

**Strategic Directions  
for  
Policing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and  
Communities**

**Updated October 2002**

**Policy Statement**

The Queensland Police Service recognises the historical relationship between police and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It seeks to develop partnerships based on a shared understanding of how to provide a service appropriate to community needs and a service free from racism and other forms of discrimination. In particular, the Queensland Police Service seeks, through consultation and co-operation, to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to:

- improve communication and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- improve the safety and security of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities;
- determine how police can assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in achieving their rightful place in the wider community;
- contribute towards efforts to reduce involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in crime and violence;

**Background**

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Queensland Police Service Strategic Plan 1999-2001 guided the formulation of this '*Strategic Directions for Policing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*' document.

The Mission of the Queensland Police Service is to serve the people in Queensland by protecting life and property, preserving peace and safety, preventing crime and upholding the law in a manner which has regard for the public good and rights of the individual.

The environment in which the Queensland Police Service operates is a complex one and is influenced by a range of social, cultural, economic and political factors which affect the lives of all people.

The Queensland Police Service operates under the Queensland Government's '*Multicultural Queensland Policy*' core principles which guide the Queensland Government in developing its strategies:

1. **Access:** *All Queenslanders enjoy equitable access to services and programs.*
2. **Participation:** *All Queenslanders enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities to participate in, contribute to and benefit from all aspects of life in Queensland.*
3. **Cohesion:** *All Queenslanders share responsibility for the continuing development of Queensland as a cohesive and harmonious society.*

In addition, the '*Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*' has been endorsed by Ministers of the Commonwealth/ Territories, States and by local government leaders. It has been endorsed by the Queensland Government as a suitable framework for adoption by Queensland government agencies to guide the planning and delivery of quality services and programs. The principles outlined in the Charter cover access, equity, communication, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.

The development of this Queensland Police Service Strategic Directions document is in accord with the above principles. It has also been guided by a number of reports produced during the past decade. These reports, which are listed in the References, have resulted from various investigations and broad consultations on a range of diverse issues.

## Introduction

Police are usually the first point of contact between the criminal justice system and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - a system which is historically perceived as operating against their interests.

The report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody said that *'...the challenge to police departments is to accept that there is a basis for Aboriginal resentment and suspicion about police conduct and to consider the Aboriginal perspective when devising policy strategies'*. The principles of equality before the law and social justice for all people must guide any attempt to correct the imbalances revealed by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

It has been recognised that part of the problem with police/Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relationships is misunderstanding and limited positive interaction. Offence and injustice often result from cultural misunderstandings.

Although most of the recommendations of the Royal Commission for which the Queensland Police Service has responsibility have already been implemented, there is still much more to be achieved by attempting to get beyond the legacy of the past.

It is only by working together with mutual respect that more visible results will be produced. This respect must stem from a recognition of each other's history and the will to build a genuine partnership in an increasingly complex society.

It is acknowledged that any real healing must begin from within the communities of people wanting change and be directed by them. However, support is also necessary at all levels of government and society beyond those communities.

This Strategic Directions document attempts to, not only continue addressing the more visible symptoms of social injustice relating to the policing role, but also seeks to influence some of the root causes which have been identified.

The Queensland Police Service has taken the broad approach in recognising that permanent change can only be made in the long term by attempting to address the root causes as well as the symptomatic issues.

This document is intended to be used as reinforcement to the foundations laid down in the current Queensland Police Service Strategic Plan 2001-2005 which guides police practice across Queensland.

## **Milestones**

Over the past decade, the Queensland Police Service has made significant progress towards enhancing relationships and achieving equity and access to policing services.

This progress can be categorised into four areas - structural, recruitment and retention, education and training, and improvements in arrest and custody practices as a result of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report. The most significant milestones are outlined below:

### **STRUCTURAL CHANGES AND REVIEWS**

- the establishment of the Cultural Advisory Unit (formerly Cross Cultural Support Services) in August 1990, as recommended in the Fitzgerald Inquiry Report;
- transfer of the Cultural Advisory Unit to the Office of the Commissioner in March 1997 and adoption of formal 'Role and Functions' for the Unit;
- appointment of an Indigenous Policy/Liaison Officer to the Cultural Advisory Unit in May 1999;
- appointment of full-time and part-time Cross Cultural Liaison Officers to police regions with a standard position description;
- development of a Cross Cultural Liaison Officers Guide to assist police in their role and conduct of regular conferences to enhance networking, communication, problem solving and training;
- introduction of the Queensland Police Service Police Liaison Officer Scheme on a regional needs basis - there are now 124 Police Liaison Officer positions throughout Queensland;
- consultation with communities when developing policies and procedures which impact on them;
- review of policing on remote Aboriginal and Islander communities (Mornington Island, Aurukun and Deed of Grant in Trust communities) conducted, with later consultation in 1998/99, on the report's eighty-six recommendations;
- development of, in conjunction with other organisations, Return Home Schemes operating in some major centres to provide support and resources for dislocated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to return to their communities;
- comprehensive review of the Queensland Police Service implementation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommendations by the

Ethical Standards Command and implementation of the review report's recommendations during 1998/99;

- implementation of thirty recommendations from the Review of the Queensland Police Service (Bingham) Report focusing on issues relating to police, ethnic, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relations;
- establishment of in excess of twenty Indigenous Community/Police Consultative Groups throughout the State to increase communication between the community and the police;
- establishment of a formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community/Police Reference Group for South East Queensland comprising representatives nominated by the Aboriginal and Islander communities and members of the Queensland Police Service;
- establishment of the Indigenous and Police Service Review Panel in March 2000 to review, comment on and have input into draft legislation/amendments which may have an impact on Indigenous people;
- partnerships with the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Liquor Licensing Division and others implementing reviews including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Taskforce on Violence Report 2000, Cape York Justice Study 2001, and *Towards a Queensland Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ten Year Partnership*;
- appointment of the Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board, to act as an Honorary Adviser to the Queensland Police Service on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues;
- appointment of an Honorary Adviser to the Queensland Police Service on matters relating specifically to the Torres Straits;
- consultation with the Islander Co-ordinating Council and Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council through the Commissioner or his delegate (Assistant Commissioner, Far Northern Region) attending six monthly Council meetings;
- review of policing needs in the Torres Straits conducted during December 1997 by the Ethical Standards Command;
- introduction of School Based Policing as a joint initiative of the Queensland Police Service and Education Queensland with the program being implemented in many schools with a high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population;
- raising and flying the flags of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia outside Police Headquarters, Brisbane, each year since 1996 during National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee Week celebrations;

formulation of standard position descriptions and transfer policy for police officers serving on remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- Introduction of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Police trial on Badu Island, Yarrabah and Woorabinda.

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- adoption of a Queensland Police Service *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Career Development Strategy* from 1996 aimed at increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander police officers to an equitable level of 2.4 per cent and staff members, including police liaison officers, to 3.7 per cent of the Queensland Police Service;
- permanent appointment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career and Development Co-ordinator to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Career Development Strategy;
- establishment of a traineeship program in 1997 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Career Development Strategy;
- appointment as police officers, those who successfully complete the traineeship each year;
- permanent appointment of a Student Support Officer at the Queensland Police Service Academies;
- facilitation of the introduction of bridging courses at selected Technical and Further Education Colleges to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in meeting the police entry standards;
- inclusion of representation from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on recruit selection panels, Police Liaison Officer selection panels, and police vacancies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- design and integration of an Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan from 1996 into management and operational functions;
- several reviews of the Police Liaison Officer Scheme and ongoing implementation of recommendations including adoption of a standard position description, comprehensive Police Liaison Officer training and creation of a **State Police Liaison Officer Coordinator position**.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- integration of cross cultural issues into pre-service and in-service training programs at the Queensland Police Service Academies;
- completion of a cultural training program and Competency Acquisition Program (CAP), designed to provide cultural training for police on a State-wide basis;
- introduction of a series of three CAP modules on 'Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Australian Society' titled: 'Race Relations', 'The Law' and 'Social Issues' developed by consultants after extensive consultation;
- incorporation of an Australian Broadcasting Corporation television series titled 'Frontier' relating to Aboriginal history into the Queensland Police Service Academies' curriculum at all levels;
- completion of a four week Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community based intensive cross cultural training programs for first year constables at Cherbourg, Kowanyama, Mornington Island, Doomadgee and Cunnamulla;
- completion of five day cross cultural communication workshop programs commenced in 1992 at Kowanyama for specialist and senior officers of the Queensland Police Service;
- development and introduction of training material, '*Cross Cultural Education for Police Working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*' by Mary Graham and Associates Pty Ltd;
- development of a comprehensive eleven module training package and videos to train Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Police;
- conduct of a National Cross Cultural Awareness Trainers Workshop in Brisbane, facilitated by the National Police Ethnic Advisory Bureau in conjunction with the New South Wales Police Service, aimed at providing a national framework and co-ordinated approach to cross cultural training for police;
- completion of a comprehensive review in 1999 by external independent consultants of all cross cultural training in the Queensland Police Service and ongoing implementation of recommendations;
- participation in the development of the National Public Safety Training Package to establish minimum National Standards for training Police Liaison Officers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Police.

## ARREST AND CUSTODY

- adoption of a Queensland Police Service *Code of Conduct* and *Non-Discriminatory Language Guide* to address conduct requirements and standards for Queensland Police Service employees in Queensland;
- adoption of the Queensland Police Service *Major Incident Guidelines* which sets out policy, orders, and procedures for deployment and use of specialist squads including the Special Emergency Response Team consistent with National Standards;
- establishment of Project Lighthouse to address risks associated with the use of lethal force, firearms, non-lethal force and six monthly operational skills training in response to high risk situations;
- production and distribution of a standard Custody Awareness lecture package including a training video;
- review of Queensland Police Service custody procedures, focusing on the care and supervision of people in police custody, resulting in the development of a Custody Manual now incorporated into the Queensland Police Service Operational Procedures Manual;
- introduction of a Visiting Nurses Scheme in 24 hour police watchhouses;
- upgrading the Watchhouse Custody Register including a screening process for prisoners entering watchhouse custody;
- introduction of a Custody Index to facilitate the notification of relevant legal services, to enable the location of people in police custody and those being questioned regarding indictable offences;
- wide consultation, development and introduction of a *Cell Visitors, Diversionary Centre Workers and Watchhouses Guide and Information Kit* providing guidelines for watchhouse cell visitors and people working in diversionary centres;
- introduction of part-time cell visitors schemes at watchhouses with no funded cell visitors program;
- adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Corrective Services and Queensland Police Service relating to procedures and transfer of information between custodial institutions and watchhouses regarding the physical or mental condition of an indigenous person;
- introduction of follow-up first aid training by the development of a Queensland Police Service Competency Acquisition Program module assessed by the Queensland Ambulance Service and upgrading of first aid training for trainers;

- adoption by the Queensland Police Service of the *United Nations Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Prisoners* and *Standard Guidelines for Police Custodial Facilities in Australia*, a Statewide evaluation and review of the use of watchhouses, and an accelerated watchhouse upgrade program commenced in 1994/95;
- consultation on watchhouse design undertaken with the Human Rights Commission, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, peak indigenous bodies and operational police;
- introduction of Polaris (an integrated main-frame computer network) resulting in streamlined warrant handling and management procedures increasing the likelihood of quicker arrest/satisfaction of warrants and lessening the incidence of warrants being held for long periods;
- electronic banking machines in selected watchhouses to facilitate payment of warrants and the early release of 'warrant' prisoners.

## **The Future**

**The goal of this Strategic Directions document is to ensure professional and equitable policing services are provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland through consultation, advice, co-ordination and support.**

To achieve this, six major strategies and a number of key actions have been identified to support the implementation.

These strategies can be summarised as:

- Equitable service delivery
- Provision of specialist support
- Effective communication
- Appropriate use of police discretion and safety in custody
- Appropriate education and training for police
- Equitable human resource management strategies.

## **STRATEGY 1**

### **Provide equitable and appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to enable them to feel safe and secure.**

- Utilise multi-agency support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of crime including domestic and family violence, sexual and other assaults, alcohol and drug abuse.
- Establish partnerships with agencies, including local government, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board, Department of Families, Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council, Islander Co-ordinating Council, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission/ Regional Councils, Health, Education, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community support groups, to improve service delivery.
- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Police as appropriate by providing them with guidance and training in accordance with established training standards.
- Facilitate the establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Consultative Groups where appropriate to develop two-way communication and to assist communities in finding solutions to community problems by developing positive strategies for minimising violence in the community, juvenile crime, street and property offences, alcohol/drug abuse and associated problems.
- Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Police Liaison Officers in local community issues relating to their role.
- Maintain implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report.

## **STRATEGY 2**

### **Provide ongoing specialist support to ensure equity in service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Queensland.**

- Maintain and develop the role of the Cultural Advisory Unit, Cross Cultural Liaison Officers and Police Liaison Officers and co-ordinate those services State-wide.
- Provide professional training and adequate resources for the effective functioning of the Cultural Advisory Unit, State-wide network of Cross Cultural Liaison Officers and Police Liaison Officers to achieve the actions in this document.
- Assist in addressing the special needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including the young and old, women, those living in isolated communities and in police custody.

- Ensure that crime prevention and community policing strategies are accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Maximise the efficient functioning of the investigative and complaints mechanisms by providing sensitive and culturally appropriate support, guidance and timely feedback to victims, witnesses and complainants.
- Co-ordinate, plan, monitor and evaluate policy and program development of the Police Liaison Officer Scheme to provide a consistent, appropriate and professional program throughout Queensland.
- Continue to research policy and practice in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in other jurisdictions to ensure Queensland is aware of and learns from experiences elsewhere.
- Assist and promote the effectiveness of working with Community Justice Groups, Community Consultative Groups, respected persons/elders, interpreters, translators, cell visitors and diversionary centre workers.
- Include appropriate and respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives on police selection panels for recruits, Police Liaison Officers and vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or panels where indigenous identity is indicated.

### **STRATEGY 3**

#### **Provide open, effective and visible communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.**

- Convey information in an unambiguous, sensitive and culturally appropriate way by using existing structures including government and community agencies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Councils, community justice groups, community consultative groups, community meetings, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media where available.
- Impart information by working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respected persons and elders or appropriate interpreters where there may be difficulties communicating in English.
- Provide information including the role and powers of police, how to report an offence, use of complaints mechanisms, the investigative process, criminal justice system, citizens' rights and obligations, crime prevention material, legal interpreters and translators.
- Clearly define and actively market the role of Police Liaison Officers, Cultural Advisory Unit, Cross Cultural Liaison Officers, community justice groups and community consultative groups.

- Support special events such as National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee celebrations.
- Establish a co-operative relationship with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and organisations (including Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council, Islander Co-ordinating Council, Community Councils, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission/Regional Councils, Torres Strait Regional Authority, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services).

## **STRATEGY 4**

### **Maximise the appropriate use of alternative action to arrest and ensure, when arrest is necessary, safe and secure custody.**

- š Reduce the incarceration rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples by 50% by the year 2011.
- Establish, monitor and evaluate policies and programs which maximise the use of warnings, summonses, court attendance notices and references to community justice groups, as alternatives to arrest, charging and incarceration.
- Establish a data collection system to enable the establishment of an arrest and alternatives to arrest monitoring system.
- Negotiate protocols and encourage participation of local respected persons and elders in cautioning, juvenile justice programs and community justice groups where possible.
- Utilise and support appropriate operational diversionary centres and rehabilitation programs, local cell visitors schemes, and other agency/community support programs and facilities.
- Continue to upgrade all police watchhouses to meet the standards established as a result of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.
- Provide ongoing training to police and emphasis on 'duty of care' to meet standards necessary to ensure safe custody as recommended by Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.
- Continue to enhance and monitor screening processes for prisoners including improved access to medical, support and counselling services in watchhouses.

## **STRATEGY 5**

**Provide appropriate education for all police to increase their knowledge and interpersonal skills in policing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.**

- Develop police skills in communication and mediation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through understanding history, gender issues, significance of kinship, spirituality, cultural protocols and their impact on contemporary issues.
- Actively promote integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural education and anti-racism training into all levels of Queensland Police Service training.
- Ensure training curricula, procedural manuals and complaints mechanisms are culturally sensitive, appropriate and free from racial prejudice.
- Actively seek participation of respected persons and elders with intimate knowledge of their particular community and culture to take part in providing Queensland Police Service members at all levels with an understanding of the issues which affect policing.
- Provide police with training on working effectively with respected persons and elders in cautioning, juvenile justice programs, community justice groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Consultative Groups, interpreters, and interviewing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders, witnesses and victims of crime.
- Provide specialist training for police working in isolated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## **STRATEGY 6**

**Implement culturally sensitive human resource management and equal employment opportunity principles and practices.**

- Develop and market the roles and functions of the Cultural Advisory Unit, Cross Cultural Liaison Officers and Police Liaison Officers.
- Develop position descriptions for full-time Cross Cultural Liaison Officers.
- Instigate and maintain succession planning for the Cultural Advisory Unit, Cross Cultural Liaison Officers and Police Liaison Officers.
- Provide State-wide co-ordination of the Cross Cultural Liaison Officer and Police Liaison Officer Schemes.

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive operational guide for Cross Cultural Liaison Officers and provide them with professional training to enhance specialist skills, increase knowledge and maintain the relevance and credibility of positions.
- Provide professional pre-service and 'on the job' training for all Police Liaison Officers.
- Maintain appropriate recruitment strategies targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to increase cultural diversity in accordance with Equal Employment Opportunities policies.
- Issue media releases on positive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and establish guidelines to ensure that information released to the general community is appropriate and sensitive.

## **Performance Indicators and Implementation**

Performance Indicators and Action Plans for implementation of strategies are compiled and updated on a regular basis, in consultation with appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, to provide a detailed framework of the implementation process. Action Plans include those responsible for implementation, monitoring and time frames.

The Cultural Advisory Unit will overview the State-wide implementation of these strategies.

## **Evaluation**

The ideas and principles outlined in this document are not new, but are relevant to contemporary issues. As the environment is constantly changing, the strategies will need to be reviewed periodically and developed as necessary. The Cultural Advisory Unit will overview any reviews by reference to senior executive officers.

The Ethical Standards Command which has responsibility for review, evaluation and inspections within the Queensland Police Service, will provide periodic evaluation of strategies.

## **Consultation**

A draft Strategic Directions document was produced for discussion as a basis for consultation, using research and consultation data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues gathered from around Australia and particularly from Queensland. This included documents relating to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and others listed in the References.

Lengthy consultation on this Strategic Directions document occurred in stages. Comments from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals were initially invited through Cross Cultural Liaison Officers during the first consultation process and incorporated into the draft document. The next stage of the consultation process involved the wider community, including peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. This document now incorporates input from those consultations.

## **Acknowledgements**

The contribution of those individuals, community organisations and government departments who devoted the time and effort to provide their thoughts and ideas is gratefully acknowledged.

This input has assisted in producing a document more relevant and sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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