously, the lack of clear reasons could make it difficult for the QPS to defend its decisions were an external review to be sought (see chapter 2).

The appropriate stage for feedback to be given is after the Selection Committee has made its recommendations. Panel interviewers, while they can comment on the interview score, are not in a position to tell applicants what overall effect the interview score has had on their application before the Selection Committee. Similarly, QPS recruiting staff may not be aware of the basis on which a Selection Committee decision has been made, particularly given the Committee's current practice of not fully documenting its reasons. Ideally, the Chair of the Selection Committee is best placed to perform the feedback function, but it may be unrealistic to expect one person to do this for about 150 unsuccessful applicants. The QPS should address these issues and make appropriate arrangements for the giving of accurate, timely and helpful feedback to unsuccessful applicants who request it.

Recommendation 66 — Provision of feedback to unsuccessful applicants

That the Chair of the Selection Committee or some other person nominated by the QPS be the designated contact person for all requests from unsuccessful applicants for feedback. Applicants who request feedback should be advised of why their application did not succeed, any steps they can take to improve their prospects for success, and the appropriate procedure for reapplying. Unsuccessful applicants should be advised in writing of their right to request such feedback.

Applicants who reapply

Currently, many applicants reapply after an initial rejection, but the QPS has no formal policy for how such applications are treated. Such a policy should cover such matters as which selection devices need to be reapplied, and whether fully or in part.

Another issue is whether the Selection Committee should be advised that the person has previously applied for selection, and the basis of the previous rejection. There are some advantages in the Committee having such information, in that it can determine what improvements have been achieved since the last application. However, there are also disadvantages, in that the Committee may be biased against applicants it has already rejected, even if their application now merits acceptance. These issues should be addressed by the QPS in the recommended Selection Committee policy.

Recommendation 67 — Develop policy to manage applicants who reapply

That the Selection Committee policy specifically address the issue of applicants who reapply for selection.

Short-term outlook

For several years, the QPS has been under considerable external pressure to rapidly increase its numbers of operational officers. One effect of that pressure has been a tendency to adopt a short-term

outlook on recruiting. This has involved a focus on filling current intakes, perhaps at the expense of considering whether in some cases it may be more sensible for certain applicants to be offered positions at a later time. This may be because the number of well-qualified applicants exceeds current intake places, so that some applicants could instead be offered positions commencing later in the year, without having to undergo the whole selection process again.

Alternatively, applicants may express a preference to perform their training at the Townsville campus, which only takes new entrants every second intake. Applicants preferring Townsville when it is not available are only offered entry to the Oxley campus, rather than being given the option of accepting a position in the next available Townsville intake.

Similarly, some applicants are considered by the Selection Committee even though they do not currently meet, for example, minimum educational requirements. Such applications are considered on the basis that the applicant will meet the requirements at some time in the future. This flexibility is desirable where the applicants are due to complete the requirements after the date of closure for applications, but prior to the commencement date of the intake, and where there is good evidence to suggest they will be successful (e.g. on the basis of past results). In other circumstances, however, it is undesirable for such applications to progress through the selection process until such time as the necessary qualifications have been obtained.

Recommendation 68 — Policy on assessment of suitability and appointment of applicants

That applicants who are selected for appointment commence that appointment at the most appropriate time, taking into account any preference for where training is to be completed, and the convenience of both the applicant and the QPS. Applicants not yet qualified for appointment should not have their application considered until such time as they become qualified, except where the outstanding requirement is completion of an educational qualification which will be obtained before the commencement date of the intake.

Selection Committee constitution and training

Given the important role of the Selection Committee, there is an obvious need for its members to be fully conversant with appropriate selection techniques, as well as legal issues such as the avoidance of discrimination. No training in these areas is currently given, and it is unrealistic to expect members to somehow acquire such knowledge themselves, particularly given that they are performing selection duties on top of their other important duties.

In addition, it is vital that the Committee has as broad and diverse a membership as possible, to ensure that a variety of viewpoints can be expressed. For example, at present there are occasions when, due to the unavailability of one member, the Committee comprises all males. This is not desirable, and is contrary to the stated EEO policies and strategies discussed in chapter 2. The Recruiting Section should ensure that all Selection Committees have appropriate gender representation, and that, if possible, other EEO target groups are also represented, if necessary through the selection of an appropriate community representative.

A recommendation has already been made in chapter 7 for a consultant to be employed to design a comprehensive training program for panel interviewers. Much of that training will also be relevant to Selection Committee members. As part of that consultancy, the specific training needs of the Selection Committee should also be considered.

Recommendation 69 — Development of training program for Committee members

- (i) That as part of the consultancy recommended in chapter 7, a comprehensive training program for Selection Committee members also be developed.
- (ii) That the Recruiting Section ensure that all Selection Committees have appropriate gender representation and that, if possible, other EEO target groups are also represented, if necessary through the selection of a community representative.

Role of the Chief Superintendent of HRD

As discussed earlier in this chapter, ultimately the Selection Committee makes recommendations only, and it is the Chief Superintendent of HRD who has the Commissioner's delegated authority to make the actual recruit selection decision. While such delegations are clearly an internal QPS matter, it is nevertheless relevant to consider the Chief Superintendent's role as it relates to the selection process described in this report.

As already described, the current incumbent in the position reviews all selection recommendations, but particularly those where applicants with a relatively high position on the overall ranking have not been appointed. This review is intended to act as a process audit or check that applicants are not being overlooked for selection for wrong or insufficient reasons.

However, while this is the current policy, it is not formally documented and there are no clear criteria available to determine the consistency or fairness with which the policy is applied. In these circumstances, there is no guarantee to prevent a future holder of the delegation from adopting a more wide-ranging or interventionist approach. There seems little point in devoting a great deal of effort to ensuring best practice in the selection process, if the results of that process can be overturned by one person, without even any statement of which circumstances or criteria will be regarded as justification for such action, or without any requirement for the giving of reasons or consultation with the Selection Committee.

As a minimum, before overturning a recommendation of the Selection Committee, the Chief Superintendent should be required to reconvene the relevant Committee, or a quorum or majority of its members where it is impractical for all members to attend. The Committee should be presented with a statement of the Chief Superintendent's concerns regarding the Committee's recommendation. The Committee should reconsider its decision in the light of those concerns, and have the opportunity to discuss the matter with the Chief Superintendent. If agreement still cannot be reached, then the Chief Superintendent must make the decision according to the relevant delegation. Such a process will ensure that there is proper consultation with the Selection Committee before any of its recommendations are overturned. This process would also have learning benefits for the Selection Committee in that the Committee would gain some insight into why its recommendation had not been accepted.

Recommendation 70 — Consultation between Committee and Chief Superintendent

That no Selection Committee recommendation be rejected by the Chief Superintendent of HRD without the Chief Superintendent first reconvening the relevant Committee, presenting a statement of concerns about the recommendation, and discussing those concerns with the Committee. If the matter cannot be resolved by consultation, the Chief Superintendent must then make the selection decision according to the relevant delegation.

Conclusion

Observation of the Selection Committee revealed several concerns regarding its current processes, including:

- the lack of any minimum cut-off point (below which applicants are not considered) means that the quality of applicants varies considerably from intake to intake
- the Committee often has incomplete, inappropriate or irrelevant information that may increase the likelihood of biased decisions
- undue weight is given to interview scores, which have less validity than the more objective data contained in education, employment and psychometric scores, and referee reports tend to be treated inconsistently.

To overcome these problems, it is recommended that the QPS institute a training program for Selection Committee members, with a particular focus on the use of appropriate selection techniques and the avoidance of bias. The Selection Committee should develop, and make available to applicants, formal policies specifying:

- the information to be considered by the Committee in making its decisions
- minimum information that must be available before the Committee will consider an application
- information that will not be made available to the Committee
- the weighting and treatment of referee reports.

The Committee should also adopt a majority vote system. In addition, the current process by which the Committee's recommendations may be rejected by the Chief Superintendent of HRD should be formally documented. The policy should require the Chief Superintendent to consult the Committee before taking such action.

Chapter 13: Sequencing and weighting of selection devices

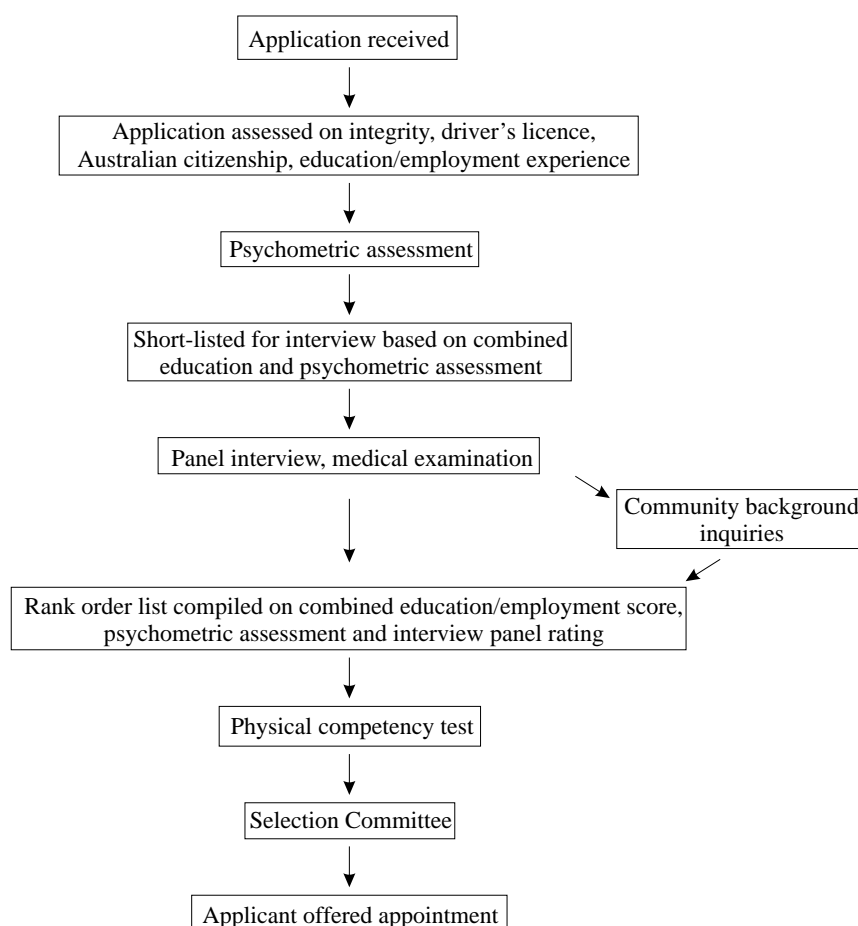
The previous chapters in this report have made recommendations aimed at improving the validity, reliability and legal defensibility of each step in the recruitment and selection process. The appropriate weight and reliance placed on each of the devices in the selection process must also be assessed, primarily on the basis of the predictive validity of each device. Those devices with greatest validity and reliability should have greatest reliance placed on them during the selection process.

This chapter assesses how each of the selection steps should be sequenced and weighted in the decision-making process.

Sequencing

The current overall sequencing of selection devices and processes is summarised in figure 13.1.

Figure 13.1 — Current sequence of hurdles and processes for selection

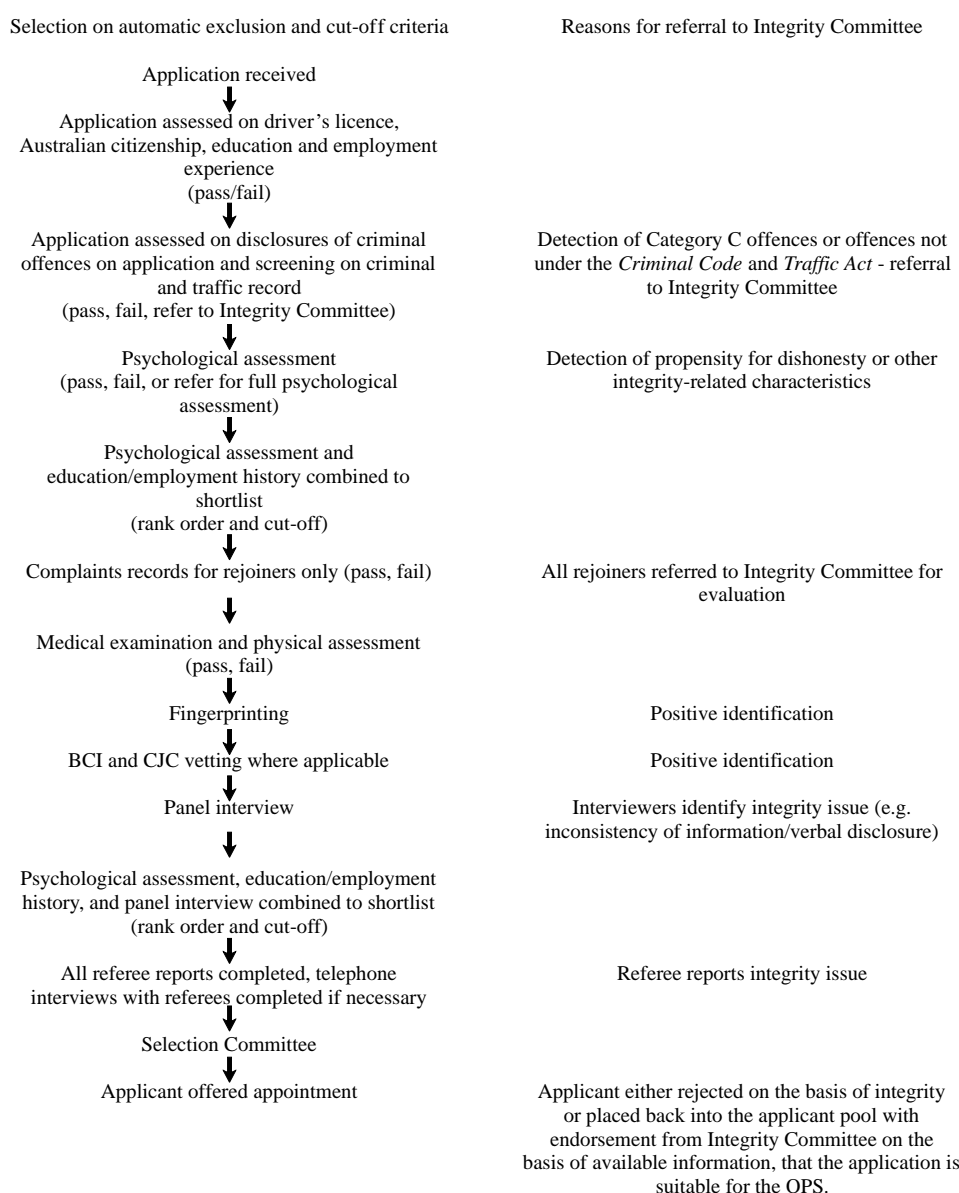


The concept of a multiple-hurdle selection process is based on the systematic reduction of the applicant pool to a size suitable for selection purposes. The decision on how hurdles (or selection devices) are sequenced is determined by a number of factors, including the:

- cost of using the selection device (e.g. psychological tests are generally cost-efficient whereas panel interviews and physical competency testing are costly)
- validity and reliability of the selection device (e.g. greater reliance should be placed on those devices with greater validity and reliability)
- ease of administration (e.g. assessing applicants on education can be done on the basis of written applications whereas interviews need to be coordinated and require applicants to attend nominated interview locations).

The most cost-efficient assessments with good predictive power should be used as early in the screening process as possible and the more expensive assessments in the final stages of selection. The sequence of selection devices currently used by the QPS should be reordered on this basis and to take into account the recommendations of this report. The recommended sequence is described in figure 13.2:

Figure 13.2 — The proposed sequence of hurdles and processes for selection



This approach retains the most cost-efficient and valid selection devices early in the selection process to reduce the applicant pool. The more costly and less reliable devices (e.g. panel interview) are towards the final stage of the process and are considered in conjunction with other selection devices (e.g. psychological testing results and assessments on education and employment).

Recommendation 71 — Sequencing the selection process

That the QPS adopt the sequence of selection devices and processes proposed in figure 13.2.

Weighting

Currently, each applicant who reaches the Selection Committee stage is ranked on their overall score (as discussed in chapter 12). This score is calculated as follows:

Overall = psychological testing score + education/employment rating + panel interview score					
score	(33.33%)	+	(33.33%)	+	(33.33%)

The decision on how to weight selection devices relates primarily to the known predictive validity and reliability of each of the selection devices. The current evaluation of the three selection devices indicates that the panel interview is an unreliable measure and has questionable validity. However, given that it is proposed to redesign the interview in the near future, the current weightings should remain until future evaluations can be conducted and an assessment made of the validity and reliability of each of the respective selection devices (see chapter 15).

Conclusion

The following adjustments would substantially improve the selection process:

- criminal and traffic history checks should be run prior to the psychological assessment
- medical and fitness assessments should be conducted prior to the panel interview
- fingerprinting and vetting should be completed prior to the Selection Committee process
- integrity should be assessed continually throughout the selection process.

Research indicates that the panel interview, in its current form, is unreliable and of questionable validity. However, given that it is proposed to redesign the interview in the near future the current weightings should remain until future evaluations can be conducted.

Chapter 14: Selection process for POCC

In May 1994, the QPS introduced the Police Operational Conversation Course (POCC) to cater for the increasing number of recruits who had prior policing experience in Queensland or other jurisdictions. POCC is an abridged training program which requires 70 recruit training days as opposed to the 130 training days required of the PROVE program. Constables produced through the POCC program also serve a much shorter probationary period than PROVE recruits. The rationale for establishing this program was that applicants with prior policing experience have at least a basic level of knowledge, skills and abilities to undertake general duties policing, whereas the PROVE program assumes no such prior knowledge.

The selection process for the POCC program differs considerably from that used for normal entry. The first section of this chapter describes the development of, and rationale for, the program and summarises the views of the QPS Review 1996 on the program. The remaining sections describe the selection process, discuss issues that have been raised about this process and make recommendations for its improvement.

Development of the POCC program

The POCC program originated as a practical response to the influx of interstate and former QPS officers seeking entry to the QPS. However, it was soon recognised by the QPS that the program could be used as a proactive marketing tool to assist the Service to meet its recruitment targets more quickly.

When the POCC marketing and recruitment campaign began in 1994, approximately 20 former QPS, interstate or overseas officers were available for each of the three intakes per year, representing a total intake of around 60 officers per annum. Subsequent budget increases soon enabled numbers to be increased to 40 recruits per intake (approximately 120 officers per annum) and that figure has been maintained ever since. Occasionally, intakes are of fewer than 40 officers, but never more than 40.

Although the main consideration behind the establishment of the POCC recruitment program was to enable the QPS to increase recruit numbers more quickly, the QPS has indicated that this is no longer a consideration and the program is now retained because it has other important organisational benefits:

- Rejoiners can be trained more quickly than main entry recruits because of the shorter recruit-training program and probationary period.
- Recruiting experienced officers brings diversity, knowledge and experience of alternative practices to the Service. Many rejoiners have previously worked in one or more specialised areas (e.g. prosecutions or forensics) and when promoted from general duties into a specialised area, bring their experience and knowledge to the position.
- The recruitment of experienced police helps to reduce pressure on Field Training Officers who are struggling to cope with the mentoring workload associated with the arrival of 450 or so inexperienced FYCs each year.
- The POCC program brings policing one step closer to mobility and professionalism by acknowledging prior policing experience (although it is acknowledged that complete mobility and portability for police officers will only be achieved when there is also lateral recruitment into higher ranks and national standards and competencies have been developed).

The QPS is now committed to maintaining the POCC program as an integral part of its recruitment strategy, even though it could meet the Government's staffing targets from within its normal recruit applicant pool, without relying on the POCC program. Although the QPS has not made any systematic evaluation of the POCC program, the HRD considers that there is strong evidence that POCC graduates have performed very well in the field. In support of this view, HRD points to the positive assessments

which have been provided by District Education and Training Officers, and the fact that no-one from the POCC program has failed any of the competencies required of a constable.

QPS review

The QPS policy of actively recruiting police from other jurisdictions was briefly discussed in the 1996 QPS Review. The report noted that the CJC had expressed concerns about the adequacy of the procedures then being used by the QPS for vetting interstate applicants, and indicated that the Review Committee shared these concerns. The Committee also observed that:

the large scale recruitment of past and present officers has the potential to undermine the substantial progress that has been made in recent years in changing the recruitment profile of the QPS, unless it is carefully monitored. (p. 99)

The Committee went on to recommend that the Commissioner take steps to ensure that:

- lateral recruitment to general duties in the QPS is on the basis of competitive assessment on the same entry criteria as other applicants, and that improved vetting procedures are implemented for such recruits
- the advancement of lateral recruits in the QPS is on the same basis as that for other new recruits as prescribed by the PSA Act
- lateral recruits are included as part of the intake for the purposes of assessing the extent to which the QPS has achieved its recruiting targets.

These issues were subsequently referred to PEAC for consideration in this review.

Current selection process for rejoiners

Table 14.1 shows how the selection process differs between the PROVE and POCC programs. The main areas of difference are described in more detail below.

If a police recruit in the POCC program fails to meet minimum competencies, he or she may be transferred to the PROVE program, although no such transfers have yet occurred. Similarly, PROVE recruits with prior policing experience who demonstrate they are easily meeting the competencies required of the course can be transferred to the POCC program. There have been two transfers of this kind since the commencement of the program in 1994. These transfer decisions are made by the Chief Superintendent of HRDB.

Table 14.1 — Selection process for PROVE and POCC compared

Selection process for PROVE	Selection process for POCC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education/employment rating • Psychometric testing • Medical examination • Physical competency testing (PCT) • Referee report • Panel interview • Integrity screening • Selection Committee (applicants are ranked on an overall score comprising interview, psychometric test results, and education/employment rating) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable • Not applicable • Medical examination • Not applicable • Referee report • Panel interview • Integrity screening • Selection Committee (no ranking, considered on a case by case basis)

Source: HRD, QPS

Prior policing experience

All applicants with prior policing experience are able to apply for the POCC program. Under a general agreement made by all Australian Police Commissioners, applicants from other police services with less than five years' service are not eligible to be considered for the program, until such time as they have resigned their current position.

Factors examined when assessing an applicant's experience include:

- the number of years of policing experience
- the type of policing experience
- the jurisdiction where that experience was obtained
- if applicable, the number of years since separation
- if applicable, the type of work experience since separation.

Not all applicants with prior policing experience will necessarily be deemed suitable for the POCC program. For example, a current serving officer who has not performed operational policing duties (for which there is no formal definition, but which usually includes general, traffic and investigative duties) for an extended period may be recommended for the PROVE program instead. The jurisdiction where prior policing experience is obtained may also determine which program is considered suitable — if the jurisdiction differs significantly from Queensland, the applicant may be recommended for the PROVE program.

Table 14.2 outlines the average years of police experience of POCC appointees for each year since the commencement of the program.

Table 14.2 — Average length of service for POCC appointees

Year	Average length of service
1994	8 years 10 months
1995	10 years 5 months
1996	9 years 9 months
1997	9 years 10 months

Source: HRD, QPS

Medical evaluation

POCC applicants are required to undertake the same medical evaluation process as other applicants (see chapter 11). Applicants in Queensland are assessed by a GMO, as is the case for main entry recruits. For interstate applicants, the GMO travels with the interview panels to different States to conduct medical assessments on the same day applicants are interviewed.

Referee checks

POCC applicants are asked to provide three referee reports. Ideally, the applicant's immediate supervisor, officer-in-charge supervisor and the district officer supervisor each complete a written referee report. The report used is the same as that described in chapter 9, although comments on the applicant's previous work performance and conduct as a police officer are also requested.

The panel interview

Rejoiners, like main entry applicants, are required to attend a panel interview. These interviews are currently conducted in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and New Zealand (and in the past, have also been held in Alice Springs and Darwin). The panel for POCC applicants is slightly different from that used for interviews for main entry recruits, consisting of the Superintendent of the ISP or some other senior police officer from the Academy, an inspector or senior sergeant, and a community member. Although the job description and selection criteria are the same as for main entry applicants,

the interview schedule is slightly different because it includes questions on previous policing experience. The process for scoring the interview is the same as that employed for main entry panels.

Integrity screening

Rejoiners are subject to the same integrity-screening process as main entry applicants (see chapter 8). However, because rejoiners have previous policing experience, the following additional information on their prior service is obtained:

- a report to verify service particulars, conduct, work performance and sick leave records
- a report to obtain details of the officer's full complaint history including unsubstantiated or unresolved complaints.

This information is provided to the ESC, which makes a recommendation as to whether the applicant is suitable for the QPS. If additional information is required to make the decision, the ESC requests further details from the officer's current or former police service. The recommendation is then considered by the Selection Committee.

All former QPS officers applying to enter the POCC program are vetted by the CJC, and information is sought from the CJC and ESC on substantiated, unsubstantiated and unresolved complaints. The CJC makes a recommendation to the ESC as to the suitability of each applicant for the QPS. This recommendation is then forwarded to the Selection Committee.

The names of all former QPS officers are circulated to the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and all Assistant Commissioners for comment.

Selection Committee

The Selection Committee considers all information collectively when making a decision on the suitability of applicants for the POCC program. Because the number of vacancies in the program approximately equals the number of applicants, applicants are not rank ordered; instead, they are simply assessed as to whether they meet the threshold for admission to the program.

The POCC Selection Committee consists of two Inspectors (managers of the Recruiting Section and the Planning and Development Section), the Superintendent in charge of the ISP, a representative from the ESC and a community representative. The ESC representative provides advice on applicants who have a particular integrity concern raised against them (e.g. an applicant who has an unusual number of unsubstantiated complaints).

The Selection Committee considers the recommendation made by the interview panel. Where the panel has indicated that an applicant is 'not recommended', the Committee weighs the reasons for the decision against all other information provided about the applicant.

When the Selection Committee has considered each case, it makes a recommendation as to the suitability of each applicant for the POCC program. This information is forwarded to the Chief Superintendent of the HRDB, who considers the recommendations and makes the final decision as to whether an applicant is appointed as a POCC recruit.

Issues for consideration

The review of the POCC selection process focused on the following areas:

- the grounds for exempting POCC applicants from certain selection devices
- referee checking
- integrity screening
- eligibility criteria used for the POCC program

- panel interview
- final selection process.

Three broad considerations underpinned this review:

- One of the key recommendations of this report is that a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan be adopted for both the PROVE and POCC selection processes, to enable ongoing validation and modification of selection practices (see chapter 15). For this to occur, relevant variables must be identified and quantified for future assessment. Therefore, the recommendations make provision for the measurement of important variables.
- Currently, POCC applicants are considered either suitable or unsuitable; those who are suitable are automatically accepted because the number of vacancies is similar to the number of applicants. However, it is apparent that in the very near future the pool of applicants with prior policing experience will exceed POCC intake sizes. A good POCC selection process should have the capacity to distinguish between applicants on the basis of merit, so as to prevent the need for an overhaul of the process in the near future.
- Although the POCC and PROVE selection processes differ, they both aim to recruit applicants to perform the job of a general duties police officer (see chapter 3). The key issue therefore is how well the applicant's work experience meets the prescribed selection criteria for a general duties police officer. In the majority of cases, the duties performed in some specialised areas will adequately address some of the selection criteria (e.g. demonstrated reasoning and analytical ability can be evidenced by the detective who has conducted and coordinated investigations). However, this must be established on a case-by-case basis, rather than simply being assumed.

Two observations of the POCC Selection Committee process were undertaken (the number being limited due to the infrequency of POCC Selection Committee meetings). The observer took notes on the Selection Committee process and did not participate in the meeting. The observer noted any problems with the process as well as any inconsistencies between interview policy/guidelines and practice. Selection Committee members were aware of the purpose of the observation session and were advised that they would not be identified individually in the report. The notes from the observation session were summarised and are commented on in this chapter. Both the ESC and the CJC were also consulted to identify any perceived problems with the existing selection process. In addition, this review drew extensively on the research literature dealing with 'best practice' recruit selection procedures.

Exemption from selection devices

The QPS has adopted a policy whereby applicants with previous policing experience who apply for the POCC program are exempt from:

- application of the education/employment rating
- psychometric testing
- the PCT.

These exemptions were the subject of considerable discussion among PEAC members. The QPS defended its approach by arguing that the selection criteria measured by the above selection devices are measured more directly and more accurately by examination of policing experience, as discerned through the panel interview and referee checks. However, other PEAC members considered that POCC applicants should be subject to the same selection procedures as main entry applicants, so that recruit quality was maintained and the integrity of the selection process was protected.

These contrasting views are set out in detail below in relation to each of the areas where there is currently an exemption for POCC applicants. Because of the recommendation in chapter 5 that education and employment for main entry recruits be measured and assessed independently, those factors are discussed separately below.

Employment history evaluation

The employment history of POCC applicants is assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking account of a range of factors. By contrast, for PROVE applicants employment is scored and used in combination with other quantifiable selection devices (e.g. psychometric tests and panel interviews) to exclude applicants who do not meet minimum criteria.

QPS representatives on PEAC argued that employment was adequately assessed by the panel interview and referee reports. According to this viewpoint, the case-by-case approach allowed an assessment of all the attributes of the applicant (including employment) in a collective manner. By contrast, some members of PEAC argued that this approach increased the risk of bias and inconsistency in the decision-making process, and urged that a formalised system for assessing employment history should be used because it had demonstrated predictive validity (CJC 1996a).

A related issue is that, under current procedures, there is no systematic process for determining how recent an applicant's experience in general duties policing must be before the applicant can be considered for appointment to the POCC program. It may have been many years since some applicants performed general duties policing, the nature of which has changed substantially over the years, particularly in relation to advances in information technology and policing style (e.g. the move toward community-based policing). Assessment of the recency of general duties experience is particularly relevant for the POCC program because it assumes a level of competence for eligibility for the abridged program.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a systematic process for evaluating employment should be developed, but at this stage should only be used for validation purposes. Under this approach, employment scores will be made available to all staff involved in the selection process to assist in the assessment of the applicant, but will not be used to exclude applicants. The proposed evaluation of the POCC selection process (see chapter 15) will assess the predictive validity of the employment variable, which will enable PEAC to determine at a later stage if any changes to the selection process are warranted. One of the benefits of this approach is that it will allow future comparisons between those applicants appointed to the POCC program, those appointed to the PROVE program, and those who are rejected.

Recommendation 72 — Assessment of previous policing experience for POCC applicants

- (i) That the QPS develop a systematic process for assessing and comparing applicants on the basis of previous policing experience. Information to be collected about applicants should include:
 - number of years in general duties and number of years since performing general duties
 - number and type of speciality areas worked in
 - number of years of formal supervisory or management experience
 - highest position attained.
- (ii) That previous employment in fields other than policing be assessed using the same systematic process as that applied to main entry recruits.

Education history evaluation

There is currently no formal systematic procedure to assess the educational achievements of POCC applicants, notwithstanding the requirement for officers to undertake continual education throughout their policing career. By contrast, main entry recruits are required to hold qualifications equivalent to an associate diploma, the justification being that skills developed during tertiary studies are similar to those required to undertake the recruit-training program and to provide effective policing in a complex society.

Several PEAC members argued that the same educational standards should apply to POCC and main entry applicants, on the grounds that:

- the willingness and demonstrated ability to do further studies are directly related to the job of general duties policing in the QPS, as officers are constantly required to attend training courses and to complete a comprehensive study program to be eligible for promotion
- the lower formal educational standards of rejoiners may be working against the QPS's previous success in raising the educational profile of recruits (see QPS Review 1996, p. 99)
- post-secondary education exposes the individual to a broader range of experiences, different ways of thinking, the role of research (see QPS Review 1996, p. 97), new ideas and values, improves written and oral communication skills, promotes competence in the use of modern technology (particularly computers) and demonstrates an ability to commit to self-directed learning.

QPS representatives on PEAC acknowledged the benefits of education, but considered that the selection process should be flexible enough to enable applicants with lower educational standards to be admitted to the Service, where these people had demonstrated through their past policing experience that they had the capacity to 'do the job'. Such recruits also assist in minimising the Service's practical difficulties in coping with the influx of inexperienced police in all major training centres.

The final outcome of these discussions was an agreement that an education rating system should be developed but, again, should initially be used for validation purposes only. As discussed above in relation to the use of employment history data, this approach will facilitate the future evaluation of the POCC selection process, as well as providing additional information to those involved in the current selection process.

Establishing an education scoring system will also enable comparison of educational profiles between PROVE and POCC applicants and appointees. This will allow measurement of the impact of POCC educational levels on the educational profile of recruits in general. The recording of this data will be particularly beneficial for future projects aimed at assessing the impact on policing of tertiary qualified appointees. For example, it has not yet been determined 'whether the effects of the socialisation process will diminish as the proportion of police within the Service with higher pre-service educational qualifications grows' (Royal Commission into the NSW Police Service 1997, vol. I, p. 44).

Recommendation 73 — Assessment of education for POCC applicants

That the QPS develop a systematic process for assessment and comparison of applicants on the basis of education. Information on post-secondary education should be evaluated in the same way as it is for main entry recruits. A systematic process for assessing and comparing prior police education and training should also be developed.

Cognitive-ability testing

Main entry recruits are required to complete seven different psychometric tests of cognitive ability, whereas POCC applicants are exempt from this requirement. The QPS considers that this exemption is justified on the grounds that applicants have already demonstrated that they can perform the job of a general duties police officer, and that the best predictor of future performance in a job is past performance.

The QPS acknowledges that cognitive-ability tests are useful for an applicant who has never done police work before, but argues that for POCC applicants it is better to rely on more direct measures of job performance, such as can be obtained through referee reports and the panel interview.

The QPS view was not accepted by some PEAC members, who argued that POCC applicants should be subject to the same testing regime as main entry applicants.

Points advanced in support of this view included:

- Panel interviews and referee checks have been shown to have relatively poor validity and reliability when predicting future training and work performance, whereas the predictive validity of cognitive-ability tests is well established in the literature (Black 1995; Burke 1993; CJC 1996a; Cortina et al. 1992; Hirsh et al. 1986; Kenny & Watson 1990; Loo & Meredith 1986).
- Cognitive-ability tests are incorporated into the selection process for many professions (and in assessment centres) regardless of the fact that applicants have previously performed the job.
- Use of cognitive-ability tests promotes convergent validity (i.e. all pieces of information say the same thing about the applicant, which increases the probability that the findings are correct) and minimises the effect of bias by ensuring there is no over-reliance on any one selection device.
- The cognitive-ability tests used by the QPS are cost-efficient and easy to administer; hence, there is no significant cost obstacle for introducing testing of POCC applicants.

Although PEAC was unable to agree on whether POCC applicants should be required to undergo cognitive-ability testing, there was a consensus that steps should be taken to ensure that the most valid and reliable selection process possible is used for the POCC program. It was therefore agreed that a validation study be undertaken to determine how well cognitive-ability tests predict Academy and work performance for POCC applicants. This will involve testing a group of POCC recruits at the start of training using the cognitive-ability test battery, and later using statistical analyses to determine to what extent test scores are related to Academy and work performance, controlling for factors such as age and length of service. This study should be able to resolve the debate over whether there is a role for cognitive-ability tests in the selection process for POCC applicants. The management of this validation study is discussed further in chapter 15.

Recommendation 74 — Cognitive-ability testing of POCC applicants

That the QPS, in conjunction with the CJC and PEAC, undertake a study to determine the validity of the cognitive-ability test battery in predicting the Academy and work performance of successful POCC applicants.

Personality assessment

As noted in chapter 6, the QPS does not currently use any personality tests to assess an applicant's psychological fitness for policing. It has been recommended both in chapter 6 of this report and by Kaczmarek and Packer (1997) that personality testing be used to alert recruiting staff to applicants who may possibly have psychopathological problems which may not be otherwise identified. This raises the question of whether POCC applicants should also be required to undergo such testing.

The main argument in favour of requiring POCC applicants to undergo personality testing is that it cannot be assumed that an applicant is psychologically suited to policing just because of prior experience. Some psychiatric illnesses (e.g. schizophrenia) have a late onset such that the first symptoms may not present until the mid-twenties (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 1944). Furthermore, as is evident in many professions (including policing), individuals often choose unsuitable careers. It was also pointed out that many rejoiners have not performed general duties policing for a number of years, and that it is possible that their psychological suitability for policing 'in the field' may have changed during that time.

PEAC was unable to reach a final view on this question, but there was general agreement that the Service should have maximum commitment to integrity screening and serious consideration should be given to adopting any measure that has the potential to screen out unsuitable applicants. It was therefore determined that this matter should be referred to the QPS Board of Management for final consideration.

Recommendation 75 — Personality assessment of POCC applicants

That the QPS Board of Management consider if POCC applicants should be required to undergo personality assessment to determine psychological fitness for general duties policing. If psychological screening is adopted, the Sixteen Personality Factor questionnaire (see discussion in chapter 6) should be used for selection.

The PCT

Rejoiners are currently required to complete the medical evaluation form and the medical assessment, but are exempt from the PCT (see chapter 10). In addition, there are different standards required of POCC and PROVE graduates with regard to physical fitness testing. To graduate, POCC recruits are required to complete the PCT used for selection for PROVE applicants. PROVE recruits, on the other hand, cannot graduate unless they pass a more detailed testing process that is, arguably, more rigorous and requires a much higher level of physical fitness.

This policy is inconsistent, given that POCC and PROVE graduates are expected to perform the same job when they enter the field. The basis for exempting rejoiners from the PCT and for requiring them to complete only an abridged physical skills education program is that they have already demonstrated a level of fitness and skill to perform general duties policing. However, as it may have been several years since a POCC applicant was engaged in general duties policing, it should not be assumed that he or she still has the physical capability to undertake general duties police work. In the initial 1998 intake, the average age of recruits for the PROVE program was 25 years and 10 months, compared with 34 years and 3 months for POCC recruits in the November 1997 intake. Research shows a deterioration in physical activity with age (Astrand 1992; Blair et al. 1992), suggesting that older applicants are less likely to meet the physical requirements of general duties policing. Research has also shown that the physical ability and fitness of the police population do not differ markedly from the general population (Circelli & Wilson, in press; Wilmore & Davis 1979) and there is considerable evidence that police over the age of 35 are generally unfit (Riffle 1996).

Taking account of these considerations, there are no grounds for exempting POCC applicants from the physical evaluation assessment procedures required of main entry recruits. However, given that the PSE program and the PCT are currently being reviewed, it is likely that both will be substantially changed over the next few months. As indicated in chapter 10, the consultants selected to review the PSE should, as part of that review, look at suitable ways of assessing the fitness of applicants, to detect those who are unlikely to be able to complete the new PSE program. Changes to the physical testing of POCC applicants should be made after that review is completed.

Recommendation 76 — Physical testing of POCC applicants

That the medical and fitness assessment process and criteria used for the selection of PROVE applicants also apply to the selection of POCC applicants. This recommendation should be implemented when the new health-screening process recommended in chapter 10 is introduced, but by no later than 1 March 1999.

Referee checking

The recommendations made in chapter 9 apply equally to the POCC selection process. However, when the structure and content of referee reports are reviewed, a referee report should be developed for police with prior policing experience, because questions asked of previous supervisors will be directly relevant to general duties policing.

Recommendation 77 — Referee checking for POCC applicants

That the referee report for police supervisors be developed by the external consultants reviewing the panel interview process. This report should specifically address the applicant's prior policing experience as it relates to the requirements of general duties policing. Other recommendations made in chapter 9 regarding referee reports should also apply to the POCC selection process.

Integrity screening

The QPS Review expressed some concerns about the adequacy of vetting procedures for interstate applicants and recommended that improved procedures be implemented. The QPS has advised that, since the release of this report, vetting procedures have been revised and tightened, with input from the CJC and the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) of the QPS, and that additional checks are now made of applicants with a questionable complaints history. However, there is still scope for further improvement in some areas.

The proposed key recommendation in this respect is that *all* POCC applicants should be referred for discussion to the Integrity Committee (see chapter 8). This recognises the importance of the QPS 'getting it right' when recruiting officers from other police services. More particularly, the Committee will be in the best position to interpret information about applicants' complaints histories and other relevant background information on integrity-related matters.

There are currently no formal standards or guidelines on how to assess POCC applicants' complaints history (e.g. the number of complaints required to reject an applicant). Currently, each case is discussed individually and the decision is made on the basis of circumstances surrounding the complaint(s). While it is impossible to develop precise decision-making criteria, it ought to be possible to develop guidelines to assist the Integrity Committee in making decisions, and to ensure there are similar decision-making criteria used in each case.

Recommendation 78 — Integrity screening of POCC applicants

That all POCC applicants, once they have completed the panel interview, be referred to the Integrity Committee for evaluation. The Integrity Committee should develop guidelines for evaluating complaints history and other relevant information for applicants with prior policing experience.

Insufficient information

It is also important to ensure that, when there is insufficient information to assess the integrity of an applicant, the applicant should not be considered any further. Observation of the Selection Committee showed that on occasions applications have been considered when there was incomplete information and/or complaints history. For an integrity evaluation, a full complaint history is necessary to assess an applicant appropriately — it is not sufficient for the outcome of the complaint to be the only information provided.

Recommendation 79 — Procedure when there is insufficient information for integrity screening of POCC applicants

That POCC applicants only be considered by the Integrity Committee when all information is available, including a complaints history. When this information is not available, the applicant should not be considered any further.

Eligibility for the POCC program

As discussed above, there is considerable flexibility in the eligibility criteria for the POCC program. Examination of the HRM Manual indicates that the written policy requires updating as it is inconsistent with the current practice. In addition, material which may be referred to (such as the flyer describing the course) should also be updated to reflect the requirements for admission to the POCC course.

Written policy should accurately reflect what is practised in the selection process. This is particularly important for potential applicants who may make a decision to apply on the basis of the criteria.

Recommendation 80 — Eligibility criteria for the POCC program

That the HRM Manual and any other reference material be updated to reflect accurately the eligibility criteria for the POCC program.

Maximum time lapse

Observation of the Selection Committee process also found considerable variation in the number of years since applicants had separated from policing. While some applicants had been out of policing for only two years, others had not performed policing duties for up to ten years. There is concern that there must be some point at which previously acquired general duties policing skills become obsolete because of changes in procedure, policing styles and technology.

Recommendation 81 — Maximum time lapse since previous police experience

That applicants who have not been employed in policing work within the preceding five years be excluded from consideration for the POCC program, unless there are special circumstances that would justify the Selection Committee making an exemption.

Non-policing work experience

Observation of the Selection Committee process indicated a need for a comprehensive method for assessing work experience in non-police fields. For example, one applicant had not served in a policing organisation for six years, but until the time of application, had been working in a related industry. This applicant was accepted into the POCC program on the basis that his work experience over the last six years was sufficiently similar to general duties policing to justify entrance to the abridged program. However, there did not appear to be any process for matching the requirements of the job to the selection criteria for general duties policing, nor was there any assessment to ensure the applicant had the minimum knowledge, skills and abilities to undertake an abridged course.

It is reasonable to consider work experience in a related field, but the work content needs to be systematically evaluated to ensure that similarities are sufficient to justify exemption from the full recruit-training program. It must be demonstrated that the work undertaken required the same knowledge, skills and abilities as is required for general duties policing. This would involve a comprehensive assessment of the duties performed, as well as consideration of the knowledge, skills and abilities required for the position (i.e. comparability to those required for general duties policing).

Recommendation 82 — Assessing experience in related industries for POCC applicants

That in cases where work experience in a related industry is to be considered, a substitute for policing experience in applications to the POCC program, a systematic and comprehensive comparative process be adopted. This will ensure there are sufficient similarities in job duties and in the knowledge, skills and abilities required before the work can be considered a suitable substitute for policing experience. As part of this process, applicants should make a written submission outlining how their work experience meets the selection criteria.

The panel interview

A key feature of the POCC selection process is the heavy reliance on the panel interview. Some comments on the POCC interview include:

- There are questions asked in the interview that could be more easily and efficiently answered by other methods, such as by examination of the applicant's résumé. For example: 'Briefly outline the types of police duties and training you have undertaken during your service?'

- The purpose of some of the interview questions and how they relate to the inherent requirements of general duties policing is unclear. For example: ‘What do you know about the Police Operational Conversion Course at the Queensland Police Service Academy?’
- There are no questions that focus on the issue of returning to general duties policing, which would seem to be important for rejoiners, particularly those who have not performed general duties for some time.

It is very important that the interview be modified to improve its validity and reliability. All of the strategies and recommendations outlined in chapter 7 are applicable and should be adopted for the POCC panel interview. In addition to these recommendations, it is important to recognise the need for questions in the interview schedule that directly relate to, and efficiently assess, previous policing experience.

Recommendation 83 — Panel interview process for POCC applicants

- (i) That the panel interview process for POCC applicants be comprehensively reviewed by an external consultant. There needs to be particular attention given to:
 - developing questions which directly relate to previous policing experience
 - ensuring that questions are directly related to the selection criteria
 - determining the number and quality of questions relating to previous policing experience.
- (ii) That all recommendations made in chapter 7 to be applied to the interview process used for applicants to the POCC program.

KSAs

It is also imperative that each applicant can demonstrate that they have the minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) required not just for general duties policing, but also for the POCC program. Therefore, interview questions must enable interviewers to assess whether each applicant has the assumed KSAs for the abridged program.

Recommendation 84 — Panel-interview questions for POCC applicants

That interview questions for POCC applicants aim to elicit sufficient information to allow interviewers to assess whether an applicant has the basic knowledge, skills and abilities to undertake the abridged program.

Information on POCC

To assist interviewers in determining the suitability of an applicant for the POCC program, interviewers should be provided with information regarding the POCC program, in particular:

- the policing knowledge that the appointee should have
- the policing skills that the appointee should have
- the core competencies of the program.

Recommendation 85 — Provision of information on POCC program to interviewers and recruiting staff

That interviewers and other recruiting staff be provided with adequate information regarding the POCC program so they are able to determine the applicant’s suitability for the abridged course.

Selection Committee for POCC applicants

The Selection Committee for the PROVE program is discussed in chapter 12 of this report. The Selection Committee for the POCC program is constituted slightly differently in that it also includes a representative from the ESC, who is responsible for ensuring integrity matters receive full consideration.

In most other respects, the Selection Committee process for POCC is very similar to that for PROVE, and consequently many of the issues of concern discussed in chapter 12 apply equally to selection for the POCC program. However, the observations of the POCC Selection Committee undertaken for this review highlighted several additional concerns:

- There appears to be inappropriate reliance placed on POCC applicants' prior work experience, at the expense of other factors such as education. This is despite the fact that successful participation in the QPS requires a considerable commitment to continuing formal and informal education and training.
- The Selection Committee is given only raw panel-interview scores that have not been standardised for variations — reliance on such material risks low validity, as do any corrections made by the Committee for tough or easy panels.
- For applicants from some other jurisdictions, there are no guarantees that all information, particularly on internal investigations, has been provided.
- It is relatively common for applicants to be known to Selection Committee members, and for members' personal knowledge and judgment to be used in the selection decision.
- Unfavourable referee reports appear to be given little weight, in contrast to the practice for PROVE applicants.
- There appears to be considerable flexibility concerning the previous law enforcement experience required for POCC applicants; for example, an applicant with ten years' experience in a related field such as security, but without specific policing knowledge, can still be accepted into the POCC program. Similarly, there are large variations in the number of years since applicants last performed operational duties.

Many of these problems would be resolved by the implementation of the recommendations made in chapter 12, particularly those relating to the development of written policies to guide Selection Committee processes. All applicable recommendations in chapter 12 should also apply to the POCC Selection Committee. In addition, a formal selection policy dealing specifically with POCC applicants should be developed and documented to deal with any issues unique to the POCC program.

Recommendation 86 — Selection Committee for POCC applicants

That all recommendations made regarding the PROVE Selection Committee also apply to the POCC Selection Committee. In addition, a formal POCC selection policy be developed and documented. The policy should address the selection criteria and the selection process, including the weight to be given to each selection criterion.

Conclusion

The lack of validation research for the POCC selection process makes consideration of this process difficult. Data are not currently collected that would facilitate validation of elements of the selection process. There needs to be a system that allows for validation of the way in which both education and previous employment are considered so that, in the future, it can be determined:

- how important these factors are in selection
- how they should be weighted relative to other selection devices
- if minimum entry criteria (as with PROVE applicants) should be introduced.

A validation study should also be done, in conjunction with the CJC, to determine the validity of the cognitive-ability tests in predicting Academy and work performance among POCC applicants. The QPS Board of Management should consider if POCC applicants should be required to undergo personality assessment to determine psychological fitness for general duties policing.

POCC applicants currently are exempt from completing the PCT and also have a different physical skills education program to PROVE applicants. The basis for exemption is that POCC applicants have already demonstrated a level of fitness and skill to perform general duties policing. However, this argument overlooks the fact that many rejoiners have not performed general duties policing for some time and it is probable that their fitness level has declined. There is also clear evidence that older applicants are less likely to meet the physical requirements of general duties policing. Therefore, it is considered that the medical and fitness assessment process and criteria used for the selection of PROVE applicants should apply equally to the selection of POCC applicants.

This chapter has also recommended that all POCC applicants should be evaluated by the Integrity Committee. This recognises the importance of the QPS 'getting it right' when recruiting officers from other police services. More particularly, the Committee will be in the best position to interpret information about applicants' complaints histories and other relevant background information on integrity-related matters.

Other recommendations made to ensure a systematic selection process for POCC applicants include: applicants who have not been in policing work within the preceding five years should be excluded from consideration for the POCC program; and the panel interview should be redesigned to ensure that questions are work related and elicit sufficient information to allow interviewers to assess the applicant's suitability for an abridged program.

Chapter 15: Implementation and evaluation

This review has involved a thorough and detailed assessment of recruitment and selection in the QPS. Numerous recommendations have been made for each part of the process. It is important to avoid a piecemeal approach to implementation of these recommendations, and to ensure that change occurs in a planned and coherent way. In addition, as stressed throughout this report, there is a need for continuous evaluation of the QPS recruitment and selection process.

The QPS Review 1996 (p. 133) also stressed the importance of evaluation:

Education and training must be subject to a continuous, rigorous process of planning, evaluation and adjustment so that needs can be predicted and met at an early stage, and not dealt with reactively, when the requirement has become urgent.

It is essential, therefore, that the QPS develop an implementation program, complemented by a systematic evaluation program, to ensure a recruitment and selection process that is continually improving.

This chapter canvasses the key issues involved in the development of successful implementation and evaluation programs. The chapter also deals with the management of a validation study recommended in chapter 14, in relation to the psychological testing of POCC recruits. In addition, it is suggested that the evaluation program should consider not only current selection practices, but also the feasibility of alternatives, whether for a particular selection device or for part or all of the selection process. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of some such alternatives.

Developing an implementation program

The recommendations contained in this report are extensive and will require implementation over time. The majority of recommendations do not state implementation dates or timelines, except where there is some urgency for change. There are several matters that should be considered in the development of the implementation program:

- Implementation of recommendations regarding medical screening is considered urgent (see chapter 11) and should be addressed as a priority.
- Recommendations regarding the PCT should be implemented by no later than 1 March 1999.
- Several recommendations regarding interviews, referee checking and selection decisions (for both main entry and POCC applicants) require an external consultant. Consideration should be given to engaging one consultant to develop an integrated response to these recommendations. Separate consultants will need to be engaged for the development of new medical screening processes (see chapter 11), and to perform marketing research (see chapter 4).

There is a need for an Implementation Committee to be formed to develop an integrated implementation plan, and to oversee and monitor changes to the recruitment and selection process. The Implementation Committee should meet regularly and should present a progress report at each PEAC meeting.

Membership of the Implementation Committee should comprise stakeholders in the recruitment and selection process, for example:

- a representative from PEAC who is not associated with the QPS or the CJC
- a representative from the QPS Review and Evaluation Unit
- the Director of the HRD
- the Chief Superintendent of the HRDB

- the Superintendent of the ISP
- a representative from the Research and Prevention Division of the CJC

The Implementation Committee should meet as soon as possible after the release of this report. The Committee's first task should be to develop a plan which prioritises, sets timelines and allocates responsibility for all recommendations made in this report. The implementation plan should be provided to PEAC as soon as possible.

Developing an evaluation strategy

It is also essential that a recruitment and selection evaluation strategy is adopted by the QPS. The purpose of an evaluation is to 'measure the effects of a program against the goals it set to accomplish as a means of contributing to subsequent decision making about the program and improving future programming' (Weiss 1972, p. 4). To do this, an evaluation usually involves the systematic comparison of program outcomes with program goals to:

- test whether the program outcomes achieve the stated objectives
- assess the continued relevance and priority of these objectives in the light of changed circumstances (such as government policy changes) and to ascertain whether there may be better ways of achieving these objectives
- identify whether the program leads to improved outcomes (i.e. its effectiveness)
- assess whether the program is providing 'value for money' (i.e. its cost-effectiveness)
- decide whether the resources for the program should continue at current levels, be increased, reduced or discontinued (Department of Finance and Australian Public Service Board 1987, p. 3).

Many of the problems identified in this report have arisen because selection criteria and systems have not been monitored in this way. Without such monitoring it has not been possible to detect or deal with changing circumstances and their effects on the validity and usefulness of selection criteria. A comprehensive evaluation system will facilitate continual monitoring of the selection criteria to identify areas which become problematic and need adjustment, and allow for continued evolution of the process.

Tasks of particular relevance are:

- Formulation of the terms of reference for the evaluation (i.e. how the evaluation will be managed, implemented and monitored). An Evaluation Subcommittee with specified responsibilities will need to be established, and the objectives, performance indicators, data sources and target audience for the evaluation identified.
- Development of an evaluation framework to assess the process, impact, outcome and costs of each aspect of recruitment and selection. Each of the selection criteria for both the PROVE and POCC programs, and the demographic profile of recruit intakes, can be addressed within this framework, to test their usefulness in predicting better policing outcomes, both at the Academy and in the field.
- Identification of data requirements and sources.

Terms of reference for the evaluation process

There is a need for an Evaluation Subcommittee to be established as soon as possible with responsibility for developing and managing the evaluation process. This will be a specialist task, relying on strong data collection and analysis skills. The subcommittee's membership should be drawn from the Review and Evaluation Unit and Human Resources Division of the QPS, and the Research and Prevention Division of the CJC. Other individuals with expertise in research and evaluation may also be appointed. The

Evaluation Subcommittee should report to the Implementation Committee, and through it to PEAC, on the development and progress of the evaluation program.

Other matters that will need to be attended to before commencing the evaluation include:

- collation and analysis of data on current recruitment practices and outcomes such as examination and attrition rates
- finalisation of new core competencies and selection criteria for constables (as recommended in chapter 3)
- identification and standardisation of training requirements for implementation of changed selection criteria
- adjustment of course content and standards of competency for the PROVE, POCC and FYC programs, to ensure that the training programs address new competencies and selection criteria
- development of measurable objectives and performance indicators for the minimum competency requirements
- ensuring that the evaluation process addresses each competency
- assessment of the availability, accessibility, reliability and validity of the data sources
- development of a centrally located database
- identification of cost or budgetary constraints and the development of a budget for both the initial evaluation, and for longer term monitoring
- confirmation of a time frame for the evaluation, including for the initial evaluation
- identification of audiences for the findings, dissemination strategies and reporting procedures.

It will also be important to monitor each of these matters over time and to document all changes. There may be changes, for example, in evaluation goals or performance indicators, selection criteria or associated procedures, the availability of data sources or course modules, or be unplanned budgetary constraints. These issues should be examined by the Evaluation Subcommittee during the initial evaluation phase.

Reporting procedures for the evaluation must also be finalised. As ongoing monitoring is established, the potential details of future reports will become more complex as it becomes possible to predict the success or otherwise of the selection criteria over several time points in a police recruit's career: initially at Academy graduation, then at FYC Program Graduation, and then into the first, second or third year of general duties policing.

Issues of confidentiality will need to be addressed by the Implementation Committee as the evaluation process may identify individual police recruits who could require remedial action. Therefore, the confidentiality of all reporting procedures will need to be clarified.

Evaluation framework

Ideally, the evaluation should involve the following stages:

- An evaluation to monitor implementation of the amended selection process systematically. This will include: an assessment of the adequacy of the implementation of the selection process including, for example, training and monitoring of interviewers; the quantity and quality of police training (e.g. course modules) with regard to the selection criteria; and the numbers and demographic profile of new recruits.
- An evaluation to assess the initial impact of the selection process on policing skills, knowledge and attitude at graduation from the PROVE program prior to field training. This will include exam results, satisfaction levels and attrition rates.

- An outcome evaluation to assess the extent to which the program causes changes in the desired direction in the field. These data could be collected at graduation from the FYC program onwards. As well as exam and satisfaction ratings, data on promotions, complaints, sick leave, use-of-force reports and the numbers of critical incidents and injuries could provide a more complete view of the predictive value of the selection process on a broad range of policing quality issues.

Data requirements and sources

The availability of appropriate data is central to any evaluation. The following considerations should guide the collection of data for the evaluation.

- Collection of data on all new QPS recruits for the period of the initial evaluation should commence as soon as possible. Alternatively, a random sample of recruits could be followed for this period. After this trial period, data collection should continue, to facilitate assessment of any changes over time to recruiting or training procedures or any other factors, such as course changes, which may influence the overall quality of policing behaviour.
- A comparison should be made between new procedures and current practice (i.e. current selection criteria and current police outcomes such as examination and attrition rates) to assess properly the impact of changes to selection criteria for recruit entry. To do this, baseline information for all available data up until 1998 should be collated and analysed so that accurate comparisons can be made between current and new practice. The CJC has already undertaken a baseline assessment of the predictive value of the current selection criteria and some of these criteria will be retained (1996a). This should provide some comparative data for future analysis, but the generalisability of that study is limited to data collected at graduation from the Academy. A review of past QPS documentation such as costs and exam results, may also present some opportunities for comparison.
- To minimise costs, current data collection or standard work procedures undertaken by the QPS such as administrative details or costs, staff resources, demographic details, exam results, and attrition rates should be accessed wherever possible. While collection of this information might appear to be extensive and time consuming, much of the data can be collected for each criteria from a single source (e.g. overall exam competencies at graduation from both the PROVE and FYC programs).
- In addition to QPS data, limited observational or survey research could be undertaken to assess satisfaction, behaviours and attitudes, and both QPS and CJC complaints data could be accessed. To coordinate this information and the QPS data currently available from a multitude of sources, it will be necessary to establish a centralised database so that all data can be analysed simultaneously.
- Performance indicators should assess competency standards on a grading scale, rather than a simple pass/fail assessment, to enhance the nuances of the predictive powers of each selection criterion. Some review of the examination process may therefore be necessary prior to implementation of the evaluation: the current rating scale for FYCs, which ranges from not competent (inadequate and limited), to competent (satisfactory and proficient), to exceeded (commendable and outstanding) might provide an adequate standard for assessment. Both quantitative and qualitative data should be collected.
- Wherever appropriate, there should be collaboration with any other evaluations of the QPS, either planned or under way. It is clear that this evaluation could provide useful information for other areas such as human resource management, education and training, and promotions and complaints. Any reduction in invasive data collection from both staff and recruits would also be advantageous.

Benefits of the evaluation

There are a number of important benefits associated with this evaluation. It should:

- be able to identify the strongest selection predictors of successful policing over time, due to the longitudinal cohort study design
- enhance improvements in the cost-effectiveness/efficiency of each of the selection criteria and their implementation procedures, thus lowering overall recruitment costs
- provide ongoing data on recruit and staff satisfaction with both training and recruitment procedures, possibly resulting in modification of these procedures
- provide ongoing data on the predictors of job performance, as well as Academy performance
- provide ongoing and timely feedback to the QPS, the Academy and the FYC program on police officer competencies, and adherence to the Service's corporate goals
- act as an effective early warning system should problems be detected early in the program (e.g. early attrition or incompetency)
- require trainers and educators to document the expected outcomes of each module.

In addition, the implementation and evaluation process will enable the QPS to address a significant number of recommendations outlined in the QPS Review 1996, not only those specifically associated with selection criteria issues (Recommendations 42, 55, 56 and 59), but also the wider concerns of accountability and monitoring (Recommendations 184 and 197), training and education (Recommendations 74, 78, 97 and 98) and human resource management more generally (Recommendations 64, 69, 123 and 157).

Recommendation 87 — Establish a comprehensive implementation and evaluation strategy

That the QPS develop an implementation program to determine how and when changes to the recruitment and selection process are made and, in consultation with the CJC, develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to monitor and evaluate recruitment and selection processes. The QPS should report regularly to PEAC on implementation and evaluation issues.

Validation study

In chapter 14 of this report, it was recommended that a study be undertaken of the validity of the cognitive-ability test battery used by the QPS in the PROVE selection process in predicting Academy and work performance of successful POCC applicants. That validation study would then provide an informed basis for deciding whether psychometric testing should be introduced as a selection device for future POCC applicants.

The study will involve administering the test battery to a group of POCC recruits at the start of training, and later using statistical analyses to determine the relationship between test scores and Academy and work performance, controlling for factors such as age and length of service.

Given the specialised nature of the validation study, and the recommendation that it be undertaken jointly by the QPS, PEAC and the CJC, it is logical that the study should form part of the evaluation process recommended in this chapter, and should be overseen by the Implementation Committee discussed above.

Other considerations for the evaluation program

This review has focused very much on refining and improving current QPS recruitment and selection processes. It will be important that the evaluation program takes a broader approach, also considering and perhaps trialling alternatives to current practices which may be more economical or reliable. This may include alternatives for a particular selection device, or for part or all of the overall process. The evaluation program should include the monitoring of changes to policing duties, the policing environment, and industry practice which may require consideration of alternatives to the current recruitment and selection program.

As part of this review, two such alternatives were briefly considered: outsourcing of parts of the selection process, and assessment centres. Some relevant issues about each alternative are set out below.

Outsourcing of recruitment and selection functions

A possible strategy for the QPS, which might improve the efficiency and economic viability of the recruitment and selection process, is to outsource some of the recruitment functions. Outsourcing recruitment functions involves contracting a consultant to conduct all or part of the selection process for a given position or range of positions. The South Australian Police Service (SAPOL) has recently investigated the viability of outsourcing its entry level police officer recruitment functions, and the draft proposal developed as a result of that investigation provides considerable guidance on this issue.

SAPOL assessed the viability of outsourcing various recruitment processes including: the initial contact, application, initial assessment, entrance examination, character checks, medical examination, physical and ability/typing test. Steps not assessed for outsourcing included self-analysis/panel interview/psychological profile, final record and motor vehicle department checks and the selection decision. In addition, initial assessment indicated that the medical examination and physical and ability/typing test could be conducted in-house at a lower cost than if they were performed by external providers.

The SAPOL report highlights that attempts to outsource recruitment functions have had varying degrees of success across organisations. Specifically, the report suggests that the Australian Federal Police has made unsuccessful attempts at outsourcing. SAPOL's lists of suggested advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing are shown in table 15.1.

SAPOL reported that the outsourcing of the relevant recruitment functions, based on a total of 803 applicants and 120 recruit appointments, would cost approximately \$39,000. The cost of SAPOL completing the same task was \$169,073.

Table 15.1 — Advantages and disadvantages of moving to outsourcing

Advantages
Potential cost savings
More efficient practices
Release of staff for other duties
Enables greater emphasis to be placed on marketing SAPOL as an employer
Opportunity to set benchmark standards for recruiting
Opportunity to enhance standard of applicants
Anti-corruption strategy in that another level of independence is added to the system
Allows time for more extensive marketing strategies to be developed and implemented
Disadvantages
Not cost-effective unless rationalisation of staff occurs
Experimental to SAPOL
Potential for SAPOL to lose control if quality control measures are not implemented

Source: Discussion paper by Inspector Bryan Fahy, Human Resource Implementation Group, Human Resources, SAPOL

The SAPOL report noted that the outsourcing of recruitment functions is specific to the organisation. SAPOL's findings cannot automatically be applied to the Queensland situation. Nevertheless, given the extent of cost savings indicated by SAPOL's investigation, there is clearly merit in further examination of the issue of outsourcing recruitment functions in the QPS. Such an examination should assess issues including: the current true costs of recruitment and selection; the recruitment phases or steps which should and should not be outsourced; and appropriate tender arrangements. As a minimum, the functions which should not be outsourced include integrity screening, because of its importance and because contractors would not have access to the same information sources as the QPS, and the final selection decision, for which the QPS should continue to be accountable. As part of its ongoing evaluation and monitoring strategy, the QPS should consider investigating the option of partially outsourcing its recruitment process.

Assessment centres

One of the increasingly popular alternatives for selecting applicants for employment and promotions is the assessment centre approach. Assessment centres are intended to provide an holistic appraisal of applicants rather than focusing on specific traits and abilities (Filer 1979; Gavin & Hamilton 1975). Such an appraisal involves the simultaneous assessment of a group of applicants across a variety of exercises (Ross 1980) and usually combines group and individual sample tests (Gavin & Hamilton 1975). A typical assessment centre combines traditional selection tests with situational testing (Ash, Slora & Britton 1990). The premise on which situational testing is based is that reactions and behaviours elicited by such tests may be used to predict future behaviour in similar circumstances (Lowry 1996; Pynes & Bernardin 1992). It is argued that through an assessment centre a more complete profile of the applicant can be obtained as this process allows raters or observers to gather information across a number of simulated situations (Gavin & Hamilton 1975; Lowry 1996; Pynes & Bernardin 1992; Ross 1980).

Typically, assessment centres use:

- multiple assessment techniques including simulations of job situations such as group exercises, in-basket exercises and fact-finding exercises
- multiple trained assessors
- judgments based on the information obtained from the simulations by the assessors
- pre-tested exercises to measure a variety of predetermined behaviours (More 1987).

The advantages of assessment centres include that they may result in:

- realistic situational testing, so that applicants must demonstrate responses and behaviours rather than verbally describing what they would do
- measurement of unique dimensions, such as noncognitive behaviours not easily tested through normal selection processes
- assessment over longer periods than traditional interviews, and in a range of different situations
- a possibly less adverse impact on members of minority groups than some other assessment procedures
- enhancement of integrity testing, in that behaviour in a range of ethical circumstances can be observed
- realistic job previews for applicants through situational tests which mirror actual job performance (Coulton & Feild 1995; Filer 1979; Gavin & Hamilton 1975; Burbeck & Furnham 1985).

The major disadvantage of assessment centres is their cost, including start-up costs, training of assessors and the time taken by assessors in rating applicants (Coulton & Feild 1995; Filer 1979; Gavin & Hamilton 1975). A second disadvantage is that in relation to base level entry to policing, an assessment centre would be attempting to evaluate an applicant's behaviour in a police simulated

situation without the applicant having the benefit of any police training. This disadvantage may be mitigated if applicants are given a brief orientation session prior to testing (Coulton & Feild 1995).

As part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of recruitment and selection processes, the QPS should consider whether there should be any further evaluation of assessment centres. The PEAC subcommittee concluded that at this time, the costs of the assessment centres could not be justified by the advantages that might be achieved.

Conclusion

This chapter has recommended that an Implementation Committee be formed to oversee and monitor the implementation of recommendations made throughout this report. This Committee will include representatives from the QPS, CJC and PEAC, and should provide a progress report at each PEAC meeting. An Evaluation Subcommittee should also be formed with responsibility for designing the evaluation program, specifying the design of the database and what data should be collected. This will be a small committee composed of individuals with expertise in the area of research and evaluation.

It is important that evaluation is not seen as a one-off or occasional task. There needs to be a properly constructed cycle of implementation of change, monitoring of conditions, evaluation of processes, and design of further change. It is important that appropriate data are collected on which to base this process.

The evaluation program should not only assess current practice, but also evaluate alternative recruitment and selection strategies from time to time. Two examples were considered in this chapter: the outsourcing of sections of the selection process and the use of assessment centres.

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