



Responding to
VIOLENT ASSAULTS
Against **POLICE**

Associate Professor
Glenn Dawes (Chief Investigator)
Dr Mark David Chong
Dr David Mitchell
Ms Margaret Henni
(James Cook University)

Table of **CONTENTS**

Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary	3
Recommendations	7
Chapter One: Background to the Research	13
Chapter Two: Theory and Research Methodology	25
Chapter Three: Police Perceptions	35
Chapter Four: Prisoner Perceptions	59
Chapter 5: Psychological Scale Data	77
Chapter Six: Body Worn Footage of Assaults Against Police Officers	87
Chapter Seven: Conclusions to the Study	97
References	101
Appendices	105
1. Police Interview Questions	
2. Prisoner Interview Questions	
3. Body Worn Camera Observation Checklist	
4. Psychological Scales	
5. Legislation on Mandatory Sentencing for Police Assault Across All Jurisdictions	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project came about over a two year conversation between staff at James Cook University and Queensland Police Service (QPS). It is an example of a research partnership between the two institutions with a shared view of addressing a social problem as to why police officers are increasingly the victims of assaults in the course of their everyday duties. The JCU researchers wish to thank our co-researchers Roger Beale, Darryn Casson and Christine Cullen from QPS for their assistance and enthusiasm over the course of the project. These included a myriad of tasks and requests such as attending meetings, locating statistics, locating research recruits, allowing access to body worn camera images and sharing their lived experiences as members of the service. We also acknowledge the financial assistance from QPS in supporting the research and thank the Queensland Police Services Research Committee for giving the team permission to conduct the research with members of the service. In addition we wish to thank Queensland Corrective Services Ethics Committee for granting us permission to conduct the research in each of the 3 North Queensland correctional facilities. The managers and staff of each of the correctional centres are also acknowledged for their on the ground support in locating recruits and constructing interview schedules with the prison inmates. Finally we thank all of the police officers who took the time to give their views and share their narratives with the research team. Their suggestions for addressing the assault problem were taken seriously and are reflected in the key recommendations in this report.

James Cook University Researchers

Associate Professor Glenn Dawes (Chief Investigator)

Dr Mark David Chong (Investigator)

Dr David Mitchell (Investigator)

Ms Margaret Henni (Research Assistant; Co-Investigator).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research was the result of a partnership between a multidisciplinary team from James Cook University and staff from Queensland Police Services (QPS). The two year project stemmed from a series of conversations about concerns relating to the high incidence of assaults against front line QPS officers from members of the general public. This led to the generation of the research question of “What are the main reasons why police officers in Queensland are assaulted in the course of executing their official duties?” Specifically the project focused on the five aims:

1. To gain the perceptions of Queensland Police Service (QPS) officers regarding the emotional social and physical impacts as a result of being assaulted by members of the community.
2. Identify the precipitating factors which resulted in assaults against QPS officers from as well as how police respond to potential conflict situations with members of the public.
3. To compare the nature and frequency of the types of assaults against police from urban regional and remote locations.
4. Identify gaps in the training and professional development of police officers in terms of responding to potential conflict situations.
5. To gain the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of offenders who have been convicted of assaulting police concerning their self-esteem, attitudes to aggression, impulsivity, behavioural and self-control, as well as attitudes to authority, in order to identify the precipitating factors which led to these conflicts with police.

To address the research question and aims, a mixed methodology was adopted consisting of qualitative data including semi-structured interviews with police who had been the victims of assaults as well as prisoners who had been charged with assaulting police. In addition, quantitative data was obtained from police and prisoners through the use of a series of psychological scales which measured behavioural and attitudinal characteristics of individuals. Finally, interpretive data relating to the analysis of five cases recorded from police body worn cameras was obtained to identify factors which increase the likelihood of police being assaulted. The triangulation of the data from each source allowed for the formulation of a number of informed observations which contributed to the key recommendations which are outlined in the next section of this report.

The qualitative data was obtained from forty semi-structured individual interviews with police officers who had been the victims of a serious assaults while on duty. Interviews were conducted in the north Queensland sites of Mt Isa, Townsville, Mackay and Cairns. Interviews covered a number of themes such as the value of pre-service training in equipping officers with

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

the skills to reduce the threat of being assaulted, the situational factors contributing to assaults, the physical and psychological impacts on the individual and their family members, in addition to documenting the suggestions from officers as to how assaults could be reduced. The main conclusions from the interviews was the need to focus more on developing a range of verbal and non-verbal communication skills at the training academy and a greater focus on developing cross-cultural communication skills and protocols to effectively work with Indigenous peoples. In addition, interviewees felt that the Field Training Officer base should be increased to ensure only experienced officers held these positions to ensure recruits received optimal mentoring in their first year of duty. Another important area was the need for more forms of professional development for officers in terms of the use of force options which are available to officers.

The accounts of assaults highlighted the physical and psychological impacts on individuals. The data highlighted that some officers returned to duty despite still suffering from physical injuries which also prevented them from performing everyday functional activities. The psychological impacts on individuals included stress while waiting for the return of blood tests due to being the victim of spitting incidents or cuts which often affected their personal relationships with partners. In addition, there was a strong perception that the culture of QPS resulted in individuals shielding the impacts of assault due to the perception they would be stigmatised within the service which would in turn impact on their career progression. Finally, it was suggested that a culture change was required which would encourage officers to report injuries in confidence and that families required support to ensure the injured officer was fully rehabilitated before returning to duty.

The prison data was obtained through semi-structured individual interviews with 27 prisoners from Lotus Glen, Townsville and Capricornia Correctional Centres in North Queensland. Of this cohort 21 were males and 6 were females with seventy percent of interviewees identifying as being of either Aboriginal or Torres Strait descent. The data generated themes relating to the trajectory into criminal behavior, perceptions about the kinds of interactions with police, and the factors that resulted in individual's being charged for assaulting QPS officers. The majority of the cohort shared personal narratives which highlight the environmental factors which are well documented in the criminology literature which lead to recidivist behavior. These include early interactions with the juvenile justice system, dysfunctional family environments, trauma, poor relationships, high levels of truancy, alcohol and drug use from an early age and low levels of paid employment as an adult.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There were mixed views regarding the types of interactions prisoners had with police. Interviewees identified “good police” as those who communicated effectively by showing respect to the individual and who did not infringe on their personal rights. By contrast Indigenous offenders observed that police required more training in communicating with their people as well as a better understanding of cultural protocols particularly in remote communities. This resonates with the data from the police cohort. The factors that contributed to assaulting police were varied with some interviewees denying or not recalling the assault due to being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Indigenous people observed that some police targeted Indigenous people unfairly in public spaces and reacted to aggression displayed by police. A number of females observed that they were charged with assaulting police as a reaction to protecting their children.

The quantitative data consisted of the implementation of six behavioural and attitude scales with police who had been the victims of assaults and a police control group. In addition, a cohort of prisoners who had been charged with assaulting police and a prison control group also participated in the study. The six scales consisted of: The Barrett Impulsiveness scale, the Brief Self Control Scale, the Buss-Perry Aggression Scale, the Behavioural Inhibition and Activation Scale, the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and the Scale for the Assessment of Attitudes Towards Institutional Authority. The outcomes of the data analysis were not surprising when comparing police and prisoner responses. The major conclusions of the study were that the two police groups have higher self-esteem than the prisoner groups while the prison groups have less self-control compared to the police. In addition police had more positive attitudes towards authority than the prison groups with people from all cohorts exhibiting more positive attitudes towards authority as they aged. The conclusions of the study showed that individuals who are younger were more likely to be more impulsive, less inhibited and aggressive and may act out without thinking of the long term repercussions. This also concurs with the criminological literature which posits that those engaged in criminal behavior are more likely to be impulsive and aggressive when interacting with authority figures such as police.

Finally, interpretive data was obtained from a fine grained analysis of five discrete cases of assaults against police recorded on body worn camera images. Two researchers independently analysed each of the cases with an observational checklist which included categories such as the environment where the assault occurred, offender characteristics, police officer characteristics, other citizens who were also victims of assaults at the time, types of police interventions, the

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

catalysts for the assault, details of the assault and the impact on the victims (police) of the assault. The analysis of the data identified two significant sets of factors which may contribute to police becoming the victims of assaults. The first set consisted of the factors which increase the likelihood of police being assaulted. These included the inherent dangers of police entering private dwellings and dealing with complex domestic disputes. It was noted that quarelling partners can turn into aggressive allies against police while care must be taken when dealing with individuals who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The second set considered the factors that increase the likelihood of police becoming re-victimised after an initial assault. The conclusions stated that police must be situationally aware of circumstances around them if they are to avoid be assaulted again particularly when dealing with large groups of bystanders. It was also suggested that the crime scene around a suspect should be effectively controlled as soon as possible after the initial incident.

In summary, the triangulation of the qualitative quantitative and interpretive data sets provides a rigorous analysis of the research question of identifying the main reasons as to why police officers are assaulted while executing their duties. These research outcomes are the drivers for the key recommendations which are tabled in the next section of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Legislative Change

Some of the most important findings of this project by the research team reveal that amongst the police officers interviewed there is a general lack of confidence in the court system to adequately punish offenders who assault police officers. There was a strong suggestion for mandatory prison sentences to be imposed by magistrates against offenders who are charged with assaults against police officers under Part 5 of the Criminal Code 1899.

The legislature should also consider whether such changes should include and cover other Public Officers and Emergency Service Workers (POESW) such as Ambulance Officers, Fire and Rescue Officers, Prison Officers etc. These changes should relate to all assault offences committed on POESW whilst performing official duty including common assault, serious assault, wilfully resisting or obstructing a police officer including biting and spitting or when bodily fluid or faeces are applied to a police officer or POESW. These changes are consistent with an identified strong community support for police officers and POESW and provide a clear message of deterrence and punishment to persons who would choose to assault police officers or POESW whilst providing a necessary and vital role within the community.

Community Education Programme

A state wide public multi-media education programme be conducted to inform the community about the incidence and impacts of assaults on police officers. A similar programme should be offered to senior students (Years 10 – 12) in secondary schools to educate the next generation about the roles of Police officers and ESW as well as the impacts of violent behaviour on the particular organisations' staff. This community education programme approach should be broad in scope to include information seminars and utilise all forms of media including television, radio, print and social media.

Police Training and Professional Development

Communication Skills

Greater emphasis is placed on the increased frequency of learning a range of verbal and non-verbal communication skills at the training academy. Recruits should also be exposed to a range of negotiation and mediation skills through a problem-based learning approach. Police recruits should be exposed to existing body worn camera (BWC) data as a means of analysing realistic conflict situations between police and offenders. The analysis of BWC data would be useful to recruits in identifying the psychological and physiological responses of police when placed under highly stressful situations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cultural Awareness

All police recruits and First Year Constables should undergo increased cultural awareness with an emphasis on effective communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and understanding cultural protocols particularly when working in remote communities. This is particularly important for officers confronted with domestic violence investigation and enforcement in both remote indigenous communities and the wider community.

Sociological Module

All police recruits are required to complete a Sociology module as part of their recruitment training. The intent of this module is to make recruits aware of the diversity of lived experiences of people within their community. The focus should be on differences based on social class, race and gender variables and how these variables affect the life chances of individual in contemporary Australian society.

Mental Health

QPS officers are offered additional training during their professional development in identifying and communicating with individual's who may be suffering from a mental health condition.

Ongoing Training

All police officers receive a minimum of 2 Operational Skills & Tactics (OST) training sessions per year to sustain their communication skills and application of the Situational Use of Force Model (SUOF 2016). In addition to this it is recommended that all police have opportunity to access shooting ranges, with OST instruction, throughout the year to maintain and enhance their operational skills with firearms. The purpose of this recommendation is that officers become more cognisant with policy and confident in the justification and use of firearms in life threatening situations.

Field Training Officer Support

That incentives are put in place to expand the Field Training Officer (FTO) cohort across the state to ensure First Year Constables (FYC) receive the best mentoring experience in their crucial first year of police service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Review of FTO Programme

It is recommended that the QPS conduct a full review of the current FTO programme and the training needs and competencies required for FYC's to operate effectively as operational police officers.

FTO Level of Experience

It also recommended that FTO's have a minimum of no less than two or three years policing experience (QPS or other) before being considered eligible to undertake this very important role in the professional development of FYC's.

FYC Rostering

Further it is recommended that, subject to operational and rostering requirements, the practice of FYC's working together or without FTO supervision whilst performing operational duties be discouraged by the QPS.

The purpose of the above recommendations is to provide the best practicable operational environment in which FYC's can develop their professional skills and to improve worker satisfaction and retention.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Six monthly audits of protective equipment (such as ballistic vests, hand held devices, handcuffs, OC spray, conducted energy devices and body worn cameras) are conducted at all police stations to ensure the quality, quantity and fit of standard equipment is maintained.

A minimum requirement is that all operational (frontline*) police officers be provided with protective gloves and long sleeve shirts to cover their arms and minimise the impact of bites or scratches when undertaking general duties.

*Front-line police officers refer to those officers required to perform general patrol duties

Personal Welfare

Access to Fitness Facilities

QPS officers are provided with opportunities to access gyms and are provided with programmes to develop higher levels of aerobic and anaerobic fitness as a means of reducing the impact of injuries, enhancing their ability to deal with physical confrontations as well as a way of reducing psychological stress associated in high arousal situations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Post Assault Support

A clear and consistent “Assault” policy is established by the QPS to assist police officers who are victims of an assault. This policy should range from informal discussions between victim officers and supervisors to detailed analysis of incidents and should include physical and psychological rehabilitation and return to duty options according to individual officer needs.

QPS Response to Police Officers who have been the victims of Serious Assaults*

Reducing Stigma

It is suggested that the QPS embark on a change of culture to reduce the stigma experienced by police officers who often under-report assaults which in turn produces psychological stressors and impacts on their roles as front-line police officers.

It is recommended that a designated independent medical practitioner is assigned to each police establishment to diagnose injuries sustained by police officers and to advise on the most appropriate course of action to ensure the victim officer is provided with the best pathway to recovery.

Strengthening Support

Peer support

The peer support officer programme be expanded by offering incentives for suitable staff through increased training in areas such as one on one counselling and knowledge about community referral agencies for further support.

Human Support Officers

A review of the roles of Human Support Officers (HSO) be undertaken so that the victims of serious assaults are more likely to feel comfortable in accessing this service. Confidentiality needs to be maintained and a primary objective of all HSO's in this process. Therefore, no personal information may be divulged to any third party without legislative authority and/or the informed consent of the subject police officer.

Police Chaplains

A greater role for the current Police Chaplains programme should be encouraged to provide further support for the spiritual needs of police officers who become victims of serious assault.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Supervisors

Supervisors to receive training to enhance their ability to identify trauma or stress in colleagues. This training could also assist supervisors to provide options for officers with resources, support and possible changes in role or duty assignments. Supervisors should be encouraged to have conversations with their staff about managing their stress levels as part of a compulsory employee review process.

Health and well-being

QPS provides an incentive programme as well as opportunities to promote officers' mental health through their participation in a wellness programme, weight loss programmes, as well as access to exercise and stress management courses.

Family support

A trial targeted support service for family members of police officers or staff who have been seriously assaulted be introduced in select locations across the state. This service would be aimed at fostering a better understanding of the stressors police officers encounter which may in turn promote greater family cohesiveness and resilience.

*Serious Assaults refer to assaults that cause injury or emotional harm to the victim officer



Chapter One

**BACKGROUND TO
THE RESEARCH**

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some context for the subsequent data reportage relating to assaults against front line police in North Queensland. Initially the chapter will provide an overview of the problem and the responses from governments across the states and territories of Australia. The chapter will then turn to a review of the literature on other research conducted overseas and in Australia before concluding with a summary of the research question and aims of this study.

Overview of the Problem

After reviewing American literature, Ozkan, Worrall, and Piquero (2016) summarised previous research findings: Assaults against police officers were more likely when multiple officers were involved, when offenders are women, when offenders have larger BMI, and when an offender had recently used alcohol (Ozkan et al., 2016). Most injuries from assaults were bruises or scratches, and 81% did not involve weapons (Wilson & Zhao, 2008). Also, departments that use more specialised units and substations are less likely to experience assaults against police (Ozkan et al., 2016).

Social research indicates race and age are associated with attitudes toward police who are often seen as representatives of oppressive practice. Ozkan and colleagues (2016) examined the assumption that employing more police officers representative of minorities in a jurisdiction would decrease assault rates, however their findings could not support this hypothesis. Jacobs and Carmichael (2002) found that areas with the largest difference in black-white share of resources experienced the highest assaults (lethal and non-lethal) against police, indicating that a number of factors are involved, rather than a simple race-assault equation. Notwithstanding, an examination of the effectiveness of Indigenous liaison officers in improving perceived trust and legitimacy of police in Queensland jurisdictions would further understanding in the unique locations presented within Queensland and the current study.

Australia

It is estimated that about one officer is killed each year in Australia, while concern also surrounds assault and illness contracted while on duty (Mayhew, 2001). Approximately ten percent of police officers were assaulted each year (up to 2001) with the most common incidents involving “fists, body fluids, syringes or bottles” (Mayhew, 2001, p. 2). More male officers are assaulted than females; this attributed to the fact that there is a far greater number of male officers. Officers are most at risk when attending domestic disputes. Mayhew (2001) lists the following features that were common to assault related injuries:

- most are minor and do not require time off
- they occur more frequently on weekends and in the evening
- they are more common during an arrest or while restraining or escorting suspects

- most injuries are to the head, face, upper limbs or torso
- constables have the highest rate, followed by sergeants
- most assaulted officers are young, with seven years or less experience
- female officers have fewer serious injuries, possibly due to different task allocations
- physical force is the most common cause of injury, followed by contact with body fluids (for example blood), impact with a wall or the ground, blunt instruments or pointed objects (for example, a nail) – knives and firearms are rarely used.

(2001, p. 2)

Mayhew (2001) further notes the most common characteristics of assailants and explains that they are similar across Western industrialised countries.

Assailants are usually:

- male
- alcohol or drug affected
- aged between 15 and 29
- unmarried
- persons with prior convictions
- unemployed or working in a low status job, and
- disproportionately indigenous

(p. 2)

There seems little sympathy by courts, media, or some members of the public for police victims of assault, with news articles from New South Wales and Western Australia indicating a lack of support. For example, in Sydney a man was facing his fourth charge of assault on police since late 2013. Despite being given a suspended sentence for the first offence, and subsequently good behaviour orders, he has served no jail time (Crawford, 2016, March 24). Also, in Perth, a judge noted he ‘had no option’ and it was ‘a sad day’ when sentencing a female to prison for biting and punching a police officer, implying that he would prefer not to apply a jail term. (In Western Australia a jail term is mandatory for assaulting a police officer causing bodily harm. The victim (police officer) was heckled outside court to the extent that police back up had to be called (Hamlyn, 2016, February 29; Katsambanis, 2016, March 8).

Queensland

The most dangerous regions for policing as identified by Longworth (2010) were in descending order, the Gold Coast, Cairns, Brisbane Central, Mount Isa and Townsville. Contrary to reports from 2001 (Mayhew, 2001), that stated across Australia approximately 10% of officers are assaulted each year, *The Courier-Mail* reported in 2011 that an average of 25% of Queensland officers are assaulted each year (Sandy, 2011, June 28). In the years preceding the 2010 Criminal Law Amendment Bill, there was an increasing trend of assault against police, from 607 assaults in 2006/2007 to 658 in 2008/2009 (Longworth, 2010). A Parliamentary eBrief in 2010 (Longworth, 2010) revealed that the Liberal National coalition proposed increasing

penalties for assault on police officers, but without cross-bench support the reforms were rejected by the Labour cabinet. The proposed laws included a mandatory jail term of at least 3 months for assaults against police officers (mandatory sentencing had already been proposed, and defeated in 2007). However, when the LNP came to power in 2012 reforms were made to clause 4 of the *Criminal Law Act 1889 Qld* allowing the penalty for the charge of serious assault of a police officer to be raised from 7 years, to 14 years (Longworth, 2010). The reasons given for the amendments were to

give effect to the Government's commitment that Queensland's criminal laws provide strengthened protection to police officers acting in the performance of their duties. The penalty increases for the murder of a police officer and the serious assault of a police officer reflect the important role performed by police officers in maintaining civil authority and the dangers faced by them in the discharge of their civic duties.

(Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012 – Explanatory Notes)

Section 340 of the Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld) pertaining to assault of police now reads:

Serious assaults

(1) Any person who—

...

(b) assaults, resists, or wilfully obstructs, a police officer while acting in the execution of the officer's duty, or any person acting in aid of a police officer while so acting;

...

is guilty of a crime.

Maximum penalty—

(a) for subsection (1)(b), if the offender assaults a police officer in any of the following circumstances—

(i) the offender bites or spits on the police officer or throws at, or in any way applies to, the police officer a bodily fluid or faeces;

(ii) the offender causes bodily harm to the police officer;

(iii) the offender is, or pretends to be, armed with a dangerous or offensive weapon or instrument— 14 years imprisonment; or

(b) otherwise—7 years imprisonment.

(For a comparison to legislation regarding assault against police in other States of Australia please see appendix _).

When commenting upon these amendments the department responded to criticism that amendments were applicable only for cases of assault against a police officer:

The penalty increase which applies only to police officers reflects the prevalence of these

forms of assaults against police officers as a profession. The amendment reflects the objective seriousness of such offending and the need for deterrence in structuring the appropriate sentence. (Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012, p. 15).

In relation to the extension of this offence to other professions, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Hon Jarrod Bleijie MP, has indicated that he would also consider extending the new laws to cover assaults on other professions if there is a decline in serious assaults on police officers after implementing this policy (Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012, p. 16). The rates of assault since the passing of this bill must therefore be examined to see if there was, indeed a deterrent effect.

The Issue of Assault against Police in Queensland

Data collected by the Queensland Police Service reveal that a considerable number of officers are affected by assault each year. It is also considered that this crime is under reported due to a culture of 'bravado' within the service. While there has been some reduction in the overall number of assaults, those occasioning bodily harm have increased, indicating that policy and prevention strategies need to be implemented or updated in recognition of the evolving hazards officers are confronted with.

Literature Review

This review of the literature briefly describes findings from the main types of studies that have investigated assault on police and will reflect the current knowledge of assault on police in general (which is most commonly at the macro level), before summarising studies that have concentrated on individual and situational factors that may lead to assault. It should be noted that Australian literature is very sparse to date, and a majority of research has been conducted in America. Therefore, not all will reflect Australian circumstances, and previous recommendations from research may not be applicable. For example, much of the research is based upon racial division and care must be taken when transferring recommendations or policies to Australia due to the disparity between immigrant and colonial experience that underlies racial tensions. Literature referring to assault *by* police is readily available in Australia, particularly in the wake of the Deaths in Custody report in 1996. A preliminary search of literature pertaining to assault *against* police, however, is indicative of a lack of research widely available to academics, particularly in the Australian context. Much of the literature is published in police specific publications and is less likely to come to the attention of scholars in the wider field of academia, and most investigations into police assault were conducted in the mid to late 1990s. Studies from America provide contradictory evidence (when comparing across jurisdictions and/or studies) for the precipitating factors that lead to violence against police. This has implications for future policy making within Queensland and emphasises the need for research into key locations where assault against police is elevated. An emphasis on situational and individual factors that contribute to the likelihood of an assault occurring can lead to effective policy and training that can produce results within a short timeframe.

Assault on police is widely acknowledged as being an under-researched area, particularly in terms of providing evidence that might inform policy and training to avoid assault and injury of police personnel. Previous research into assault on police has been mainly focussed on structural and organisational issues (or macro level) and seems largely contradictory, with opposing results and conclusions drawn from quantitative data. More recently a few studies have investigated the aggravating or mitigating factors in a situational context which may result in a better understanding of assault on police.

Macro Level (Structural and Organisational) Research

Much of the research at a structural level has been conducted in the USA and has concentrated on fatal incidents (assaults, homicide, and accidental death) while a few included non-fatal incidents (assaults). Structural factors of cities included in the research were the “levels of social disorganization, the racial and economic structure of cities, and the violent crime rate” (Barrick, Strom, & Richardson, 2018). The conclusion from these studies was that the overall levels of deprivation (based on social and economic indicators) “increase rates of police non-fatal assaults as well as police killings and police accidental death” (Barrick et al., 2018, p. 206).

Organisational structure has been examined by several authors and refers to the “division of labor within an organisation” (Barrick et al., 2018). Willits (2014) refers to three strands that make up organisational structure: context, complexity, and control. Willits (2014) found that organisational context and complexity were both significantly correlated with assault on police. Contextual (structural) disadvantage was associated with an increased risk of violence towards police, and researchers suggest this is significant as the correlation “supports the theoretical contention that violence against police officers is largely just an extension of violence itself” (Willits, 2014, p. 152). Willits (2014) also indicated that the organisational complexity (or manner in which work is divided and planned) had a significant correlation with the number of assaults on police, showing that “police departments with more substations are likely to report fewer assaults against police officers, controlling for other factors” (p. 150). He concluded that “the use of substations promotes positive relations between the police and the community” (p. 150). Similarly, Mastrofski (1981) found that smaller police stations (or departments) tend to practice more community focussed (client-orientated) policing and experience a lower assault rate.

Organisational level (or agency-level) led policing styles and community characteristics have also been researched, and some correlation has been found with the rate of assault on police (Barrick et al., 2018). For example, Wilson and Zhao (2008) conducted a detailed study on the contribution of community policing versus ‘aggressive’ policing to rates of assault against police and concluded that it was not community policing in itself that reduced the rates of assault, but the number of times police met with community groups in the context of community policing. They found a positive correlation between ‘aggressive’ policing (such as zero tolerance and high arrest rates for minor offences) and assault rates.

Individual and Situational Influences

Much of the research in the USA has continued to focus on the macro (structural and organisational) factors that may increase the risk of assault on a police officer. However, these large issues generally take time, political will, and a large financial input before change can be affected. This has led to recent research that studies individual and situational factors that may predict situations where assaults are more likely to occur, and may result in recommendations that can easily and relatively cost-effectively be utilised to reduce risk for officers. Factors that have been studied include the type of incident that police were called to, the time of day, location, number of officers present, and the equipment provided.

From the 1980s, domestic violence incidents have been recognised as a high-risk callout for police, although there is not unanimous agreement that this is true for all communities or jurisdictions. Johnson (2011) used his study to identify predictor variables (rather than simple correlates) of assault on officers during domestic violence incidents. He explained that although “previous research has done a fairly good job of describing the characteristics of the assailants who attack police officers in many nations, they all failed to make any attempt to predict officer assaults” (p. 163). Johnson (2011) felt that it was important to distinguish between those assailants that were likely to assault the police, and those who fit the generic assailant description (lower class, adolescent male who has been consuming alcohol) but were not likely to resort to violence against the police. This was considered significant as the description of assailants “fits a significant proportion of the citizens with whom the police routinely interact. Yet only small fractions of the intoxicated, lower class, adolescent males the police encounter actually assault them” (Johnson, 2011, p. 164). Johnson (2011) subsequently identified that within domestic violence arrests there was more risk to the officer if the offender was unemployed, lived with the victim of the domestic violence, had consumed alcohol, had damaged property, and had shown hostility towards police.

Recommendations from this study were to (when possible) gain information on the first four factors from the incident reporter, bystanders, or neighbours. This would forewarn officers and could allow for more officers to be sent to these incidents. Hostility (or the fifth contributing factor) often reduces when police officers arrive, but if it remains there is an increased likelihood of assaultive behaviour towards officers. In addition, Johnson (2011) suggested that “[c]ertain officer characteristics (such as skills in interpersonal communication), or situational characteristics (such as the number of backup officers present) may help further reduce the odds of being assaulted” (p. 168). He explained that “What the officers did and said at the scene may have had an aggravating or mitigating influence on the potential for assault” (p. 169).

The most recent published study on individual and situational factors that could contribute to assault or violence towards police officers also used elements of routine activity theory. Barrick et al., (2018) used data from 8,500 incidents in the USA during 2012. Their study revealed that attempting an arrest was the most dangerous activity for police, and that interactions on roads and in the home were the most dangerous locations. The most dangerous time of day was afternoon and early evening (12 – 6pm) which was also the busiest time of day. They further found that when officers worked in pairs they were less likely to be assaulted than when unaccompanied (supporting the guardianship aspect of routine activity theory) (Barrick et al., 2018). However, it should be noted that other research has suggested the opposite, that single officers were less likely to be assaulted (For example, Covington et al., 2014; Kaminski & Sorenson, 1995). These general findings are useful in terms of general policy and guidelines but could also benefit from more contextual information (as previously suggested by Johnson (2011)) to improve relevance to particular jurisdictions. For example, staffing levels are less likely to be an issue in urban contexts where police rarely work unaccompanied, but may be unavoidable in rural settings. In rural situations it may be more appropriate to practice tactical withdrawal as it is unlikely that officers will be accompanied at all times.

Prenzler (2006) conducted a study into police deaths (including accidental death) in Queensland through analysis of situational factors, and routine activity theory. He demonstrated the level of analysis and specificity of recommendations that can be achieved through a more contextual approach. In this case he was able to access coroner's reports that provided more detail of incidents than statistics alone. His recommendations that could be relevant to assaults on police included more routine use of protective clothing, He also suggested that "more information about police deaths in initial and in-service training may assist in curbing any tendencies towards over-confidence and a sense of invulnerability" (p. 161) that may have contributed to fatal incidents, particularly in young officers. He further recommended that advances in technology be used to ensure timely access to background information on offenders (for example, previous violence, mental illness, and presence of weapons). This recommendation may have largely been fulfilled with the use of tablets and software that rapidly access this information. Prenzler (2006) stresses the importance of all attending officers being equally aware of this information, and further stresses the need for adequate communication between officers, as well as a clear chain of command at critical incidents.

In further Australian research, Hine, Porter, Westera, and Alpert (2016) explored aspects of the situation, suspect, and officer (and more particularly, officers' decision-making processes involved in use of force "relative to the suspect resistance" p. 15). They found that, contrary to previous research which suggested female officers were assaulted less than male (For example Mayhew, 2001), no officer characteristics were significantly associated with the likelihood of violence and assault. Hines et al. (2016) discovered that the greatest contributor to officer injury

was the incorrect level of force used. They noted that use of force may be disproportionately low in comparison to the level of suspect resistance more often when dealing with females, or when in a public place. In contrast to some research they found that officers were less likely to be injured when dealing with mentally ill offenders than in minor incidents (such as theft or stealing). They offered the explanations that Queensland police have additional training (Mental Health Intervention Project (MHIP)) and that based on the perception that mentally ill offenders are more dangerous a higher level of force is generally used. They recommended that “officer training needs to have a strong focus not only on identifying potentially dangerous encounters, but also on how to respond to such circumstances; that is, officer decision-making on when, and how, to use force” (p. 15).

Problems arise in practice, however, for officers in making correct decisions of appropriate use of force under stressful conditions. This is evidenced by enquiries into both public complaints about excessive use of force (Task Force Bletchley), and the real concern about the stress levels experienced by officers that can impact their decision-making capacity (Violent Confrontation Review).

Studies completed in the USA have produced mixed results, with contradictory evidence and conclusions. The inconsistency in results could be due, in part, to the unique characteristics and variables in the jurisdictions that were studied. Studies based on opportunity theories, in particular, can be dependent on context. This emphasises the importance of this study across a variety of locations in Queensland, and acts as a reminder of the inherent difficulty of trying to transplant strategies formulated in other jurisdictions into new sites. The examination of situational causes of violence directed at police allows for relevant data to be collected, and subsequent recommendations that, while based on evidence and best practice, are tailored to the needs and circumstances of the specific location.

Research Question and Aims

In the light of the paucity of research into assaults against police this project focused on the following research question: “What are the main reasons why police officers in Queensland are assaulted in the course of executing their official duties?” To provide some detailed insights into this question the following five specific aims were chosen:

1. To gain the perceptions of Queensland Police Service (QPS) officers regarding the emotional social and physical impacts as a result of being assaulted by members of the community.
2. Identify the precipitating factors which resulted in assaults against QPS officers from as well as how police respond to potential conflict situations with members of the public.
3. To compare the nature and frequency of the types of assaults against police from urban regional and remote locations.
4. Identify gaps in the training and professional development of police officers in terms of responding to potential conflict situations.
5. To gain the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of offenders who have been convicted of assaulting police concerning their self-esteem, attitudes to aggression, impulsivity, behavioural and self-control, as well as attitudes to authority, in order to identify the precipitating factors which led to these conflicts with police.



Chapter Two

THEORY AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Nature and Relevance of Routine Activity Theory

The Routine Activity Theory, an environmentally-oriented paradigm created by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979) in the 1970s, is an integrative, practical and user-friendly theoretical framework that puts forward the argument that for a crime to occur, there must initially be a convergence in time and space of:

- (1) a motivated offender;
- (2) a suitable target/victim; and
- (3) the absence of a capable guardian.

These situational elements are considered to be intimately linked or proximate to the ‘opportunity’ to commit the offence, and is often depicted as a simple ‘Crime Triangle’, as seen in Figure 1 below (Anderson, 2010, p. 11).



Figure 1: Crime triangle

These modern crime prevention scholars noticed how this convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets/victims, and unguarded items or ‘preys’ was dictated by the natural rhythms of everyday life that allowed for predictable crime patterns to be discerned (Clarke & Eck, 2005). Crime was thus seen as an ‘opportunity’ that anyone could potentially exploit in the course of the ‘routine activities’ of their daily lives. From a criminal justice perspective, this theory proposed that it would be realistically possible to pre-empt particular crimes from being committed by environmentally modifying or manipulating one or more of the three elements of the Crime Triangle in the following ways:

- (1) Reduce the number of motivated offenders, or demotivate the motivated offenders;
- (2) Make the target/victim less suitable or vulnerable; and/or
- (3) Increase the level or quality of guardianship (Clarke & Eck, 2005)

This original conception was later augmented by John Eck (Felson, 2008, pp. 74-75) to include more distal social factors (though not necessarily referring to deep sociological or socio-structural criminogenic causes) that also impacted upon the opportunity to commit a crime. This later revision, called the ‘Problem Analysis Triangle’ [as seen below in Figure 2 (Clarke & Eck, 2005, Step. 8)], added an outer triangle of so-called “controllers” to an inner triangle of some of the original elements of the Crime Triangle.



Figure 2: Problem analysis triangle

These “controllers” were just that – they ‘controlled’ aspects of the inner triangle. So for example, in relation to the inner triangle factor of the target/victim, it would be the guardian that “controlled” or protected it from the offender. With regards to the place or setting where the crime would be committed, here it was the manager who would be responsible for controlling the behaviours of both the offenders as well as the victims (if the victims were human, of course). As for the handlers, they were people who knew the motivated offender well enough to be in a position to exercise some control or influence over his/her deviant or criminal conduct (Clarke & Eck, 2005, Step 8). Thus, to better describe the essence of the opportunity to commit a crime, Eck argued that an offence would more likely occur when there was a convergence in time of:

- (1) a offender, who either did not have any handlers or whose handlers were not able to adequately control/influence his/her deviant/criminal behaviour;
- (2) a target/victim, who either did not have a guardian or did not have adequate guardianship; and
- (3) in a place/location where either there was no manager or where a manager did not adequately regulate the behaviours in that area (Clarke & Eck, 2005).

Thus, it is arguable that Routine Activity Theory will be particularly useful to criminal justice practitioners because it easily lends itself to the formulation of well-thought-out, practical, and implementable solutions. This is because the paradigm clearly explains how crime problems arise out of a simple (though not simplistic) two-step process. Firstly, the inner triangle factors of Eck’s Problem Analysis Triangle must initially converge. Secondly, the likelihood of a crime actually occurring is then increased if the controllers (i.e. the outer triangle factors) are either absent or deficient in performing their respective roles. Crafting a solution to prevent these crimes from occurring will therefore necessitate a modification or manipulation of one or more of these 6 core elements. The key intention of doing so is to impact upon the decision-making processes of the offender so that when he/she is confronted with the opportunity to commit an offence, they will decide against it because of the crime prevention measures.

Hence, it is critical that practitioners have a deep understanding of how offenders decide whether or not to exploit this criminal opportunity. In this regard, Routine Activity Theory explains that there are at least two different ways of doing this. On the one hand, when offenders are already motivated or cognitively primed to commit a crime, practitioners will have to employ a Rational Choice Perspective in order to comprehend the inner-workings of the offender's mind. On the other, if the offenders are initially unmotivated or less motivated to perpetrate the offence, then a Crime Precipitation approach should be used to do the same.

In the first scenario, the motivated offender is assumed to be rational in that he/she utilises a cost-benefit analysis when deciding whether to pursue a deviant or non-deviant course of conduct when faced with the opportunity to commit a crime. This form of rationality however is of a 'bounded' nature (Simon, 1957), and recognises that when considering the merits or otherwise of perpetrating the offence, the offender will do so within the parameters of limited information and time, their personal cognitive ability, whether they are currently affected by emotional arousal or drugs/alcohol; whether they have been socialised into deviant values; etc. Thus, decisions taken by the motivated offender, although arguably suboptimal, are nevertheless still rational. Such decisions are sometimes referred to as being "satisficing" i.e. they are satisfactory and sufficient to meet the offender's immediate needs at the time of the offence (Wortley & Tilley, 2014). It should be noted though that motivated hard core recidivists tend not to weigh the costs and benefits of their actions each time they commit an offence. According to Clarke and Cornish (1985), when an offender frequently commits the same type of crime in similar circumstances, they tend to do so on the basis of "standing decisions", where the decision-making process has already taken place at some prior point in time.

Thus, their subsequent offending behaviour becomes "instinctive", "automatic", "routine" or "second nature" if those previous attempts have been successful. Nevertheless, because the underlying basis of these so-called "instinctive" crimes is rational, practitioners can still use Routine Activity Theory to challenge these "standing decisions" by manipulating one or more of the 6 core factors contained in the Problem Analysis Triangle.

As for the second scenario, some offenders may be unmotivated or have less motivation to commit the offence at the time of the crime. In those circumstances, employing a Rational Choice Perspective may not be an appropriate tool to use in order to comprehend their decision-making processes. A crime precipitation framework however would be more useful. The Crime Precipitation approach argues that there are certain factors which can create or intensify an offender's motivation to commit an offence. According to Wortley and Tilley (2014), there are 4 main crime precipitators, and they are as follows:

- (1) Prompts: Such precipitators, for example, hyper-violent movies, may stimulate or evoke

aggressive memories or emotions in some people, and this then leads them to commit assaults etc.;

- (2) Pressures: This refers to the significant influence that others can have on an offender's behaviour because of the social conventions or pressures that, for example, compel us to conform to group expectations, to obey authoritative peers or superiors, to submerge our individual identity into a collectivity, or to constantly seek to please our significant others;
- (3) Permissions: These refer to the cognitive neutralisations that offenders employ to excuse their misdeeds. A very good example of this can be seen in Sykes and Matza's *Techniques of Neutralisation* (1957), where delinquents denied responsibility, denied injuring the victim, blamed the victim, condemned those that arrested them, or appealed to a higher loyalty, in order to assuage or neutralise the guilt that they felt for their crimes; and finally,
- (4) Provocations: When aspects of the immediate environment causes the offender to feel, for example, frustrated, insulted, overwhelmed, discomforted, crowded, etc. these provocative precipitating factors can induce emotional or physiological arousal that biologically prepares the offender for a 'flight or fight' response to the harmful situational stimulus.

This theoretical analysis is extremely important because by knowing how the offenders think and make decisions, practitioners can then respond more effectively (at the policy implication stage) to modify or manipulate one or more of the 6 core factors in the Problem Analysis Triangle in ways that will make the crime less rewarding, attractive or viable in the minds of the offenders. For example, if the practitioner puts in place a measure that target hardens the victim by installing security screens in the residential home (i.e. modifying the inner triangle victim component), this will then potentially impact upon the offender's decision making processes because now, he/she will be thinking that the effort needed to commit burglary (or break-and-enter) will be too much. Target hardening will also mean that the offender may take more time to commit the crime, and consequently, in his/her mind, they may not want to perpetrate the offence because of their increased exposure or risk to being caught.

The Policy Implications of Routine Activity Theory

As highlighted previously, the policy implications of Routine Activity Theory in relation to the prevention of offences are very promising indeed because it lends itself very easily to the formulation of well-thought-out, practical, and implementable responses to crime problems. In fact, there is already a conceptual framework that can be used for this very purpose. This framework is called situational crime prevention, and is a subset of the wider conceptual umbrella of environmental crime prevention. There are 5 main categories or strategies of situational

crime prevention, each of which has 5 specific techniques that modify or manipulate one or more of the core aspects of the Problem Analysis Triangle. They are as follows (Clarke & Eck, 2005, Steps 38-43):

(1) Increasing the effort to commit the crime

- a. Target hardening: To reduce the vulnerability of the potential victim
- b. Controlling access to facilities: So as to keep the offenders out of places that they are not supposed to be
- c. Screening exits: To ensure that the offender has not stolen anything from the premises
- d. Deflecting offenders (away from crime targets)
- e. Controlling the tools/weapons: That can be used by the criminals against the potential victims

(2) Increasing the risks of detection and apprehension

- a. Extending guardianship (quality and quantity)
- b. Assisting natural surveillance: So that more people who are going about their daily routines will be better able to keep a look out for you or your property
- c. Reducing anonymity: So that the potential victim will be able to know who is not supposed to be at a particular place etc.
- d. Using place managers: So as to increase surveillance capacity
- e. Strengthening formal surveillance: Through the use of the police, security guards, and store detectives etc. Employing burglar alarms, CCTVs etc. can augment this form of formal surveillance

(3) Reducing the rewards of committing the crime

- a. Concealing targets: By hiding your valuables
- b. Removing targets: So that the offenders will not be able to steal what they had originally intended to take etc.
- c. Identifying property: Through property marking so that your valuables will be more easily identified as yours rather than the offenders or their 'fences'
- d. Disrupting markets: Through systematic monitoring and police 'crackdowns'
- e. Denying benefits: By putting in place measures that will not allow the offenders to enjoy the fruits of their crime, for example, ink tags on clothes that stain them so as to prevent shoplifting etc.

(4) Reducing the provocations that can lead to a crime being perpetrated

- a. Reducing frustrations and stress: For example, more seating, less smoking, muted lighting, soothing music etc. in pubs or other public areas that draw large crowds
- b. Avoiding disputes
- c. Reducing arousal and temptation
- d. Neutralising peer pressure
- e. Discouraging imitation

(5) Remove the excuses that can be used to reduce guilt

- a. Setting rules: So as to remove any vagueness as to what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour
- b. Posting instructions: So as to ensure that potential offenders are aware of the rules, for example, through public posters or signs etc.
- c. Alerting the conscience: Through the use of signage etc., at the point when the potential offender is about to perpetrate a particular offence. This is not intended to engender permanent changes in general attitudes or beliefs concerning criminal behaviour but rather focussed on preventing the offender from exploiting the immediate opportunity to commit the crime
- d. Assisting compliance: By helping the potential offender to be law abiding in relation to particular types of criminal behaviour, for example, building public toilets in areas where people tend to urinate in public
- e. Controlling drugs and alcohol: This is a particularly important point because such substances are capable of compromising our self-control and inhibitions, thereby making people more susceptible to committing crime and acts of deviance

These situational crime prevention measures may then be implemented on one or more of the following interventional levels:

- (1) Primary: Where the measures are delivered to whole communities;
- (2) Secondary: Where the measures are delivered to those at-risk of becoming criminals or those at risk of being victims (including places); and
- (3) Tertiary: Where the measure are delivered to known or recidivist offenders or victims (including places) who have been repeatedly victimised

Generally speaking, the likelihood of successfully preventing crime using these situational crime prevention techniques increases if a multi-pronged approach is undertaken. This is because the crime prevention measures will then attempt to address the crime problem from multiple sides or levels. An important caveat however is that such a holistic approach will tend to require additional resources and finances to bring it to fruition.

Research Methodology

In order to uncover the primary causes for assaults against police this study examined both intrinsic as well as extrinsic factors that contribute towards increasing the likelihood of an encounter between a police officer and a member of the public, to escalate to the point of violence. In this regard, intrinsic factors related to constitutive elements within the offender as well as the police officer that may relate to aggression. Some of the factors relate to:

- (1) age; (2) ethnicity; (3) relationship status; (4) educational qualifications; (5) employment and/or

socio-economic status; (6) attitudes and beliefs concerning aggression; (7) mental health status (psychiatric history); (8) previous incidence of head trauma; (9) previous incidents or arrests/convictions for assault; (10) previous incidents or arrests/convictions of offences not involving assaults; (11) previous assault victimisation; (12) complaints of aggression from members of the public against the police officer; (13) history of illicit drug consumption/abuse; (14) history of alcohol abuse/addiction; (15) illicit drug addiction and/or consumption at the time of the incident; (16) alcohol addiction and/or abuse at the time of the incident, etc.

Extrinsic factors however were concerned with the environmental matrix in which the encounter took place, for example: (1) the location; (2) timing; (3) climate; (4) situational and social contexts; (5) whether alone or in a group (peers, family), etc.

It should be noted that often both intrinsic as well as extrinsic factors often featured concurrently in a particular encounter between the police officer and members of the public. The prevalence of such factors in these police-community interactions were identified through a vigorous employment of a range of mixed method research instruments including qualitative, quantitative, and interpretive data collection techniques which served to triangulate and validate the data from each source.

Firstly, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with of police officers who have been assaulted, as well as offenders who were imprisoned as a result of assaulting a police officer. In relation to interviewing police officers, five sites across North Queensland were selected. These five sites were among the most dangerous regions for policing in Queensland (Longworth, 2010). The chosen sites included: (1) Cairns; (2) Townsville; (3) Mount Isa; (4) Mackay. Ten officers who have been previously assaulted from each of these sites were interviewed. The selection of these participants was not entirely random as it was considered that a cross-sectional representation was achieved in the participant cohort, based on, for example, their ethnicity and gender age and experience in the service. The seriousness of the assault was also taken into account as well, for example, being verbally assaulted, bitten, spat at, having bodily fluid or faeces thrown at them to mores serious assaults such as suffering from contusions, concussions, wounds, internal injuries, broken limbs etc.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with offenders who were in prison for assaulting a police officer. Three correctional centres were chosen as the sites for the interviews : (1) Lotus Glen Correctional Centre (men); (2) Townsville Correctional Centre (men); Townsville Women's Correctional Centre; (3) Capricornia Correctional Centre (men). A total of 21 males and 6 females were interviewed across the three sites with 70% of the cohort identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Secondly, the prison cohort as well as a cohort of prisoners who had not assaulted police (control group) completed six behavioural and attitude scales to assess self-esteem, attitudes to aggression, impulsivity, behavioural and self-control, and attitudes to authority. In addition the police who had been the victims of assaults as well as a cohort who had not been assaulted (control group) also completed the same set of scale tests. All of these scales have been shown to have adequate reliability and validity:

1. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965);
2. Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire – Short Form (Bryant & Smith, 2001);
3. Short forms of the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale,
4. Behavioural Inhibition and Activation Scales
5. Brief Self-Control Scale (Morean et al.,2014)
6. General Attitudes to Institutional Authority (Rigby, 1982)

Completion of the scales were conducted in the presence of one of the investigators and took on an average 30 – 45 minutes to complete. Analysis of the data involved group comparisons using analysis of variance (multivariate analysis of variance were appropriate and t-tests. Correlational analysis and logical regression was were also conducted on the four sets of scale data.

Thirdly, the researchers examined and assessed CCTV footage of incidences of police assaults occurring at some of the sites. Footage from at least five separate incidents from each site were independently assessed by two researchers against a checklist of key situational and social risk factors associated with assaults against police officers. These CCTV camera footage were primarily sourced from the Queensland Police Service. While this form of assessment was subjective and highly dependent upon the perceptions and the researchers the limitations of this approach was minimised by the use of a checklist of common situational and social risk factors derived from the literature as well as the relevant police standard operational procedural manuals.

In addition to that, more than one researcher viewed the same footage using the same checklist so that the results could be compared, and analysed. It was argued that by employing this triangulation of qualitative, quantitative and interpretive data, a rich narrative of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors which led police to be assaulted would be identified. What follows in the next four chapters of this report is the reportage and outcomes of each form of data collected to address the primary research question of:

What are the main reasons why police officers in Queensland are assaulted in the course of executing their official duties?



Chapter Three

**POLICE
PERCEPTIONS**

An important focus of this research was to obtain first-hand accounts from police officers who self-reported as victims of serious assaults in the course of their duties. To capture these narratives a qualitative research framework was developed consisting of a series of semi-structured interviews with individual police officers from Townsville, Cairns, Mackay and Mt Isa in northern Australia. The interview subjects were recruited with the assistance of QPS via emails to the major police stations at each site. The email contained an invitation to join the project if the officer has suffered a serious assault and was willing to volunteer 45 minutes of their time to record a taped interview. In all ten interviews were recorded at each of the four sites with a diverse range of police personnel in terms of variables such as gender, experience rank and geographic location which provided a bank of rich descriptive data. In total the participant cohort consisted of 12 females and 28 males, with 8 officers having less than 5 years experience 14 officers with 5-10 years and 18 officers with 10-15 years of policing experience.

Before the interview each respondent signed a JCU ethics consent form which indicated that they fully understood the aims of the research and that they agreed to participate in a recorded interview. In all a total of forty interviews were recorded over 2017 with 10 QPS staff at each of the four sites consisting of Townsville, Cairns, Mackay and Mt Isa. The raw interview data was analysed through the NVIVO computer software package which identified a number of key themes as well as a source of rich thick descriptive data. The major themes categorised demographic details about each officer, their perceptions of training at the police academy, accounts of the situational variables which contributed to being assaulted as well as the physical and psychological impacts on the individual as a result of an assault. An additional theme related to identifying measures to address the problem of assaults with regards to possible responses at the legislation institutional and individual levels. What follows is a narrative account of police officers perceptions based on these themes beginning with an account as to what motivates individuals to become members of the police service in Queensland.

Motivations for Pursuing a Career with QPS

The variability in this research cohort is reflective of the diverse cross-section of the community who aspire to a career in the Queensland Police Force. In the initial stage of each interview the respondents were asked as to why they elected to aspire for a position in the service which reflects the heterogeneous demographic profile and range of life experiences that potential recruits bring to the service. A significant number of younger people for example had completed year twelve and had transitioned to tertiary education with some failing to complete their university study. For the majority of these young people pragmatic issues around job security were the drivers for their decisions to join the police service as echoed in this first-year constable's account:

I think several reasons I joined the police. I think my Dad wanted me to. Said it'd be a

good career opportunity, he was always in private enterprise and I think he kind of saw that it was a good steady job where you get paid every year, get superannuation, and you're never gonna get fired unless you do something really bad. I don't have to worry about you know, whether or not, how well the economy's going for your job.

Other recruits saw life in the police service as a logical step from previous positions such as the military or fire service due to similarities in the type of frontline work in dealing in stressful situations as outlined by an officer who had 10 years of military service with the English army before migrating to Australia. This officer's account highlights how his military experience impacted on his approach to policing:

I was in the army for 10 years straight from school and being honest, it was the easiest thing to get into after being in the army... I am a firm believer that there's an expectation that where you need to – I mean, I come from a bit of a culture where, especially with a military background, you know, suck it up and get on with it princess, sort of thing and I think there's a certain expectation when the public are running from a fight that the Police be running to it, you know what I mean?

By comparison other recruits were attracted to the service for altruistic factors such as wanting to serve their community based on the realisation that many of them had limited life experiences compared to sectors of the community which were socially culturally and economically disadvantaged. For example a second year constable shared his philosophy on life as to why he resigned from his previous employment as a personal trainer to join the service:

However, I really enjoyed helping people and I wanted to take that to the next step, and that's why I applied to be a police officer, because I really liked helping the community. I enjoyed helping the community through helping to try and fight obesity and just today's problems with people generally being unfit and the associated health problems that come with that.... So I chose to become a police officer to try and take it to the next level on something where I could be attending triple zero calls for service and just trying to be that first person on the scene and dealing with those high stress situations where people are generally having the worst day of their life, when I turn up and meet them.

By comparison other recruits were motivated to join the service due to a policing tradition in their families or through positive experiences with police which had left a lasting impression on their young lives. For example, four of the interview cohort gave positive accounts of interactions they had with police when they were at school which prompted them to enrol as police recruits after completing school:

I liked my school-based police officer, he was a cool guy but I never had anything to do with him, and then so on this one particular night, the third time I got pulled over - and it was in the one trip, from one end of the suburb to the other end, there was a big party going on, so I got pulled over three times. The third time I got pulled over, it was a female police officer, and I don't know I guess the way she treated me, I thought that was really cool. You know, they're just human.

Target Hardening: Perceptions of Pre-Service Training

The quality of pre-service training that recruits received at the police academies was perceived as pivotal in terms of preparing individuals to work in an increasingly challenging and changing society. Interviewees were asked to comment on the adequacy and type of training they received at the academies for preparing them to respond to potentially violent situations as new officers with QPS. Of the forty officers interviewed fifty percent responded that that they thought that the overall training of recruits was adequate (considering that courses were approximately 6 months in duration) for preparing police in the rudimentary skills associated with having a clear understanding about the force of options which were available to them as well as their knowledge about Queensland legislation:

I think the training was excellent. It sort of starts off, so you know, we have our use of force options, okay. Presence, communication, that's really where they start, and they start by getting you to do scenarios around move on directions, and street checks and things like that, which are really just low-level police interactions where you're just learning how to talk to difficult people. Mental health, similar...

And then of course we went further on to learning about how to use our batons, capsicum spray appropriately, taser firearm as well, handcuffs. You know, how to use them not only just to secure an offender's hands behind their back but also there's some use of force options that involve them that are quite good to have.

...The use of force model works on a circular motion that you have several options available to you in the way of equipment or responses that you can actually do, tactically as well as verbally, and you can go to any one of those use of force options, depending on the nature of the threat that's actually in front of you or the nature of the situation that you're actually dealing with or encountering, or potentially encountering

There was also an acknowledgement that recruits benefited from other aspects of training such as general physical fitness training while at the academy which was conducted with skilled trainers who acted as successful models for the recruits:

I could say that with confidence, our fitness and training per say, our techniques, would be second to none, in relation to that. Reflecting back now, that the people that taught it, knew what they were talking about and as far as I was aware of the day, the techniques and everything are still in now, with variations. But certainly we had enough physical training, balanced out with the theory stuff yeah.

Despite the acknowledgement that the academy experience provided recruits with an overview of the essential skills to react to violent situations, there was reflective commentary about the need for more of an emphasis on the teaching of different types of communication skills which

was recognised as part of the force of options training offered to new recruits to the academy. A number of highly experienced police observed that there was a presumption that young people entering the force possessed the necessary communication skills to de-escalate potential conflict situations. However, it was argued that many recruits also lacked sufficient life experience skills which hampered the development of their communication skills with members of the general public who often had differing cultural emotional and social experiences compared to young police officers:

In the 25 years since I was in the training environment, the training which I got - I was 21 when I went through the police academy, I was young, I was naïve, and had never experienced any of it before. It opened my eyes to, really, what's going on. If I was going through the academy now - what I see people going through the academy - I don't think you can really prepare someone adequately for it. Especially if you're young, and your worldly experience doesn't go back to being picked on, sworn at, abused - you don't have the thick skin to be able to accept that. If you're a young person who has grown up in a good family home environment, you've gone to school, you've done your university education, you're not really going to have experienced that.

You get kids - they're literally kids - that have no fucking idea. They haven't worked for anything, or really spoken to anybody, or seen anything, haven't travelled, or whatever. And you're throwing them into these high-risk situations, and you're expecting them to cope with it. To me, you haven't given them the appropriate tools.

By comparison some respondents observed that individuals who entered the service after working in front line services such as the armed forces also tended to lack high level negotiation skills due to the impact of their training in the forces which was often interpreted as overly authoritative by members of the public:

But within my squad at the academy, there was also a very large amount of army - ex- We should teach them, the guys that are coming here. There should be an orientation package, for anyone who goes north of Rocky. Because you have - Rocky has Woorabinda. Cherbourg, Murgon, around Kingaroy. All these communities. But our indigenous people are over-represented in incarceration, and in family violence, in education, in drugs, but we just haven't yet conceptualised an adequate answer, or programme, for police to be trained in that.

army. And the way that they spoke to people was very different to the way I spoke to people. And you know, they were very authoritarian in their way, they were controlled, they were well spoken, but they were forceful. They weren't going to negotiate.

A further observation by experienced officers was a desire to see more Indigenous cultural content included in the training curriculum to prepare young constables who were often transferred to remote Indigenous communities early in their careers. It was suggested that

trainees should have an understanding of Indigenous history as well as a knowledge about the protocols for working at these sites in order to better relate to Indigenous people particularly in rural and remote communities:

Transitioning into the Service

Despite a range of perceptions about the adequacy of pre-service training for recruits in preparing them for potential conflict situations, there was widespread agreement that the most effective training occurred during the first twelve months of service when new constables were mentored by experienced Field Training Officers (FTO'S). The majority of officers who had between 5 -10 years in the service identified that experienced FTO's were instrumental in teaching them "on the job" skills which enhanced their understanding of situational awareness when operating in different contexts such as confined spaces or in public places with large groups of bystanders. The value of this mentoring experience in addition to working in various areas of the service in the first twelve months was cited as being among the best learning experiences for new officers:

The field training officer I had - I've got to admit - was sensational. A very, very capable copper who used a lot of his skills, and was able to portray, and walk through everything that happened. We always used to do the pre-brief. We'd be going to a job; he would be briefing about what things are likely to occur. Obviously, policing being a rolling bloody job, you just turn up and things turn to shit completely. But he was very good at making you situationally aware, how to talk people down, when you're not going to talk people down, and how to deal with things when you weren't talking people down.

However, despite support for the FTO model in preparing constables for their first year of life in the service there was sentiment among older police that the process was now not as effective due to the increasing numbers of relatively inexperienced officers who are now in the FTO role. This was viewed as having detrimental effect on the ability of relatively inexperienced officers to pass on valuable "on the job" knowledge to new appointees. The majority of interviewees stated that QPS should commit to increasing the FTO base by appointing only experienced officers to the role:

So you know, it goes right back to when we bring our first years here and they're in their training year – you know, those FTO's need to be setting them up to be that good connie that's senior in time because you know, they are going to be the ones that are going to pass this on and I think that we let ourselves down there and I think that situation awareness and operational safety and everything like that, the QPS were not doing enough training of it, you know throughout the year and we've got a poor FTO base, so you may see an escalation of this because you know, people just aren't focusing on it. I think it's one area of business that we could really do a lot better.

It was also suggested by one respondent that existing FTO's would benefit from regular compulsory professional development to improve their mentoring skills in order to ensure that recruits were receiving the best career advice:

But the point is, is that in the years I've been an FTO, I've never once had to attend any re-coursing and, you know, re-skill set or anything like that; nothing at all. And you can actually go onto at night and do an upgraded course, which is an online thing. But if you're not motivated to do it, you're not going to do it, are you? Now I've done it – I've tried to keep my up skills every year, so I'll go through and do that up skill and everything like that, but there's not many people doing it. So you've still got old coppers with old qualifications trying to teach new coppers new tricks.

Factors That Contribute to Assaults Against Police

Rationalisation of assaults

Following discussions about the training of recruits, the interviews turned to questions relating to what police perceived to be the current challenges confronting them as frontline workers in contemporary society. Surprisingly the majority of interviewees did not perceive that society was now necessarily more violent than previously while acknowledging that there appeared to be greater numbers of police who suffered from serious assaults. The majority of police however admitted that the numbers of assaults would be higher if all police reported what they considered to be minor in terms of being verbally assaulted pushed or shoved. In these cases most police did not charge the perpetrators and passed these instances off as “part of the job” and not worth the administrative time spent in formalising the charge. Most police rationalised that there was also little chance of recording a conviction for what they considered to be minor assaults:

Interviewer: Is it an everyday occurrence or is it something that people put up with in terms of being a police officer?

Police: It comes with the job I suppose and it's not worth the paperwork. It's not an everyday occurrence and I suppose you have different levels of assault as well, because assault might be where somebody just pushes past you and you may not apprehend them. But that's basically assault, whereas it might come to a fellow - I've known of people that have got broken jaws and had their arms broken.

Most police who were interviewed however were able to identify that they had received multiple types of assaults over their careers ranging from verbal assaults, being spat on and being physically injured by members of the public. Female police in particular stressed that while physical assaults received the most attention, verbal assaults also had negative psychological impacts on the individual which were not recognised as being serious within the service:

Verbal assaults are bad too, yes. We have a thick skin, that's true. But when you're told that you're going to get raped, or that you're a fat cow, or like when my mates get called names things like that too, it's not on. It should be something, I believe there should be an offence for verbally abusing police officers and officers should charge those who talk to police like that.

It was also generally acknowledged that some assaults on reflection could have been avoided if the police officer had engaged the offender in another way to de-escalate the situation. For example, most senior police stated that conflict scenarios could be avoided if younger officers in particular used their communication skills in preference to other force options:

Those minor assaults - I, personally, don't really see them as an issue. They're going to happen in the course of trying to do something. If someone's under arrest, they're not going to want to come with us - on the whole. A police officer puts a hand on them, "Don't touch me", yeah, it's an assault, but I don't really see it as an issue. They happen because of the way that we've gone about doing our job. It comes back to communication.

Societal factors

All of the interview subjects were invited to reflect on what they considered to be the key factors that contribute to police officers becoming the victims of serious assaults while performing their duties. This is despite the forms of "target hardening" to protect themselves that police undergo during their initial training at the academy as well as the mentoring they receive from their FTOS' during the initial phase with the service. It is not surprising that the responses from the research cohort of police are varied depending on variables such as gender, age, length of time in the service and situational factors.

In order to identify societal factors that contribute to police assaults, the interview cohort was asked to reflect on how they thought the community perceived police in their roles as enforcers of the law and as a service to the general public. A major point of convergence among the cohort was the erosion of respect for the service over time which was perceived as a major factor contributing to the spike in assaults against officers. Several senior police identified the Fitzgerald Inquiry as a pivotal point in history which contributed to this gradual erosion of public confidence and subsequent lack of respect for the service in some sectors of the community:

Generally speaking, yes. I think attitudes have definitely changed, towards police. If you go back to - for want of a better term, good old days - you go to the 60's and 70's, the person who was the police officer certainly carried with them that air of responsibility. People had respect because you were a police officer. And I think older people would, generally, say that the police officer was someone to be feared - not necessarily feared, in terms of, "I'm scared of the person", but fearful of what the results would be if I do something to that person. As changes in society come through, that fear, in terms of

respect, has definitely gone. And that's been brought about by any number of things. Enquiries which have come in in relation to - Fitzgerald is probably the big one - those police were, obviously, doing the wrong thing. It was a small group of the police, and the actions of that small group of police had ramifications for a big group of police, as in the police service as a whole.

Others pointed out that there was a general lack for respect by Australians towards all types of authority figures which was attributed to the breakdown of traditional values in base institutions such as the family and the school. For example there were comparisons made about the alarming rise in the numbers of violent assaults against other front line workers across the country such as paramedics, hospital staff and school teachers which were seen as an indicative of the loss of respect for front-line workers in general :

So I look at that and think of where I sit now with the assaults, and I've never been badly assaulted like that, but certainly, there has been a massive increase. And I think, generally, that is because there is a lack of respect for authority, particularly - and when we talk about authority, we talk about police, but authority in general. To put it in perspective, I watched - the news and you watch reporters who are interviewing the President of America and they always call them President. And the media calls our Prime Minister by their first name.

The observation that some Australians no longer respected police as authority figures was played out in accounts with their daily interactions with some members of the public who chose to ignore directives from officers and/or abused police verbally with a belief that they were immune from sanctions:

The lead up to that was our ability to be respected has gone down. I think the attitude of society, or the elements of society, has risen. They've got the confidence that they can go and do something because either we're not believed, or it's not recorded, or whatever the case might be. Certainly, in terms of numbers of assaults, I would say the increase happened simply because there are more people who are prepared to take us on when something doesn't go their way; they're not getting the response that they deserve.

Front-line officers also highlighted that the court system often did not support them in terms of handing down appropriate sentences to perpetrators which further ingrained the belief that there were few serious consequences for offenders who assaulted police. Many police believed that unless they possessed concrete evidence such as body camera or CCCTV footage to present to the courts the perpetrator of an assault was likely to avoid the charge and have the assault charge dismissed by the magistrate:

You know, I've met a lot of people who have quite blatantly said they really have no care for the consequence, because they know that the consequence is quite small. It's very rare for a heavy punishment to be dealt out to someone assaulting the police, or an

ambulance officer or a public officer or a teacher or a nurse. It's very rare, despite how large they say the punishment is versus to what they actually get. And so as a result, I'd say they are a lot more willing to do it, for sure.

Additionally, some officers who had been seriously assaulted, perceived that they were not supported by QPS prosecutors. They stated that in some cases the original charges were downgraded by a prosecutor resulting in perpetrators receiving lighter sanctions. In one case a victim stated that a serial offender received a fine and allowed to walk out of the court because the prosecutor had withdrawn one of the key charges relating to the use of brass knuckle dusters which had resulted in the officer receiving serious facial injuries:

Yeah so they charged him well and he was charged well. Within a few weeks, the prosecutor who happened to be the OIC of pros there, came to me and said, so the full mind, he was initially charged with serious assault with a weapon, the knuckle dusters, causing bodily harm. She said, "Look, we're dropping the with a weapon side of it because at the time of the incident, you're the only witness to the punch and you can't identify him actually having the knuckles on at the time that he punched you.

An additional societal factor which was perceived to indirectly contribute to assaults on police related to the impacts of social media which was viewed as a means of negatively portraying how police responded to incidents in public spaces. Posting selective segments of footage on public media platforms without any reference to the context of the situation often resulted in police being portrayed as being over-reactive or aggressive. For example, interviewees observed that increased access of social media platforms by the public resulted in many incidents involving police and members of the public being posted on sites like Facebook or recorded as video footage on phones. While most police identified the advantages of social media they could also identify instances whereby they consciously self-regulated their response to problematic situations due to the knowledge they were under an intense public gaze. One officer relived a situation where he potentially put himself in a dangerous situation by opting to use a hands on option to tackle an offender rather than using a taser when confronted with an aggressive male who was surrounded by a large number of onlookers who were recording the incident on their devices:

With the way that police are seen on Facebook, and on social media, and all that sort of stuff, the common thing - and you'll hear this all the time - is, "Why don't you catch a real crook? Go away, and do your job somewhere else". At the same time, I pulled a guy out of a crowd on a busy street and would have used my taser, but I backed off and tried to jump on him knowing that everyone was recording what I was doing and I was looking like an arsehole and was never going to win. So yeah in hindsight I put myself in potential danger then.

Another societal variable that was identified as contributing to increased assaults against police was attributed to changes in illegal drug use patterns across all demographics in the

community. There was strong agreement among the cohort that a spike in the use of the drug ice often combined with high levels of alcohol use were responsible for more conflicts involving greater numbers of police than with previous generations who used other drugs of choice such as cannabis. Police stated that ice users were unpredictable in their behaviours and it often stretched police resources when they attempted to restrain an ice induced person thus increasing the possibility of a police officer being injured:

Incredible strength. Like I said to you before, we were fighting - at that stage I was probably sitting up around about the 75-kilo mark, one of my partners was about 70 kilos, and the other partner was about 110 kilos. And this young female - 45 kilos, all up, I reckon she would have weighed - was at the point where she was overdoing us. Anyone who's on Ice they are so unpredictable. Like more often than not they'll end up in a violent detention cell in the watch-house. And yeah, you don't go and touch them or do anything with them unless you've got - well I don't I know unless I've got four officers. Especially if we have to get the QAS to come out and have a look at them, and more often than not you'll be standing - like the VDCs got a stable door, so you can open the top door and leave the bottom part closed, we'll talk to them through the door that way, we won't even like open the whole door to them, they're just completely unpredictable, and their strength is incredible.

An associated but growing problem for front line police was working with members of the public who were affected by mental health issues. Many of the police who were interviewed stated that they felt they did not have the skills to identify and communicate with people who were undergoing a mental health episode which made it difficult to communicate with them as a means of removing them from situations where they were potentially in danger to themselves as well as other members of the public. The following case illustrates the difficulties confronting police when attempting to intervene with individual's who possess mental health issues which sometimes result in physical injuries to the officer:

There'd been an urgent call, because somebody had decamped from another copper over in Cranbrook. So, we just went patrolling. We happened to find this young fellow. He wasn't on drugs, or anything, but he was agitated because, from memory, the copper had just intercepted him. And he had a noose - he was going to the bridge to kill himself. The copper's intercepted him. He's done a bolt. We found him just before he's got to Mum's. We've ended up following him to Mum's because we knew that something just wasn't right. Mum was there. And we're trying to chat to him, trying to get him to voluntarily come to the hospital - which isn't normally our job, but shit happens. You're on the spot - you're doing it. and it was a low-set fence. We were over Fulham Road. And, for some reason I was there, the young fellow was there and, I think, Mum was on the steps, he just lost it, and I think he's gone to leave. And I've played a lot of football, so I've tackled

him to the ground - later on, he actually complimented me on the tackle. We ended up in a thing. But he was extremely flexible - I don't know whether it was extremely flexible, but just - he wasn't off chops, but he was off, mentally. Somehow, or other, I'm trying to hold him down, and I had my head near his head. He has, somehow - I shit you not - brought his leg up, and has come back and smacked me -

Situational factors contributing to assaults

During the interviews police were asked to identify situational variables which were more likely to place a police officer at risk of being seriously assaulted. The following narratives highlight the importance of how good situational awareness plays a big part in reducing the possibilities of being seriously assaulted.

Interviewees cited that the most challenging situation for police was entering unfamiliar confined settings such as private dwellings where an alleged offence such as domestic violence had been reported. Police observed that entering dwellings as a consequence of a call out for domestic violence related incidents placed them in potentially vulnerable situations due to a high number of unknown variables such as: number of occupants in the house, potential sources of concealed weapons within the dwelling and being unsure of the rationality of occupants in terms of mental health and drugs or alcohol use. It was highlighted that the most dangerous room in any dwelling was the kitchen due to the range of potential weapons on hand such as knives:

Being in the kitchen, that's where police - and you're taught this in academy as well, try not to deal with anybody and please keep people out of the kitchen - I was standing in front of him trying to gain control over the left arm of him and he's using the left arm to get the knives. I don't know how I ended up being assaulted but I will just explain the situation, I was pretty much wrestling with him and he's dropping the knives, thank god, so there are knives all over the kitchen floor and I just remember him grabbing the knives and I can't remember them dropping but it was like a never ending block of knives and we tried wrestling with him and then we had him up and then we were both down on the ground with him and come back up with him - long story short, we got him in handcuffs.

In addition, police also stressed the need to avoid conflict situations within the confined space of motor vehicles which limited the range of options open to an officer when attempting to restrain a non-compliant offender:

I ended up going for the driver, who was quite a big lad compared to me, and tried to get control of the car and, as a result, the steering wheel caught - forced it to actually drive off the side of the road, but then he managed to get it in reverse, and he dragged me along the road back in - he did another reverse and we reversed back into the drain, but I knew

that, if I tried forcing him hard enough, he'd get locked in the area, and sure enough - but he dragged me along the road, did a bit of damage on the knee. Then when I eventually got the car locked, he realised that he didn't have any other option. He's gone up into my eye with his thumb, and he drilled my eye to the extent where my eye just was ready to burst, and the hospital sort of said lucky I'm not blind as a result of it, but if he had have gone directly in he would have busted the eyeball, but he went up actually between the eye -.

There were also accounts where police were often thrust into unfamiliar surroundings without basic necessities such as a torch when attempting to pursue offenders which often resulted in injuries to the officer. The account below is an example where a lone female police officer pursued a young offender at night and tripped over a cement culvert and received serious injuries to her eyes due to a conflict with the female offender:

Yeah, it was a large area, maybe 200 metres by 200 metres, and I tripped and fell into a stormwater drain, like a big culvert, like an open stormwater drain you get beside the highway. I hit the bottom and I thought, I'll give myself a minute down here. I was in water about half a foot deep, and I thought I'll just give myself a minute because it was embarrassing, and I fell down. Little did I know that I rolled down over the top of her in the dark. It was a six metre roll that I went, and without knowing she was there she just jumped straight on my back and the first thing she did was she put her fingers - tried to gouge my eyes out. I flipped her over and then she scratched my eyes again before I could quickly grab her. So it went for maybe ten seconds while I was just getting myself in a position to grab her hands. Then she tried to bite me - she was on top of me so she was about a 90-kilo girl, she was a big fat thing. So I tasered her because I was on my back in the water on the reeds, and I had limited movement, she'd already scratched my eyes. So that was one of the worst physical injuries you could actually see.

Remoteness is another situational factor which force officers to reconsider interventionist options and often resort to tactical withdrawal if they are heavily outnumbered to avoid potential conflict. Police who work in remote Aboriginal communities for example described a non-interventionist strategy as the most appropriate response particularly when inter-clan disputes erupted often involving large numbers of people brandishing weapons. The most appropriate service response to these situations was to monitor the situation often from the safety of a vehicle and, if necessary, follow up on the incident the following day as depicted in this account:

And you go down to the old football field. If you drive around you'll find them. And there'll be a family feud, between 100 - 600 people fighting. Oh - the riots are massive. The riots are incredible. And as far as you can see - people fighting with angle iron, sticks, weapons. Mornington Island, if they were fighting on Mornington Island, they'd have

spears. Shoot spear fights. They throw spears at police. It's like – it's really bad. I had a young fellow in the car once, and we were driving through a riot. And they were throwing stuff. And they were throwing bottles and some stones, and stubbies, and – they'd never throw a cold one! But they throw – sticks, and my buddy says to me – 'they're throwing sticks!' I said 'they're not sticks – they're spears, and that's a boomerang'. They're throwing spears – that's what they do. Like – we've got to get out of here. This has gone bad.

A number of younger officers described similar approaches to conflict situations when stationed in small townships where there were only 1-2 police located. It was common to hear accounts where police attended call outs without other police support which placed them in potentially vulnerable situations. This account by a lone police officer who was apprehending a female in a public space highlights the inherent dangers police are placed in when they lack the support of a fellow officer:

I was in Chinchilla. It was 2012. I was working by myself. There'd been an incident at the local bottle-o and some alcohol had been stolen. And just a small community, you kind of knew the local suspects, you started doing patrols and looking at the description of who it was. There was a disturbance on King Street, I think it was. I go there and there is an Indigenous woman smashing a house up because she'd stolen big bottle of alcohol and her son has hidden it from her, because when she drinks she gets really aggressive, and she's already quite drunk. So in the normal process of her assaulting him and so forth - domestic violence, she gets handcuffed, is taken to the police vehicle and she turned and just spat in my face. And she's hep-C positive.

The Psychological Physical and Emotional Impacts of Assaults

In addition to the often harrowing accounts of how police became the victims of serious assaults, individuals were asked to reflect on the short and long term psychological physical and emotional impacts of assaults and how these incidents affected their professional and personal lives. During this stage of the interviews police were also asked to comment on the types of institutional support they received from the QPS in terms of aiding their rehabilitation and subsequent return to duties.

As previously stated most interviewees perceived that the physical injuries they received were relatively minor and dismissed the notion of impact as being significant. Furthermore the majority of people stated that they did not lose any work hours and in some cases continued working despite harbouring an injury. By comparison there were some accounts whereby police officers sustained serious physical injuries which impeded them from performing their duties

such as one officer who was punched with knuckle dusters while pursuing an offender which resulted in a broken jaw and several months off work. In these cases the injuries sustained seriously impacted on their ability to perform everyday physical functions and impeded them from resuming their former roles for a considerable amount of time. Another account describes a former front line officer who sustained serious hand injuries as a result of an altercation with an ice-user which prevented him from performing functional and recreational activities:

Just doing simple things - riding a motorbike, now - I used to go for a ride for five hours. I can go for a ride for, maybe, 50 kilometres before I can't ride anymore. Things like that. Just simple working things around the house - using screwdrivers, using things. I mean, it's getting better, but it's never going to be as good as what it was. And the most frustrating thing is the fact that nothing happened. The guy walked away, scot free. And he'll never, ever bloody know who I was, or what is now the consequence of his actions.

While most interviewees stated that they eventually overcame their physical injuries the majority stated that assaults had deeper more sustained psychological impacts on the individual which affected their approaches to policing as well as their relationships with family members and colleagues. As previously discussed spitting on police has become a common form of assault which is difficult to predict. Police have to undergo a series of blood tests to identify if they have come into contact with serious diseases such as hepatitis c which involves a three month wait to ascertain the results of the test. For many officers this waiting period produced psychological stress and also impacted on their relationships with their partners as outlined in this exchange:

Police Officer: *I had to go through the tests that night. I had to have bloods drawn; there was a mountain of paperwork as far as for me to do, just that night, as far as doing all that.*

Interviewer: *And how long did you have to wait to get a clearance that you were okay?*

PO: *So the initial - there's multiple tests. I think they've just managed to reduce the waiting time so, it used to be at least six months, now it's about half that. You get a first indicative test about two weeks, but it's just an indicator. And then about three months I got my confirmation that I was fine.*

I: *So how did you feel during that time? Did you feel really afraid that there could be something wrong here? Did that go through mind? Did that influence how you thought about things?*

PO: *It was back of the mind, definitely, definitely back of the mind.*

I: *Worrying about the result coming out?*

PO: *Yeah.*

I: *How it was going to turn out, because you could have had anything, couldn't you?*

PO: *Exactly. We immediately obviously checked our own records to see if we knew of any diseases he had and I asked one of the nurses - well I asked the missus and other nurses if they knew if he had anything and they said, "No, look, according to us he's got nothing."*

Other victims cited that after being assaulted they encountered difficulties in communicating how the assault had affected their self-esteem with their partners which in turn negatively impacted on their personal relationships. For example one female police officer revealed that her relationship had deteriorated after being assaulted as she could not communicate her feelings to her partner. The following account by another female officer captures the sense of alienation suffered by victims and its resultant negative effects on their personal relationships:

You just bring it home. If you're struggling with some things, because I remember when I got assaulted for that week I was sort of – it was playing on my mind a bit. It took me a couple of weeks to sort of get over Well I had my partner with me and we actually planned and went on a holiday and we were on holiday, we just went up to Mission Beach for a week. But I'd just get upset for no reason during the middle of the day or something and obviously you're on holiday with your partner and you're like shouldn't be doing this. Yeah, no it was fine after that. So just needed that I think couple of weeks just to let it all out.

It was common to hear accounts whereby the victims attempted to shield the effects of assaults particularly when they returned to work post-assault. Several officers stated that they were afraid to talk about their incident to peers for fear of being labelled or stigmatised as “weak” or “not up to the job” in the eyes of fellow officers and their superiors. This resulted in many officers feeling alienated and in some cases harbouring anger and resentment which affected their attitude when returning to work as in this scenario:

I was a mess. I was coming to work - I was coming back to work angry already. I was arriving at work bitter and jaded and just I was hating the world. I would go to jobs and just entirely lose interest in their problem, because their problem was rubbish and their problem was bullshit and those are the sort of problems and that's the sort of person that assaulted me and I can help them right now, but the next day they'll be coming at me with a cricket bat. It's the same - it's just arriving at jobs with that blinders on, that's so bitter and it was visible to other people as well, how pissed I was.

In other cases officers reported seeing changes in their colleagues in terms of their demeanour with signs of depression and withdrawal as a result of being assaulted:

You can tell someone's going through depression if they're not coming out of their room and you haven't seen them out and about. And I'm referring to police officers here. That if that is the case, this return to work team would easily find out that information on what's going on with this person. 'Oh, they're due to come back to work, but they haven't. They're still on extended leave. They're not going – they're not engaging with any of their friends. They're in their room.' 'Well, obviously they're suffering from a form of depression and need help.

All of the interviewees were able to identify the various avenues of support available to them within the service. For example, HSO'S and the Peer Support officers (PSO) were the most

readily identifiable support mechanisms for people who had suffered serious assaults. However, most officers preferred the more informal networks of support found in their fellow officers where they felt they could speak candidly and have their confidentiality respected. Others appreciated informal contact from their OIC to check on their welfare after an assault:

We definitely got an email from the district office. Like I remember my OIC saying, "Hey if you need support, we can help you out. We can link you up." But like our bosses and that locally used to be like, "You're all sweet?" and pretty much imply that if we wanted to talk to someone, we could. But the way we just functioned, it was more like a peer support/ unofficial looking after each other.

By contrast few of the interview cohort stated that they had any faith in turning to more formal avenues of assistance such as HSO's for assistance for fear that their confidentiality would be compromised which could potentially affect the way their peers perceived them as well as impacting on their career progression:

There's a stigma around the HSOs as well, unfortunately, with the police, because everyone knows that they have to report stuff that they feel pertinent back to the police. So, if you go to them and you're able to have an open, honest conversation and say, 'Oh, look, I really feel down and I don't know if I'm going to be able to do my job or put my gun on again ever,' they've got this weird duty-bound – I don't know how that's written into their – I don't know how they're written out of their professional obligation to make – to keep stuff confidential, but then breach that to be able to tell the QPS, but that's happened to – I hear stories. Unfortunately this is just stories that's gotten back to people and they've been put on – what's it called? Virtually – 'We found out this about you, and we don't want you in the workplace anymore.' Yeah. So there's a bad stigma about the HSOs.

Others reported that they felt institutional pressures on them to return to work after periods spent recuperating from an injury sustained due to an assault incident. Some police reported that there was an institutional stigma attached to people who opted to go on stress leave as part of their work cover entitlements which affected their career advancement in the police service.

It's a massive problem within the QPS that they need to get rid of. It's been said at this station, not directly to me, but to my wife, 'Do not go on stress leave.' And it's really bad, 'cause people might just need a month off to see psychologists and get help. Yeah, so that is a massive stigma within the QPS, which I never realised. I thought – 'cause obviously, with mine, I got back to work and didn't need any time off and have to have the stress leave and that, but I may have. And – yeah. I've seen enough people go through things worse than mine, who've been on stress leave and they've had to change locations and stuff like that just 'cause of the really bad stigma attached to taking time off for any sort of psychological injury. Legitimate psychological injuries. And I don't know why that is.

Returning to Work Post-Assault

The interview subjects were asked about returning to work after they had been seriously assaulted and if they now consciously took other precautions to protect themselves from potential conflict situations compared to the period before they were assaulted. Half of the cohort stated that they did not change their attitude or approach when interacting in violent situations. By comparison the other respondents highlighted that they were now more situationally aware and took precautions to reduce the impact of a potential assault occurring. For example, a common response from officers was to be more cautious when entering potentially dangerous sites such as households where they were uncertain of the number of inhabitants inside as well as potential weapons in rooms such as kitchens. This female officer observed that she now refused to go into homes where there was a domestic violence call out:

Yes, if I got to a family where there is DV where there is a lot of people and they're drinking, I won't go into the yard. I will drive up, have a look at the house, and see what's going on. Beep the horn. Just how they do business, I guess. Like, in Kowanyama we never got out of the car. We beeped the horn, and they came to us. So, I have started doing that to families here because a lot of them have come out of the communities, and that is how they used to operate. So, I will drive up and beep the horn.

... so, you know, they're all things, you've got to be constant situationally aware where this is happening, you know and constantly looking at risks, so I don't let offenders get anywhere near a kitchen now; you know, I live and learn from that, so that's one thing that I certainly consider.

Other officers who had suffered bites or been spat upon by perpetrators took evasive measures such as situating their body in a position which made it difficult for these kinds of assaults to occur:

Yes, I've changed my way of - just more careful, and more careful where I place my hands on someone so they can't lean down to bite me. So, just being more conscious of my movement. So, instead of having hand to the front like I had, I will now have my hand to the back.

A common observation shared by members of the cohort was that serious assaults resulted in officers reflecting on their training and in particular their use of force options when dealing with a potential perpetrator. More experienced officers for example stated that the experience of being assaulted on many occasions had prompted them to rethink how whether they now engaged in situations if they were seriously outnumbered. For this officer non-intervention while monitoring a situation such as a street fight was preferable compared to his previous responses which involved direct interventions:

If someone's out there physically fighting with each other, I'm not going to go in and get myself hurt, if they're not killing each other. If they're just having a fight, it's going to last for a minute at most. No one can keep going for five minutes on fighting. If they're only fighting against each other, they're not killing each other. –

Another common response particularly from more experienced officers was that people now were more likely to see the inherent benefits of defusing a situation through attempting to communicate with people or withdrawing to reduce the odds of a conflict situation:

In terms of responding communication is definitely worth considering. I've said that all the way along. Learning how to talk to someone, and apply that to any situation that you're in; a simple traffic stop, for a roadside breath test, to your pushbike rider without the helmet, to your drunken person on the street, to your most drug-affected person, to mental health people. How you communicate with them dictates a lot of the response that you're going to get back.

My thing is, well, I'm going to walk away and I'm going to cool down and I'm going to get my thoughts back into place and that sort of stuff. Because I'd much rather do that than argue with someone. And I don't think young ones actually really consider that that's probably one of the best options. And I can still remember when I left Yeppoon, another guy that was around the same vintage as myself said to me, "The biggest thing that I find with you and that I wish I could do was to communicate as well with people as what you do," is what he said to me. He said, "Because you're capable of talking your way out of everything." And I thought, well, that was a nice thing to know.

A preventative approach adopted by some police was to ensure that a barrier existed between themselves and potentially very violent individuals who were affected by drugs such as ice. A female officer who had been violently assaulted in a watch house recalled how she now ensured that there was a physical barrier between herself and perpetrators to reduce the chances of being re-victimised:

From my experiences anyone who's on Ice is so unpredictable. Like more often than not they'll end up in a violent detention cell in the watch-house. And yeah, you don't go and touch them or do anything with them unless you've got – well I don't I know unless I've got four officers. Especially if we have to get the QAS to come out and have a look at them, and more often than not you'll be standing – like the VDCs got a stable door, so you can open the top door and leave the bottom part closed, we'll talk to them through the door that way, we won't even like open the whole door to them, they're just completely unpredictable, and their strength is incredible.

Addressing the Problem of Police Assaults

The final questions of the interview schedule focused on gaining the perceptions of the officers with regards to addressing the high incidence of violent assaults against police. Some of these suggestions form the foundation of the key recommendations for this report. While it is not the intent to replicate the recommendations here, the suggestions of the interview cohort can be grouped into two major themes namely: a. Support for assault victims and b. training and professional development issues.

Support for Assault Victims

A major issue identified by the research cohort was for the QPS to encourage officers to report all cases of assaults and that they are provided with more support within the service which addresses the physical and psychological impacts on the victim. There were many accounts in this research where officers stated that they under-reported assaults due to a cultural perception within the service that being assaulted “was part of the job”. One reason for not reporting an assault was the perception among the cohort that they were likely to be labelled as “not being up to the job” by their colleagues or superiors which could in turn impact on their career progression within the service. Senior police in particular observed that front line officers should be encouraged to report all cases of assaults to address the impacts associated with being assaulted in a transparent and confidential way as summarised by one senior constable:

I see that now that I've done eight years and I can see these junior constables come up and – knowing about those vulnerabilities and the stuff that – the psychological stuff that can happen to us, that that needs to be identified early. There needs to be not a stigma about mental health and stuff. That it should be completely ok for a supervisor inspector to go to a constable and say, 'Oh, look, you've been driven at. That's pretty full-on. You're going to have some psychological effects from this.'

A related issue is that a review be undertaken as to the effectiveness of the current process of reporting assaults within the service. For example, a high number of interviewees stated that they would not access the HSO's for support after being assaulted for fear that their case would not be kept confidential which in turn had the potential to negatively impact on their career prospects as in the following observation:

Officer: *I'll never talk to a HSO. I'd rather go and talk to one of my workmates than a HSO, because they just have that aura, now, that - you just can't trust them.*

Interviewer: *So, it's an ineffectual thing, in your opinion?*

Officer: *Oh, yeah. I reckon you could ask a hundred coppers; not one of them will go and talk to a HSO. They'll go and talk to a PSO, but not a HSO.*

In contrast, most officers stated that they were more comfortable in confiding in the Peer Support Officer within their station or other informal networks within the service such as fellow

officers after being assaulted. In addition, this research indicates that other mechanisms should be considered by QPS to ensure that officers receive appropriate support post-assault. One suggestion by an officer who worked in another country suggested that each police station should have an assigned external general practitioner who would diagnose the extent of injuries and suggest a rehabilitative plan for the officer. The rationale for this initiative was that external support would reduce the tendency of some officers to under-report injuries or return to work before they had fully recovered from the assault.

Legislative changes to address assaults

Over half of the cohort recommended that courts should have the power to enforce mandatory sentences on individuals who are charged with seriously assaulting police in the line of their duty. The rationale behind this suggestion is based on the effectiveness of existing legislation relating to evading police in vehicles which attracts a mandatory sentence. The prime rationale for this recommendation was that similar legislation had been introduced in other states to address the rise in assaults against front line workers such as paramedics and hospital staff in triage units:

Just a zero tolerance to more of that type of behaviour. That needs to come into place because I feel as though sometimes it's a little bit too - we went from a police force to a police service because it's about helping the people, which is good, that's fair enough but sometimes I feel as though we let it go too far to a point of we're more for helping the people and it's like well 'hey, what about us?' We need that support as well. Police officers need better support.

Yeah, and that got pushed out there pretty well. So people know that's the minimum they're going to get, and so they were fighting it based on the penalty to start with, and now they look for different avenues to get out based on identity and things like that. People know that if they get charged with evade it's a big offence. We still have a lot of evades, but they don't want to be caught. When they get caught and we can prove it, they go to court and they know what the penalty's going to be.

So that sort of - when we know that it's them, that does stop them from evading us. So it does prevent the offence. It's different because identity's an issue. But when you're faced to face with someone, you've already identified them, they can't get away. I think there could be - if there was some sort of mandatory custodial sentence it would be a good thing. I don't know how you would fairly put it in.

Public awareness campaign

Another suggestion was the introduction of a media campaign to educate and inform the public about the impacts of assaults against police and their families. The multi-media campaign would be used to reinforce the message about new state penalties and sanctions (if introduced) which were mandated to protect officers while on duty. It was also suggested that School based police working in secondary schools could assist in developing programmes in tandem with teachers to educate students about violence prevention as part of their role.

Training and professional development

After gaining their perceptions about preparing police through pre-service and ongoing professional development a number of recommendations were tabled to better equip officers with the skills to avert potential conflict situations. Enhanced forms of communication training was a key recommendation for skilling police to de-escalate a conflict situation without having to resort to other use of force options such as capsicum spray or taser. Interviewees observed that many of the younger constables did not possess suitable communication skills when interacting with people in conflict situations. Experienced officers noted that while young recruits may have other skills they often lacked world experience which prevented them from reading situations and adopting appropriate strategies due to a lack of interpersonal communication skills as identified in an interview a senior sergeant:

They may have gone travelling around the world but they have no experience in actually talking to people. They get six weeks at the Academy, six months at the Academy, very little training in how to talk to people or conflict resolution because they're just like boom, boom, boom. They don't have enough time for this, that's that done, we're off. And then they come here and the way they talk to people is not necessarily the right way. It's more of an aggravation to the suspect, you're winding them up. And then it's tit-for-tat, they say something and the officers say something, and then it all just blows out of proportion before you know it they are rolling around and you go like, "What did the hell did you do that for?"

It was also suggested that all police would benefit from undergoing more training within the professional development programme in how to communicate with people with mental health issues as well as those who exhibited unstable and unpredictable forms of behaviour while under the influence of illegal drugs and /or alcohol. In summary there was widespread agreement that communication skills should be at the forefront of the training curricula at the training academy as well as the on-going professional development programmes with an emphasis of the use of realistic scenarios which mirror the type of everyday situations which officers are confronted with:

I think, having a more specific focus on communication with people, particularly anyone who might be having a mental breakdown or anything like that much earlier in your

career can definitely be an effective option. Like I said, personally, I didn't feel like it was much of a problem, only because of the previous life experience I've had, as you said. And I've always just been good at listening and communicating with people. But not everyone's like that, and obviously you need to take an approach to things to help try and suit everyone who's in the job, because everyone's different. Everyone approaches a situation different. So I definitely feel like that could be an option, for sure, is to have a more focused approach towards mental health, communication, negotiation. Negotiating with someone who's non-compliant and trying to get them to be compliant, to have a peaceful ending to it, I think would definitely help to stop assaults happening, because perhaps that might be an option that's considered first rather than going straight.

Operational Skills Development Training

Over ninety percent of interviewees cited that there is a need for more operational skills development training in addition to the current system which affords officers the opportunity to hone their use of force options on an annual basis. Most people suggested that training be increased to two sessions per annum as a minimum due to the perception that people lose their skills over time particularly when using guns and tasers which in turn increases the officer's vulnerability when in high stress level conflict situations.

Yeah. It's about one day shooting, to requal. But if you're not shooting and you're not doing it that often, it doesn't make a difference. I've noticed at the academy, I was shooting every day and got good. But then as the time goes on, we're only doing it once every year or so. You can definitely see your skills drop.

Others suggested that police would benefit from increased training with hand to hand skills as this was a common form of response in everyday situations with non-compliant members of the public:

We don't do enough training for hand to hand stuff. We do OST - which is a three-day program every year - which is Operational Skills Training. It's just remembering how to use some different movements - how to put someone in certain different locks, and that sort of thing. It's all very controlled, so you've got time. It shows you how to do things in a certain way - which never works. It does not work unless you do it all the time. I'm not very hands on with people, so I don't do it all the time. So, when something happens, it just goes out of your head - you don't remember how to do it.

Summary

The police narratives captured during the 40 face to face interviews across four North Queensland sites provides rich contextual data for understanding the factors that contribute to police assaults as well as the short and long-term impacts upon the individual. The data highlights that there are

a number of societal factors which contribute to increased numbers of police being assaulted. For example, most police cited that interacting with individuals who are under the influence of drugs such as methamphetamines (ice) as well as alcohol is a contributing factor that leads to police assaults. Other factors such as an overall breakdown of societal respect for police as a service as well as a perceived lack of support from the judicial system also contribute to the spike in police assaults. However, a high number of officers identified that police could often avoid potential conflict situations if they adopted a more mediatory approach when interacting with potential problematic people.



Chapter Four

**PRISONER
PERCEPTIONS**

To gain a deeper understanding, and alternative perspective on factors that contribute to violent or assaultive behaviour, first-hand narratives from offenders who had assaulted a police officer were also obtained. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with offenders who were serving time in Townsville, Capricornia, and Lotus Glenn correctional facilities in North Australia. Offenders were asked to volunteer to take part in taped interviews (by?) about what led to them assaulting a police officer. In all twenty-seven offenders agreed to take part, with eleven from Townsville, seven from Capricornia, and nine from Lotus Glen. Participants represented varied age and gender groups and came from diverse rural and regional areas of North Queensland. The participants' age ranged from 19-57 and included 21 males and 6 females. Most were of Indigenous descent.

The aims of the project, and the rights of the participant, were verbally explained by the interviewer prior to the offender signing the JCU informed consent form. The raw data from the twenty-seven interviews were analysed using the NVivo software package, producing major themes and allowing a comparison of descriptive data with those identified in the police narratives. The major themes identified included demographic details about the offenders; their pathway into offending; contributing societal, cultural, personal, and situational variables that led to the assault of a police officer; and ways in which the offender felt the assault may have been avoided. Offenders who have assaulted police were asked to give their perspective on what contributed to them assaulting a police officer, as well as ways in which they believe the situation could have been handled differently to prevent the escalation to violent behaviour. The main themes identified by offenders were a general dislike or distrust of police (a feeling which they believe is mutual), the fact that they felt picked on, or singled out (due to their offending history, race, or lifestyle choice), a natural reaction (particularly in response to pain, or fear of being returned to prison), and a breakdown in communication (which can also be a contributing factor for the preceding reasons). The following is a narrative account of offender responses to open ended questions.

Trajectory into Offending Behaviour

Participants were open in sharing their trajectory into crime, and subsequent assault on police. These discussions revealed accounts of trauma, abusive family relationships as a child, trouble with school, early entry into alcohol and drug use, and lack of employment, as well as negative attitudes to police: a feeling that is widely believed by offenders to be reciprocated by most police officers.

Many of the offenders shared common factors that contributed to contact with police at a young age for minor offences (For example intoxication, stealing) which often escalated when they reached their early teens (into break and enter or car theft for example). The majority failed to complete school to year 12 and had their first contact with police in their early teens (although

many held down jobs when first leaving school before intoxication and/or criminal record made it hard to secure employment).

The types of assault among the offenders included spitting, hitting, pushing, head-butting, and obstruction, usually during an arrest, or as a function of resisting arrest. Some of the offenders did not believe they had assaulted an officer, but several of the accounts appeared quite confused and offenders contradicted themselves within the interview; this could be a result of the intoxication level of many of the prisoners at the time of the assault committed against a police officer(s).

Offender Perceptions of Police Officers and Policing

There were mixed opinions on what characteristics made a good policeman, but good communication skills were a major theme. Some felt that older officers were more likely to attempt communication before attempting a hands-on approach.

Interviewer: *Okay. How do you find the older ones compared to the younger ones when you're dealing with them?*

Prisoner: *Some older ones, they're easier to deal with, they're a bit more lenient. Well, not really lenient but a bit more fair.*

I: *Because they're more experienced perhaps?*

P: *Yeah. The young ones though, the new ones that keep coming out, they're taking their badge a little bit too seriously I think.*

I: *Are they aggressive?*

P: *Yeah, not just aggressive. They can do what they want, they're higher than you, they're better than you.*

Although a blanket dislike of police was exhibited by many of the offenders, some differentiated between styles of policing and acknowledged that some police were better than others. One explained that some police *"talked to me like a person, not an animal"*

Others felt that older, more experienced police could take a more relaxed approach with offenders, but that some may become jaded after years in service and make foregone conclusions based on past experience.

The older ones can be more measured. They can take a bit more of an all right, yep, that sort of approach of laid back and just okay, we're know what's going on. But at the same time, I've seen older coppers just neglecting to – like, they come in and they stereotype a person straight away, and it's not always with colour or with gender or anything like

that. Sometimes they're just looking at people, okay you're in this junkie house, you're all junkies

One felt that the particular motivation that led to an individual becoming a police officer affected how they interacted with offenders

There are some cops that actually do – they're cops so that they can help. Whereas there's cops so that they can – they're gung-ho and they want to clean up the streets and they want too much. They're too, you know. Whereas if the cops had – if there was more police that actually started being police so that they can help the community, rather than just drop everyone in jail and be done with it, the streets are clean again and anyone who's got a lot of money and is living a good life, they're okay. But these people who are struggling and their kids are running wild because they're struggling and whatever, they'll just lock all of them up. And there's a lot of cops on both sides. I'm thinking they need more of a mixture. They might have to do – I know I – they've got to do some more screening or something when they get to the Academy.

What is seen as perhaps the increasing rights of police has upset several people, particularly when this is related to access to offender's homes.

P: *There's some police they're okay and there's some that are just trying to move up the rank real quick and, you know, just go a bit too over the board with you.*

I: *What do they do when they go over the board? How do they treat you?*

P: *Just because they wear their uniform, you know, they think they can just barge in.*

I: *Into your house?*

P: *Yeah and just, you know, do what they please. Nowadays you really can't say, 'You need a warrant to come in here'.*

I: *So you think it's basically infringing upon your rights?*

P: *Yeah.*

Another offender was particularly upset by the police entry (and their conduct) of his extended family home

P: *Like they're running in my aunty's house one night pointing guns and stuff at her.*

I: *Guns? At your aunty?*

P: *Yeah, pointing it – like asking her where I was and that, and that same night I just got out of the watch-house, they let me out on bail, and that same night they went to my aunty's house asking where I was and that. Like aiming*

guns everywhere and stuff, like-

I: *That's pretty heavy.*

P: *Nephews and nieces and that hanging around there too.*

I: *Little ones?*

P: *Yeah, they're only like four, three years old and that.*

Misunderstanding and miscommunication also frequently occurred due to the lack of local and cultural knowledge

Because they come from Brisbane, Sydney. They're not the locals - like the local police that used to be there, they was good. They're from there. They understand.

Newly drafted officers may try to get to know the community members, but this cannot replace the depth of local knowledge and cultural awareness that more experienced officers have.

I: *Do they understand about indigenous protocols and indigenous issues, do you think, these police? These young guys when they come, or young ladies, when they arrive on the island?*

P: *No. I don't think so. They come around and act like – they go up and they act like they want to be friends with everybody, they talk sweet and all of that, and then next minute, you know, they're there.*

I: *They're at your front door and want to search your place?*

P: *Yeah, mmm.*

Police liaison officers have been employed to try and improve communication between community members and police, however their role is seen by offenders to be too closely aligned to that of the police service. Several of the offenders stated that they saw little of the liaison officers, and that they were rarely seen in the community, while others chose to avoid them. One offender explained his feelings

They're bullshit. They're just fake wanna be coppers, you know.

The offenders generally welcomed the use of body cameras and video footage from within police stations, however some felt that these were often 'conveniently' not activated during their interactions with officers.

Yeah, when they get you there they – I've been in the interrogation room and they're telling me you're going away, you're going away, and they give you a clip around the ear and things like that. I'm talking this is – they know where their cameras are, they know what's going on. They don't do it when the interview's actually going, but before they press that interview button and say it, then they do whatever they want. There's no cameras on at that time. They're controlling the cameras, so it has happened.

One offender alleged that he had been severely beaten while he was held at the watch house, and that his argument could have been supported had the CCTV camera been working.

P: *Most of the charges against me got dropped because I went there, I didn't clean myself up, I was covered in blood, and I carried on a bit ... (and said to) 'His Justice, I've done nothing wrong, I wasn't drunk, he's charged me with this.' And I had the Legal solicitor there and he -He's asked for a copy of the video footage -*

I: *CCTV?*

P: *Yeah, in the cell, and apparently that camera was down that night.*

Some participants felt that obligatory recording (bodycam and interview room video) of all interactions could be of benefit to themselves by providing evidence of their innocence for the court, as was demonstrated in this offender's account.

P: *I was charged with a serious assault of police, but I beat the charges.*

I: *How?*

P: *I mean, beat the charges with serving more time, because like I said, they had no right of coming into my house, not unless they had a warrant and they didn't have no right to arrest me, even though I said I'll walk in with my own free will. And they had it all on camera, so -*

I: *The body cameras?*

P: *Yeah.*

One offender acknowledged that he could not deny his involvement in a crime due to the likelihood of CCTV footage being produced in court

Because what they said and that - I was going to fight it and ask them if they had any recordings or anything but no, I just went forward - I will just plead guilty to something because they might - if you can't do something like that, they come on the stand and next minute they show you something that you are pleading not guilty for and they say 'oh no, we've got the photo and that of him' and next minute you get - you know?

Several offenders were unsure of the term of imprisonment they had been given for the assault on police charge, as sentencing for the crimes for which they were being arrested at the time of the assault was processed at the same time. The average length of sentence reported was 6-12 months imprisonment, although this may run concurrent with the penalties for the other offences which may contribute to the uncertainty of the actual penalty.

I: *So how long did you go to jail for assaulting the police the first time?*

P: *Probably four months.*

I: *Four months?*

P: *Yeah. Because it was my first time. I was only 17.*

Serious assaults did sometimes attract longer sentences.

I: *So you spent - you got two years when you went to court for assaulting police.*

P: *Yeah. And went to court in that time, I got two years.*

I: *Do you think that was a harsh - the sentence was a bit tough?*

P: *Yeah, it was.*

I: *Did you expect to get two years?*

P: *I was expecting to get more than that because I assaulted a police officer. I thought I was going to get about five or six years.*

However, several offenders felt they were inadequately represented in the court system and stated that they were always advised to plead guilty and were therefore serving time for assaults they did not commit.

I: *Do you get much help with Aboriginal Legal Aid when you go to court? Do they help you - do they give you advice or are they any good?*

P: *They tell you to plead guilty for something you didn't even do.*

I: *So why do they tell you to plead guilty if you haven't done it?*

P: *They just say, just plead guilty; you'll get lesser time. Then you plead guilty for something you didn't do, then they'll give you more time for something you didn't do.*

Factors That Contribute to Assaults Against Police

Individual factors

One offender felt that police invited verbal abuse, and contributed to the dislike of police, by harassing people and charging them for minor offences.

Yeah. I got a paper there with fines. They said, 'Oh, we're going to give you a fine for talking on the phone, riding a bicycle.' I said, 'Get fucked, this is not the city, this is community. Go fuck yourself,' and I told them, like, 'There's a boy riding a bicycle without no helmet, without no lights, without nothing.'

Many of the offenders appeared to believe that their actions in assaulting an officer were rational and justified in the context of the incident and some blamed the police for instigating

the aggression, regardless of the circumstances (and offending history) preceding the assaults.

A person would usually kick if they're drunk to keep the police away. But he just came into me, like – and that was his own fault for doing that, you know? He should've just left me there till I settled, then he could have handcuffed me.

Few offenders expressed regret that the assault took place, although one offender, who pushed chemicals from a meth cook over an officer's leg while attempting to avoid arrest, acknowledged that there could have been more serious consequences and feels bad for the injuries caused (chemical burns) saying that

"... they're police, but they're still human beings and I still feel shit ..."

Societal factors

A general lack of respect was noted among the offender cohort who believe that this lack of respect works both ways. Many freely admit that they have no respect for the police and state that this is common across the communities they come from.

Interviewer: *Do you think there's been a break down in society because of this in terms of how people see the police? Are people less respectful to police?*

Participant: *Definitely. And look I'll admit I'm one of them, you know? But come at the right time, I'd rather talk to someone dressed in your clothing that wears a badge then talking to a man in blue.*

However, they also state that the police do not show them respect due to discrimination. There is a well-documented history of troubled relationships between Indigenous Australians and police. This ongoing distrust and hatred of police is evident in many of the accounts given by Indigenous offenders.

One offender was asked why Indigenous people get angry with police and hit them. He denied that this was the case and implied that they were charged for nothing, that charges were fabricated, that charges were not explained, and that this was probably due to racist attitudes on the part of police officers. Other offenders agreed, saying

They treat us like dogs. Treat us like shit. If I was someone white, they would have ... I'll cuff you. You know what I mean? They'd just cuff me. But I was black and I was intoxicated and they knew I had a warrant. So they just grabbed me, ruffled me around, scruffed me on the ground.

And another pointed out that Indigenous Australians are less likely to be left alone by police than white people

P: *Yes well the police are pulling everybody up for nothing too you know*

what I mean? That makes a lot of people wild., just because you're a black fella walking along the street.

I: *They pull you over?*

P: *Yes.*

I: *Do you reckon they do the same thing for a white person walking down the street?*

P: *No, I reckon they would just drive straight past them.*

Other offenders felt that they were harassed or disliked due to their history of offending.

I: *Okay, so you're walking home. But why would they stop? Was it because they knew you?*

P: *Yeah, they don't like me.*

I: *They don't like you?*

P: *Yeah, they don't like no fellas that were in prison.*

Intoxication appeared to be a contributing factor to almost all the self-reports of assault on police. Most were alcohol related, although a few were related to use of meth (ice). Those who were alcohol affected at the time of assault generally freely admitted that their behaviour was poor as a result

I: *Were you sorry that you hit the police?*

P: *Yeah, I was. Because I was too drunk.*

I: *Would you have hit them if you were sober?*

P: *Nah.*

Some of the ice users related their aggressive behaviour to the drug. When asked if the ice made him angry one said

Yeah, towards them I guess. It's just - it's funny when you look back at it straight, or sober - whatever you want to call it - you just think that you're doing so well, and everything's going sweet, that you're missing the whole thing and it's crazy. I've finished apprenticeships on drugs and what not, it didn't affect me in doing - making me dumb or anything like that.

Another indicated that

It's like they're the enemy, they're trying to stop what you're doing, and whatever you're doing it's to feed your habit. It's just so you can get more and so you can keep going. It's an escape, really is an escape. That old saying, escape reality, it's real.

However, the meth users generally thought they were in control of their behaviour and the addiction.

Situational factors

A breakdown in communication was an underlying factor in many of the assault incidents; this is understandable when considering the highly charged atmosphere in an arrest situation, which is frequently exacerbated with offenders being drug or alcohol intoxicated. In some cases, the assaults appear to have been based on an instinctive reaction, rather than a rational decision to harm an officer. However, in some instances, according to the offender, their attempts at communicating legitimate concerns have been ignored, leading to assaultive behaviour based on frustration, pain, or fear. The majority of assaults detailed by offenders were committed accidentally, usually during an arrest, or while the offender was resisting arrest. Most of the offenders were intoxicated at the time of the incident and some have no recollection of the assault with which they are charged. This adds to the pre-existing resentment towards police, possibly increasing the likelihood of future conflict. Offenders who were aware that they may return to (or go to) prison sometimes tried to run from police, and assaults have occurred in their attempt to get away. One offender went so far as to say avoiding or resisting arrest was almost expected in his 'role' as a criminal:

there are some police officers that still really do think that they're doing the right thing, and they're catching a criminal and they're putting them away ... But at the same time, I'm saying the crims, we feel like okay, it's our job to be crims, so when the cops come we're jumping out windows and we're going. We're away.

He felt however, that there was a fine line of acceptable behaviour within these roles that was, at times, overstepped by both sides:

But sometimes there's always going to be that person that pushes things to the limit, on both sides of the spectrum. So the coppers are going I've got him, he's a run from the cops, he's done this before or whatever, and so they feel like they're doing it for the rest of their core people and all that stuff. And they kind of see it that that's their job to catch the crim, and I guess they watch different moves and whatever and think they can rough you up and what not.

Some offenders feel the police are too rough, or come into an arrest too aggressively, one offender explained that when officers caught up with him following a stolen car pursuit, in which he was the driver (dui), the

Police officer was trying to tackle me to the ground, trying to wrestle me. As I got up I punched him in the face and then all the other officers jumped on me ... they were angry, that's why I punched him because they were swinging me around by my shirt and trying to – they were pretty rough.

He further claims that following his assault of the officers

[t]hey pounded me. They wrist-locked me and then they cuffed me, put the cuffs really tight and then kicked me in the guts when I was on the ground.

This offender has developed a history of assaulting police under various circumstances, but believes that *“if they weren’t so rough, I probably wouldn’t have hit them”* also claiming that if they attempted to talk to him in a more formal and respectful manner he would be less likely to react aggressively.

In some cases the assaultive behaviour seems to have been an instinctive reaction to pain

Yeah. She pulled my hair to get me in the car and I said, “Don’t pull my hair you bitch,” like swore at her. She just had me on the ground with my hand and she’s twisting my hand, it was painful. And I had to kick her and bite her again because she was just pulling my hair. I don’t know what happened then.

One offender became riled at the damage to personal property before reacting violently to a minor injury

And then when I got taken to the watch-house and everything like that they started cutting off my anklets without consent and I’ve had those on for six years, they all had their own meaning, and they come off normally had he of just given me the chance to take them off.

So they was cutting them off and they nicked my leg with the scissors and so I kicked out, instant reaction, and then they tackled me again onto the concrete and then it just became kicking and screaming, more for me, but, yeah, I – I’m not a big fan (of police).

One offender spoke about his desire to avoid a struggle with police, particularly for fear of exacerbating existing injuries, and he felt he had made it clear that he would go with the police without resistance.

P: *Nah, I just - I knew - I seen them. I said, oh yeah, I’m going to give myself up for this. I’m not going to keep running from them. I said, here you go. Take me.*

I: *So you walked down the steps - you came out.*

P: *Yeah, I came out - out of the house. I said, here you go, I give myself up. They just come rush me. Just my shoulder, [hit the deck] boom.*

I: *You already had a sore shoulder.*

P: *Yeah. My shoulder dislocates that way.*

I: *So you pulled your shoulder back -*

P: *Yeah. They picked me up and dumped me and my collarbone, boom.*

I: *Did they break it?*

P: *Yeah, broken. I can’t get it fixed anymore.*

I: *Did you hit anybody?*

P: *Nah. But they assumed that I did.*

I: *Right. So you threw your arm back behind you -*

P: *Yeah, I just threw my arm around. But I didn't hit anyone.*

Another offender also spoke of the need to avoid physical interaction during an arrest

I think there's definitely more time for talking instead of tackling. That'd be a good start too. Because I've got scoliosis, so one wrong fall or anything like that could, you know ... screw my back.

An offender believes he was wrongly accused of assault following his arrest for evading police in his own car. He crashed the car and claims he was sleeping off drugs and alcohol when the police dog tracked him down and mauled his arm causing extensive injury.

The police subsequently *"grabbed me – the same arm that got ripped up – and they dragged me out of the cane"* he claims he said *"Chief. You got me, you know, but can you grab this other arm?"* The officer refused and a struggle took place after which the offender was charged with assault.

In some cases offenders were frustrated when they felt that their attempts to communicate legitimate concerns were ignored, particularly when they were trying to protect their children. One offender was happy to walk out quietly with police, but wanted to first ensure her child was adequately cared for

I ended up getting charged for assault on a police officer, because he basically grabbed me and rammed my head out onto the bonnet of a car, in front of my four-year-old daughter and she's not see no violence at all in her life, you know what I mean. I basically stood up and I didn't do anything and then boom, they were all over me. Rammed my head up against the bonnet of a car and stuff and that's when I just cracked up and I threw my head back.

I just wanted to make a phone call so that my child was getting looked after. They weren't letting me do nothing.

Another offender also wanted to protect children from observing any interaction with the police, and became angry when the children were frightened

P: *Because I just have all boys and I was sitting down playing with toys with them and they (the police) come kicking on the gate, and I got a fright and I started swearing and that, 'What's going on? What the fuck are youse doing?' And a lady officer come out and she, when I opened the gate, she pushed me to the side and then rushed in.*

I: *She pushed you aside?*

P: *Yeah, she pushed me aside and rushed in. My partner was upstairs in the shower, having a shower while I was looking after the boys, and the boys, they started screaming and carrying on and that's when I put my hand*

out like that and pushed the officer back outside the gate, you know, and said, 'I got kids in here, can you wait? Let me get my kids inside the house first'. So they went back and stepped back, stand up where the gate was and I took the kids inside the house. I yelled out to my partner, she ran downstairs, she grabbed the kids and I said, 'Just watch them here first' and I tried and explain again to these idiots here, what's going on. I walked back outside and that's when the officer, she wanted to arrest me.

I: *Yeah, okay. So you pushed her away and she's charging you now?*

P: *Yeah, I pushed her back and she wanted to charge me. I was like, 'Well if you want to charge me, you don't have to put any handcuffs on me, I'll go on my own free will. I'll walk to the cop car. I don't want to be handcuffed in front of these kids.'*

P: *She didn't like the idea of that, you know, she wanted to put me in handcuffs and as I tried to walk out, she grabbed me by the arm and tried to twist my arm and I broke out of that and I just went [claps] 'boof'.*

I: *You whacked her?*

P: *Yeah.*

This lack of communication between offender and police may be a contributing factor to assault, and it is also possible that a lack of communication between agencies is contributing to poor relationships between the two.

A lack of communication between police and parole officers may be resulting in further prison time for some offenders, inevitably leading to frustration and a higher likelihood that an assault may take place within the context of that arrest.

I'm going to a parole interview, like yep I'm going to sign in, I'm doing everything right, I've actually had jobs and whatnot. Okay, they've done this before, taken me to the watch house ... [o]ff the street for no reason, knowing that I have to go to parole to sign in, and I've been breached for parole. They haven't said that I'm in the watch house, there's no paperwork of me being in the watch house and ... I missed the appointment, and I get returned to prison, right back to jail, but I've already been in the watch house.

Some offenders felt they were wrongfully accused of the crime for which they were being arrested, which led to the resistance in which an assault took place.

Yeah, I was just going into a club and I actually hadn't even been drinking at this stage, we were just going out ... and the police just pulled up and started saying, 'oh what did you say?' Like, accusing me of swearing at them, or calling them pigs or something. And I was just talking to my mate. And there was a bouncer at the door of the club and he actually spoke up and said - 'oh, I didn't hear him say anything. Maybe it was someone

else', you know. So they left, but because we had an interaction with the police the bouncer wasn't going to let us into the club, so we've gone back around the corner and the same police was sitting there waiting... As soon as I've gone around the corner, I've just rolled my eyes and gone, here we fucking go. And bang, they pounced on me. And I struggled, you know, swearing at them, 'what are you fucking doing? I've done nothing', you know. And they got the better of me, cuffed me and put me in the back, smashed my head on the roof as I went in. I played up, like fair enough. To that stage I hadn't done nothing wrong... And then we got to the station, they drove around and chucked me in the padded cell, come in a couple of times because I was playing up, wouldn't shut up. I sort of brought it on myself. And they've come in a couple of times and assaulted me. And this was going on ages, broken nose they give me...

I: So how did you get charged for assault? What did you do?

P: I elbowed one at one stage and -

I: When they came into the cells?

P: Yeah. And the first scuffle was trying to stop them from cuffing me and find out what was going on, you know? And I've given one an elbow or a kick or something then.

I: Was there anything else?

P: Obstruct police, obscene language in a public place, drunk and disorderly, which they didn't breathalyse me or anything -

I: Because you hadn't drunk.

P: - because I hadn't even had a drink, yeah.

P: So yeah, I had to - I wore the charges. I think I got two and a half years in jail.

When there has been a previous arrest history, particularly in smaller towns where offenders and officers have an established pattern of interaction, a history of dislike may affect a current arrest. For example, an offender explained that the arresting officer already knew him from multiple domestic violence interventions and said

he's known me for a while and there's a bit of tit for tat. And we've got a bit of history against each other

he believes the officer was at fault saying that when he attempted to run (resist arrest)

he assaulted me by stiffly grabbing me like not how a policeman would ... like you're in a rugby league tackle ... I was pushed to the ground with aggressive double fists

The offender retaliated by fighting back, mostly with his elbows and forearms.

One offender explained that his actions in damaging police property, and subsequently police,

was in anger or retaliation at treatment of his family members.

I: *So what do you – what's the idea about – why did you smash the police cars and why did you smash the police officers – the station? Was it anger? Is it because you guys don't like the cops?*

P: *No, it's anger. Like one night they slammed my big brother on the ground, broke his arm, and like he wasn't a risk.*

I: *He wasn't doing anything bad?*

P: *Yeah, wasn't doing anything. Like just walking along, and they tell him to empty his bag 'cause he had grog and that in it, telling him empty it, asking him all these questions and that. They didn't know all of us other young fellows were standing around watching so we just rocked them and that. I threw a bottle at a police officer, he slammed my little cousin.*

I: *Did you get charged for that?*

P: *No, they didn't know it was me. It's at night-time now, and there's a big mob of people around, and he slammed one of my little nieces on the ground, slinging her. She wasn't doing anything wrong. Slinging her like she was nothing so I just threw the bottle at him, bust him in the head.*

In another incident an offender felt she was protecting her friend from inappropriate and unnecessarily aggressive treatment from the police.

... so the chick that was renting the house, she went out and she was being a smart arse, whatever, so she got arrested. That's fine, I didn't worry about that. And then the other chick that I was good friends with, she laughed and she laughed and then she went, like, tapped his arm, like a feather. And then before she could even click her fingers – and she's just in a towel, we all are – she was tackled to the ground. And she's 30, never done anything wrong in her life, never been charged with anything, no speeding, nothing. And that was wrong, considering they were both male officers, they were big, and they tackled her on concrete with no clothes on. And so I pushed past and I was just like 'You can't do this' and then I got tackled to the ground and arrested and charged.

Addressing the Problem of Police Assaults

Offenders were asked how they felt assault of police officers could be avoided. The most common responses concerned better communication, more attempts at de-escalation, and less discriminatory practice.

Offenders pointed out that it is natural to respond to someone in the same manner that they are speaking or acting.

Talk nicely would be a nice thing because then it creates a calm situation. You be

aggressive, you're going to get aggression. I don't know, that's the way I look at it.

You talk to me like a piece of shit, I'm going to talk to you like a piece of shit. It's a back and forth thing and it's never going to – the situation's never going to resolve.

I think they could talk a little bit more reasonably. Like, if we swear at an officer we're in trouble but if an officer swears at us we have to sit there and take it.

Several offenders would have been happy to go with police (be arrested) without resistance, but felt they were not given the opportunity.

P: *In my opinion ... When you give yourself, they should just let you give yourself in instead of acting really tough and shit.*

I: *Do you reckon they could have spoken to you better?*

P: *They could have just come up - like I gave myself. I said, I know I'm in the wrong here, bro. Take me.*

I: *They didn't care, they just -*

P: *They didn't care.*

I: *- they just started getting rough straight away.*

P: *Yeah. Because I was intoxicated.*

These suggestions also extended to less discriminatory practice, and better cultural awareness.

Just because they got black skin, leave them. I hardly see them just because a white fellow is walking along drunk, I don't see them pulling them up. ... What's so different because we got black skin and they got white skin. We're all humans.

Another offender suggested

they're just walking home, leave them, let them go home. They're drunk, leave them. Don't pull them up and thing - they're not harassing you, they're leaving you go by, doing your stuff, let them do their stuff.

In terms of how to gain respect in an Indigenous community it was suggested that

They need to learn how we act and our backgrounds. Them old crew, them old policemen, they know us.

One offender gave a detailed account of how his arrest escalated into an assault through lack of communication, and what he felt was aggressive behaviour by the arresting officers.

I: *Right. Okay, so just going back on that incident, how do you reckon the cops could have handled it better in terms of that? What's another*

approach in terms of the way they acted?

P: *Well the way they come in at the start, they just come in aggravated, very, very angry and accusing me of something instead of asking me what's your problem mate, you know? They just come in like I'd done something wrong.*

I: *They were aggressive.*

P: *Yeah, very aggressive.*

I: *Right from the start?*

P: *Yeah, yeah.*

I: *Were they young guys, youngish, or older?*

P: *Yeah, younger, yeah.*

P: *And got right in. One of them got right in my face and -*

P: *Yeah, yeah. And screaming at me, 'what's your problem?' you know. And instead of that they could have just I don't know, 'look what's going on mate? Are you having a rough night? What's your problem mate, do you have a problem with us?' or you know, asked instead of just accusing and being so aggressive.*

I: *So their communication skills were pretty bad?*

P: *Yeah, yeah.*

I: *If they had of done that how would you have reacted if they were different in terms of being a bit more civil?*

P: *I would have probably laughed at first, said 'I don't know what you're talking about, you know, I haven't said anything. We're just going to the club.' And yeah, I would have interacted with - I would have talked with them instead of getting so aggressive, because they invaded my personal space -*



Chapter Five

**PSYCHOLOGICAL
SCALE DATA**

Literature on possible behavioural characteristics and attitudes of perpetrators of police assaults is for all intents and purposes, non-existent. What research that is available has primarily involved demographic factors such as age, gender, race, etc. and conducted in the United States (e.g., Barrick, Strom, & Richardson, 2018; Bierie, 2017; Covington, Huff-Corzine, & Corzine, 2014). Although not as extensive, there has been research investigating particular behaviours that may cue police officers to impending violent behaviour, e.g., hands in pockets, clenched hands, fighter's stance (Johnson, 2017, 2018).

Procedure

Six behavioural and attitude scales were used.

Barrett Impulsiveness Scale (Morean et al., 2014)

This is an eight item scale assessing impulsiveness. Items include statements such as; *I do things without thinking; I act on the spur of the moment*. Each item is rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 *Rarely/never* to 4 *Almost always/always*. A total score is calculated by summing all items. Scores can range from 8 to 32 with higher scores indicating greater impulsiveness.

Brief Self-Control Scale (Morean et al., 2014)

This scale includes seven items such as; *I do certain things that are bad for me, if they are fun; Sometimes I can't stop myself from doing something, even if I know it is wrong*. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 *Not at all like me* to 5 *Very much like me*. A total score is calculated by summing all items. Scores can range from 7 to 35. Higher scores indicate a tendency towards less self-control.

Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (Bryant & Smith, 2001)

Items on this scale assess tendency towards behavioural and verbal aggression and includes items such as; *I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me; I have trouble controlling my temper*. There are 12 items with each item being rated from 1 *Very unlike me* to 5 *Very like me*. Total scores can range from 12 to 60 with higher scores indicating a tendency to being more aggressive.

Behavioural Inhibition and Activation Scale (Morean et al., 2014)

This is a 13 item scale assessing the tendency to respond to stimuli (e.g., *I often act on the spur of the moment*) as opposed to the ability to inhibit responses (e.g., *I worry about making mistakes*). Each item is rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 *Not true at all of me* to 4 *Very true of me*. Total scores range from 13 to 52 with higher scores indicating a lack of inhibition (tendency to respond impulsively).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

This scale assesses one's self-esteem. It consists of 10 items. Items include statements such as; *On the whole, I am satisfied with myself; I take a positive attitude toward myself*. Each item is rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 *Strongly disagree* to 4 *Strongly agree*. A total score is calculated with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. Scores can range from 10 to 40.

Scale for the Assessment of Attitudes Towards Institutional Authority (Rigby, 1982)

Attitudes towards four institutional ‘authorities’ (police, army, teachers, and the law) are assessed by this scale, e.g., *The Police are generally quite impartial and fair in the way they carry out the law; People should feel proud to serve in the Army; It is reasonable to say that as a rule teachers work in the best interests of their students; The Law rightly claims the allegiance of every citizen at all times.* Each of the 30 items is rated on a scale of 1 *Strongly agree* to 5 *Strongly disagree*. Where necessary, items are reversed scored to reflect a more positive attitude towards authority resulting in higher scores indicating more positive attitudes towards authority. Total scores range from 30 to 150.

The scales were administered to four groups of participants. Prisoners who had been convicted of assaulting a law enforcement officer and were currently incarcerated, referred to as Prisoner Case. A group of currently incarcerated prisoners who had not been convicted of assaulting a law enforcement officer, referred to as Prisoner Comparison. Law enforcement officers who had been assaulted, referred to as Police Case, and law enforcement officers who had not been assaulted, referred to as Police Comparison were also included. The scales were completed individually by participants in the Prisoner and Police Case groups as part of an interview. The Prisoner Comparison completed the scales in groups. Individuals in the Police Comparison group completed the scales electronically.

Results

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Unless otherwise stated, statistical assumptions were met.

Table 1 presents the mean age and number of females and males for the four groups.

Table 1

Number, Gender, and Mean Age (Years) and Standard Deviation (SD) for the Four Groups

Group	Gender	N	Mean	SD
Prisoner Case	Male	21	30.81	10.68
	Female	6	31.83	8.42
	Total	27	31.04	10.08
Police Case	Male	25	40.20	8.81
	Female	10	34.70	7.42
	Total	35	38.63	8.70
Prisoner Comparison	Male	12	39.08	9.71
	Female	8	34.75	8.00
	Total	20	37.35	9.10
Police Comparison	Male	20	40.95	9.32
	Female	12	37.42	8.34
	Total	32	39.63	8.99

A 4 (group) by 2 (gender) between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) for age revealed a significant effect of group, $F(3,106) = 2.949$, $p = .036$, $\eta^2 = .077$. The main effect of gender and the interaction between group and gender were not significant ($ps > .05$). Post hoc analysis for group found the Prisoner Case group to be significantly younger than the Police Case and Comparison groups ($p = .010$ and $.003$, respectively). No other pairwise comparisons were significant.

Table 2 presents mean total scores and a measure of the internal reliability (Cronbach alpha) for the six rating scales.

Table 2

Total Mean (SD) Scores and Reliability (Cronbach alpha) for Six Ratings Scales

Scale	Prisoner Case		Police Case		Prisoner Comparison		Police Comparison		Cronbach alpha
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Barrett Impulsive	17.14 (4.15)	18.50 (2.88)	15.16 (3.05)	13.70 (2.83)	18.42 (3.20)	18.50 (4.38)	13.90 (2.65)	14.58 (3.00)	.704
Self-Esteem	29.33 (4.43)	28.50 (4.68)	35.68 (3.21)	33.30 (3.56)	27.08 (5.00)	30.63 (5.13)	33.80 (4.68)	33.42 (6.08)	.879
Self-Control	21.10 (5.01)	22.33 (5.20)	15.32 (3.51)	14.60 (3.92)	23.58 (5.65)	19.63 (6.07)	15.80 (4.32)	13.75 (2.86)	.805
Buss-Perry Aggression	34.62 (10.56)	28.83 (9.99)	22.84 (7.60)	20.00 (6.52)	38.67 (5.77)	32.38 (10.80)	24.15 (7.44)	20.08 (5.96)	.887
Inhibition-Activation	38.05 (7.36)	38.67 (7.12)	34.48 (4.49)	36.90 (4.72)	38.67 (6.04)	38.00 (7.05)	34.30 (4.69)	35.83 (4.78)	.756
Attitudes Towards Authority	93.62 (13.17)	84.83 (10.70)	120.48 (7.80)	120.70 (12.28)	98.82 (18.98)	89.29 (9.29)	118.85 (12.12)	114.33 (17.39)	.887

Although caution should be exercised when interpreting Cronbach alpha values (Field, 2018), all scales were found to have acceptable reliability. Because there were significant differences in age between groups, correlations were run to determine if there were correlations between age and the rating scales. Table 3 presents Pearson correlations between age and the total mean scores for the six rating scales.

Table 3

Pearson Correlations Between Age and Mean Total Scores for Six Rating Scales

		Total Barrett Impulsiveness Scale	Total Brief Self- Control Scale	Total Buss- Perry Aggression Questionnaire	Total Behavioural Inhibition- Activation Scale	Total Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale	Total Attitudes Towards Authority
Age	Pearson Correlation	-.069	-.128	-.204*	-.200*	.031	.318**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.467	.174	.029	.033	.746	.001
	N	114	114	114	114	114	112

The small negative correlations between the Buss-Perry and Inhibition-Activation scale indicates younger individuals tend to be more aggressive and less inhibited than older individuals. The positive correlation between age and Attitudes Towards Authority indicates more positive attitudes towards authority with increasing age.

Separate 4 (group) by 2 (gender) between subject ANOVAs were run for the six rating scales. Due to the significant correlations between age and three of the rating scales, age was included as a covariate in the analyses for the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire, the Behavioural Inhibition-Activation Scale, and the Attitudes Towards Authority Scale. Table 4 presents the results from analyses of the six scales.

Table 4

Results of Separate Group x Gender ANOVAs of the Six Rating Scales.

Scale	Effect	F-value	Degrees of Freedom	p-value	Partial Eta Squared
Barrett Impulsive	Group	10.296	3,106	< .000	.226
	Gender	.058	1,106	.810	.001
	Group x Gender	.830	3,106	.480	.023
Self-Esteem	Group	10.251	3,106	< .000	.225
	Gender	.0002	1,106	.988	.000
	Group x Gender	1.699	3,106	.172	.046
Self-Control	Group	17.672	3,106	< .000	.333
	Gender	2.162	1,106	.144	.020
	Group x Gender	1.171	3,106	.324	.032
Buss-Perry Aggression	Group	15.55	3,105	< .000	.308
	Gender	7.71	1,105	.004	.077
	Group x Gender	.179	3,105	.911	.005
Inhibition- Activation	Group	1.664	3,105	.179	.045
	Gender	.383	1,105	.537	.004
	Group x Gender	.280	3,105	.840	.008
Attitudes Towards Authority	Group	30.776	3,103	<.000	.473
	Gender	3.333	1,103	.071	.031
	Group x Gender	.890	3,103	.449	.025

Figures 1 to 5 present mean totals for the four groups for the five scales where significant effects were found. A significant effect for gender was found for the Buss-Perry Aggression Scale so Figure 4 presents the means for males and females separately. There were no significant differences between males and females for the other scales so the remaining figures present means collapsed across males and females.

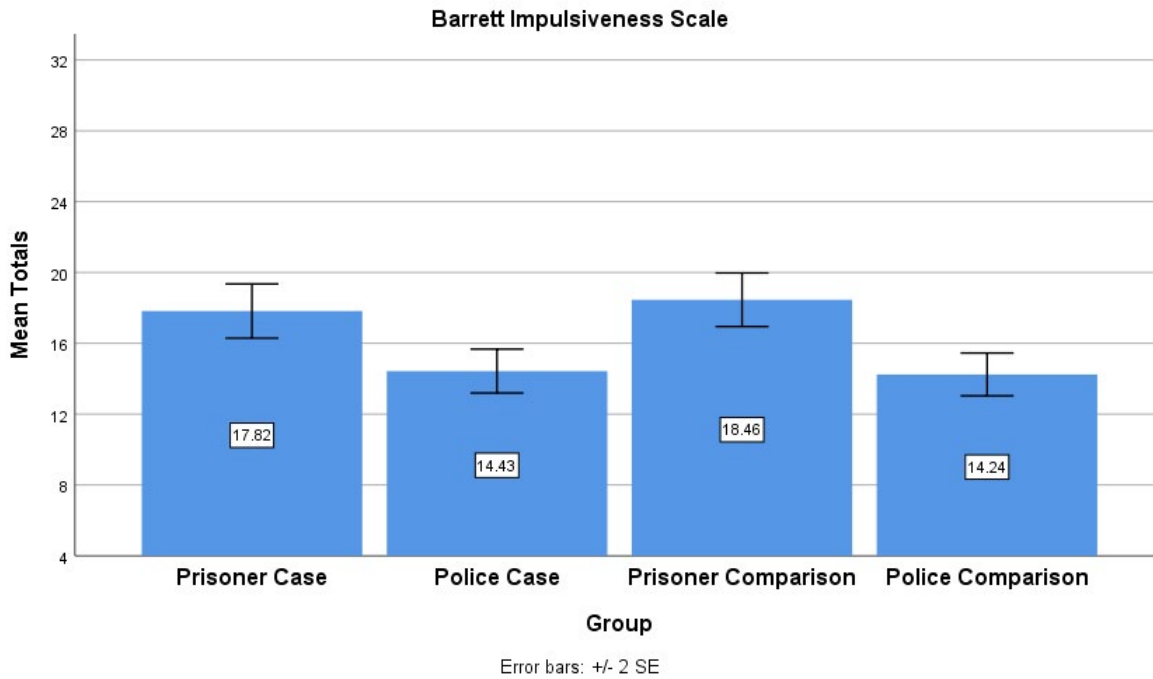


Figure 1. Mean total scores for the Barrett Impulsiveness Scale

Post hoc comparisons found significant differences between the Prisoner Case and Comparison groups and both of the police groups with prisoners indicating greater impulsiveness.

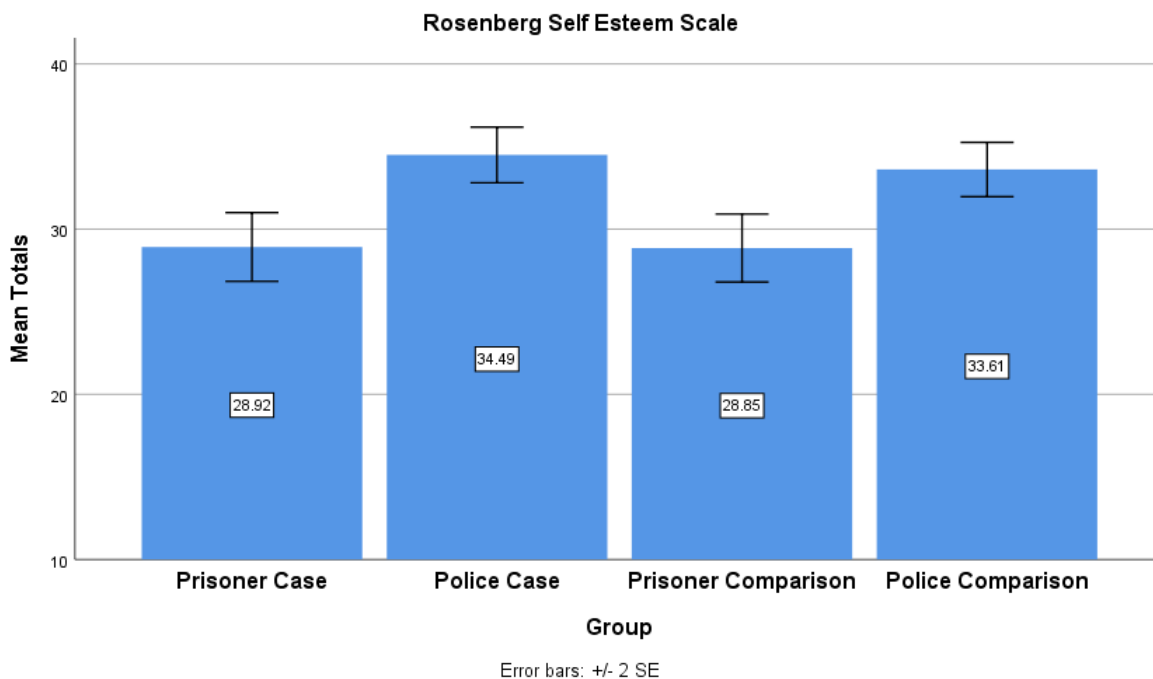


Figure 2. Mean total scores for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Post hoc comparisons revealed the two police groups had significantly higher self-esteem scores than the two prisoner groups.

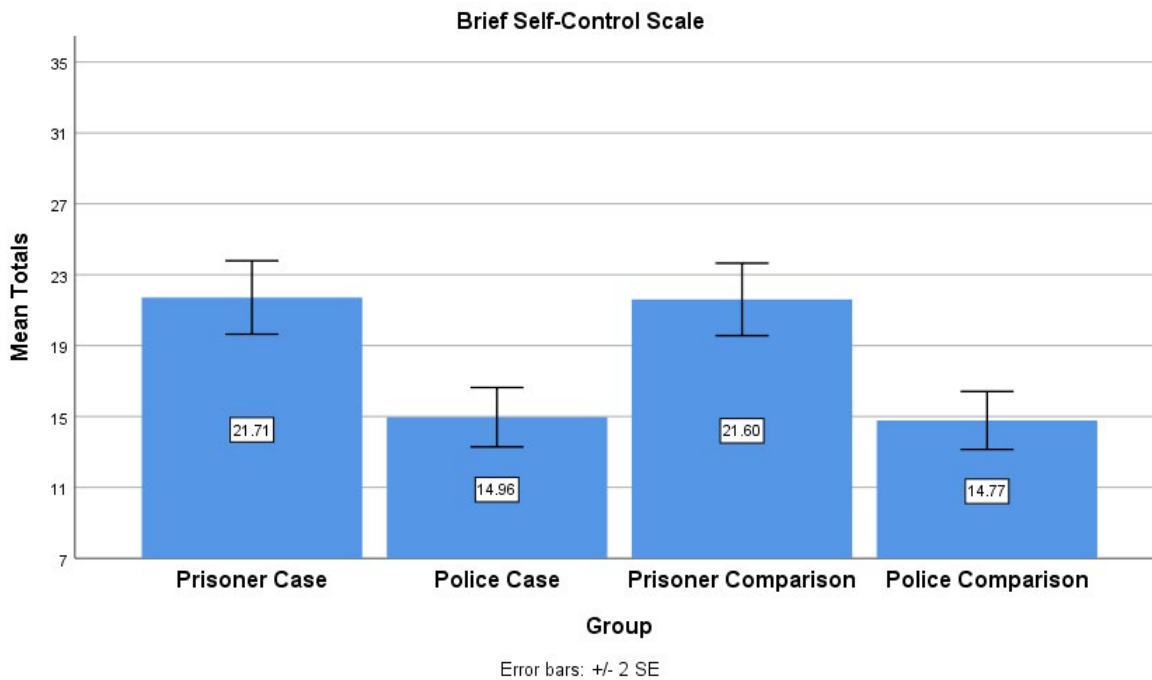


Figure 3. Mean total scores for the Brief Self-Control Scale. From post hoc comparisons, the two prisoner groups indicated a tendency for significantly less self control than the two police groups.

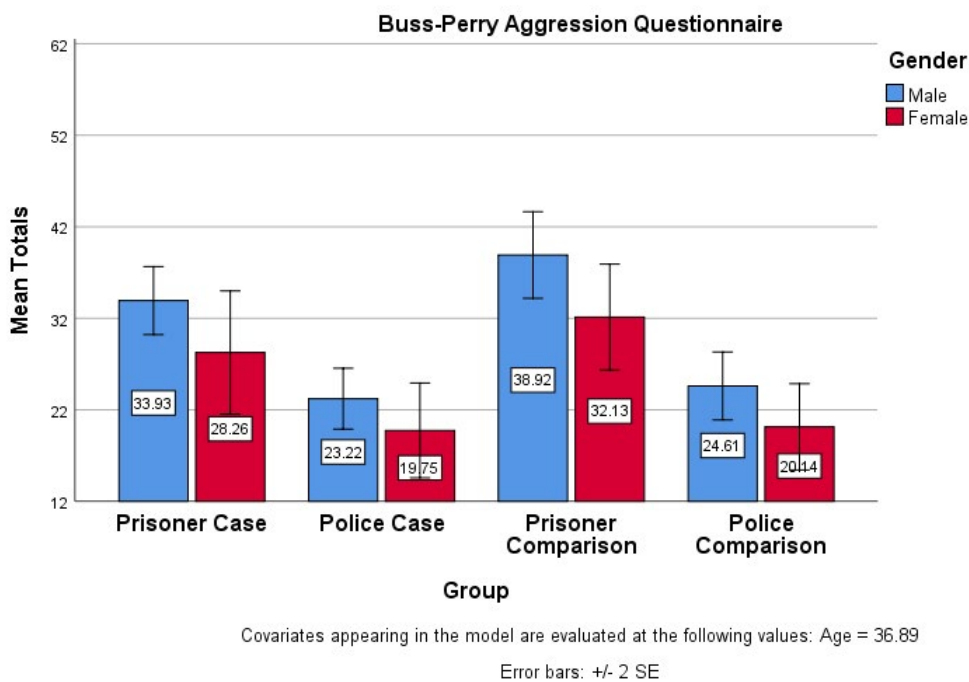
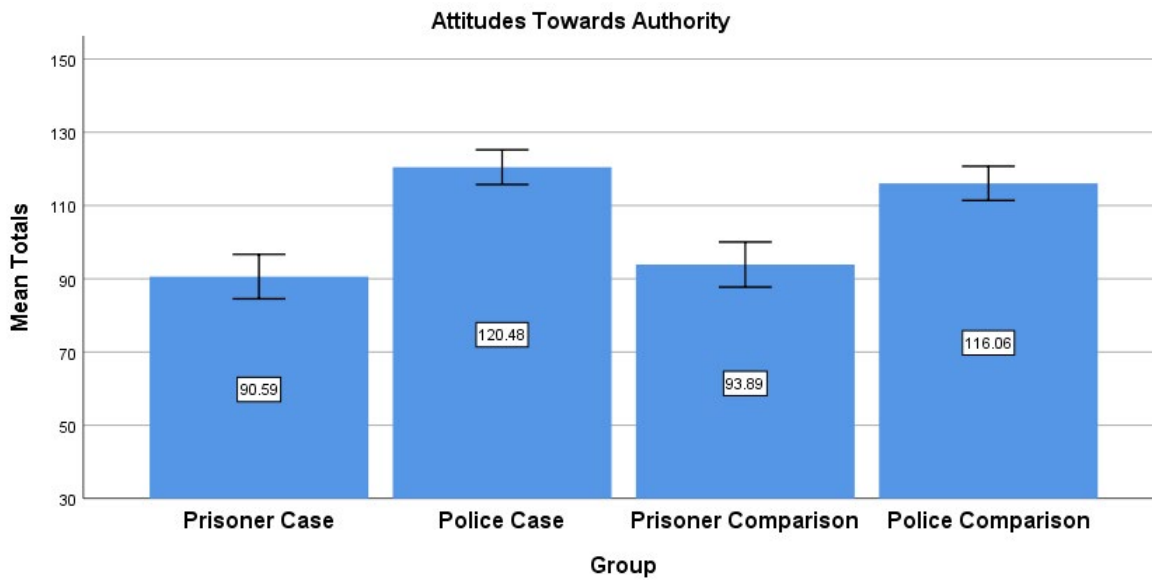


Figure 4. Mean total scores for males and females on the Buss-Perry Aggression scale. The significant main effect for gender was due to males having higher aggression scores than females. The absence of a significant interaction indicates this is the case for both prisoners and police. The significant main effect for group was due to the prisoners, irrespective of Case or Comparison, having higher aggression scores than the police groups.



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Age = 36.99
 Error bars: +/- 2 SE

Figure 5. Total mean scores for the Attitudes Towards Authority Scale.

From post hoc comparisons, both police groups were found to have significantly more positive attitudes towards authority than the two prisoner groups. Individual analyses for the four subscales representing attitudes towards police, law, army, and teacher authorities were run controlling for age for the police, law, and army subscales. The subscale teacher was not significantly correlated with age. Unsurprisingly, the police groups had significantly more positive attitudes towards the authorities Police and Law. Attitudes towards the authority Army demonstrated the same trends with the exception of a significant difference between the Prisoner Case group and the Prisoner Comparison group with the latter having more positive attitudes to the authority Army. No significant differences were found between the four groups for the authority Teacher.

Table 5 presents correlations between the six rating scales.

Table 5.

Pearson Correlations between six rating scales.

	Brief Self-Control	Buss-Perry Aggression	Inhibition-Activation	Attitudes Towards Authority	Self-Esteem
Barrett Impulsive	.536**	.439**	.163	-.440**	-.329**
Self-Control		.558**	.287**	-.495**	-.452**
Buss-Perry Aggression			.378**	-.479**	-.336**
Inhibition-Activation				-.073	-.238*
Attitudes Towards Authority					.359**

** Significant at the .01 level *Significant at the .05 level

The significant positive correlations between the Barrett Impulsiveness Scale, Brief Self-Control Scale and the Behavioural Inhibition-Activation Scale demonstrate convergent validity between these three scales, i.e., increasing scores on all three indicate increasing impulsiveness/lack of inhibition. Positive correlations between these scales and the Buss-Perry Aggression scale indicate those who are more impulsive have a tendency towards being more aggressive. The negative correlations between self-esteem and impulsiveness and aggression suggests those with higher self-esteem tend to be less impulsive and aggressive. There also appears to be a negative relationship between impulsivity/aggression and attitudes towards authority, i.e., those who are less impulsive/aggressive have a more positive attitude towards authority.

Summary and Discussion

The results for the behavioural/attitude scales are in some ways both reassuring and somewhat disappointing. Disappointing in the sense that no significant differences were found between those who had been convicted of assaulting a law enforcement officer and those who had not. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that those who are more impulsive/less inhibited and aggressive may be those who would be more inclined to act out and not consider the repercussions. What the results indicate is that irrespective of the crime, those who engage in criminal behaviours are, in general, more likely to be impulsive and aggressive, at least in relation to police officers. This is consistent with a large body of literature which has found relationships with impulsiveness/aggression and criminal behaviour (add reference).

Chapter Six

**BODY WORN FOOTAGE
OF ASSAULTS
AGAINST POLICE
OFFICERS**

In order to inject objectivity to the subjective accounts of the offenders and police officers (as set out in the previous chapters), video footage of the violent crimes committed against the police will also be closely examined. Footage from five separate incidents were independently assessed by two researchers against a checklist of key situational and social risk factors associated with assaults against police officers. These CCTV and/or Police Body Worn camera footage were provided to the research team by the Queensland Police Service via a secure file-sharing facility (Evidence.Com), and are as follows:

- Case Study No. 1 (File ID: QP1800209598): Encompassing 4 separate videos
- Case Study No. 2 (No File ID; AXON Flex Video 2017-07-30 1810): Encompassing 1 video
- Case Study No. 3 (File ID: QP1700627501): Encompassing 1 video
- Case Study No. 4 (No File ID; Title: Assault Police In Flinders): Encompassing 1 video
- Case Study No. 5 (File ID: QP1700312994): Encompassing 3 separate videos

While it is arguable that this form of assessment may still be subjective and highly dependent upon the perceptions and individual interpretations of the specific researcher viewing the footage, these limitations were minimised by the use of an observational checklist of common situational and social risk factors derived from the literature. In addition to that, more than one researcher viewed the same footage using the same observational checklist so that the results can be compared, and analysed. It was anticipated that by employing this triangulation of qualitative, quantitative and interpretive data, a rich narrative of the core reasons, both intrinsic and extrinsic, as to why police officers are increasingly assaulted in Queensland will unfold, thereby providing the research team with the building blocks to construct a strong foundation upon which to craft a suite of effective recommendations to decrease the likelihood of such crimes occurring in the future.

Designing the Video Observation Checklist

A range of peer-reviewed studies were relied upon in order to identify key visible/audible situational and social factors that, if present, may increase the likelihood of police officers being assaulted. To that end, the following publications proved to be instrumental in accomplishing this task:

- Kaminski, R.J., & Sorensen, D.W.M. (1995). A multivariate analysis of individual, situational and environmental factors associated with police assault injuries. *American Journal of Police*, 14(3/4), pp.3-48
- Bierie, D. M. (2017). Assault of police. *Crime & Delinquency*, 63(8), 899-925
- Covington, M. W., & Huff-Corzine, L. (2014). Battered police: Risk factors for violence against law enforcement officers. *Violence & Victims*, 29(1), 34-52
- Caplan, J. M., Marotta, P., Piza, E.L., & Kennedy, L. W. (2014). Spatial risk factors of felonious battery to police officers. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 37(4), 823-838

- Gruenewald, J., Dooley, K. M. G., Suttmoeller, M. J., Chermak, S. M., & Freilich, J. D. (2016). A mixed method analysis of fatal attacks on police by far-right extremists. *Police Quarterly*, 19(2), 216–245
- Hine, K. A., Porter, L.E., Westera, N.J., & Alpert, G.P. (2016). The understated ugly side of police-citizen encounters: Situation, suspect, officer, decision-making, and force predictors of officer injuries. *Policing & Society*, 1-19
- Prenzler, T. (2006). Towards prevention: A situational study of police deaths on duty in Queensland. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 18(1), 147-164
- Crifasi, C.K., Pollack, K.M., & Webster, D. W. (2016). Assaults against U.S. law enforcement officers in the line-of-duty: Situational context and predictors of lethality. *Injury Epidemiology*, 3(29), 1-6
- Smith, M. R., Kaminski, R.J., Alpert, G.P., Fridell, L.A., MacDonald, J., & Kubu, B. (2010). *A Multi-method evaluation of police use of force outcomes*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice
- Schouten, R., & Brennan, D.V. (2016). Targeted violence against law enforcement officers. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 34, 608-621

Of these studies, 8 were United States-based, while two of them focused on Australia. It should be noted that not all of the situational and social factors identified in these publications could be readily applied to this present study. This was particularly so when these factors could not be visually or audibly detected by the researchers when examining the video footage. Consequently, only those risk factors that could be visually/audibly perceived by the researchers were included in the observation checklist. Once that had been completed, all the selected factors were then grouped appropriately into 8 tables in the following way:

Table 1 – Environment

Table 2 – Individual (Offender)

Table 3 – Individual (Police Officer)

Table 4 – Characteristics of citizen victims

Table 5 – Activity (Reason for police intervention)

Table 6 – Catalyst for the assault

Table 7 – Assault Details

Table 8 – Assault Impact

Appropriate questions for each of these risk factors were then formulated so that the researchers would be able to immediately discern their contextual relevance when examining the actual video footage. For example:

Table 1 – Environment

- *What sort of neighbourhood did the assault take place (public, private, entertainment)?*
- *Where did the incident take place?*

- *Time of assault (day/month/year/season)*
- *Were bystanders present?*
- *Did bystanders become involved?*
- *Was alcohol sold in licensed premises close by?*
- *Did it appear that the suspect(s) assaulted PO (the Police Officer) because there was a perception that the presence of officer was a threat to civil liberties (or cultural mores)?*
- *Did it appear that the suspect(s) assaulted PO because there was a perception that the presence of officer was a threat to family?*

Table 2 – Individual (Offender)

- *How many suspects were involved in the assault incident?*
- *Did the suspect(s) appear to be adult(s) or juvenile(s)?*
- *What was the apparent race/ethnicity of the suspect(s)?*
- *What was the apparent gender of the suspect(s)?*

Table 3 – Individual (Police Officer)

- *What was the gender of officer assaulted?*
- *What was the race/ethnicity of officer assaulted?*
- *What was the rank of officer assaulted?*
- *Roughly, what was the height/weight/build of the assaulted officer?*
- *Was the PO larger than the suspect? (by height/weight)*
- *Did the PO appear older than the suspect?*
- *Were other officers in attendance (how many)?*
- *What was the gender of other officer(s) (if applicable)?*

Table 4 – Characteristics of citizen victims

- *Were there victims at the scene when police arrived?*
- *How many victims were apparently involved in the incident which required police officer attendance?*
- *Did the victim appear to be adult or juvenile?*
- *What was the apparent gender of the victim(s)?*
- *What was the apparent race/ethnicity of victim(s)?*
- *Was there apparent relationship between suspects and victims (acquaintance, family, partner)?*
- *Was the victim a resident at the location?*

Table 5 – Activity (Reason for police intervention)

- *Did the suspect appear to be committing an offence prior to the assault?*
- *What action did the suspect demonstrate immediately prior to the assault (approach, converse, yell, flee, fight)?*
- *Were police called to the incident?*

- *Did the police locate the suspect on random patrol?*
- *What type of encounter was the PO responding to (DV [Domestic Violence], traffic etc.)?*

Table 6 – Catalyst for the assault

- *Was there apparent alcohol use by the suspect(s) involved in the assault incident?*
- *Was there apparent drug use by the suspect(s) involved in the assault incident?*
- *Did the suspect(s) appear to suffer from a mental illness condition?*
- *Did the PO appear aware that the suspect may have mental illness?*
- *Did the PO appear aware of the suspect's criminal history?*
- *How physically close was the PO to the suspect prior to assault?*
- *Did the suspect indicate intent to harm him/herself, others, or PO?*
- *Was the suspect hiding to ambush the PO?*

Table 7 – Assault Details

- *Was the police officer attempting to negotiate face-to-face with the suspect(s) before he/she was assaulted?*
- *Did the suspect(s) attack the PO without provocation or warning?*
- *Did the PO know the suspect from previous interactions with the CJS (Criminal Justice System)?*
- *Did the suspect(s) have a weapon(s)?*
- *Was the PO wearing a protective vest at the time of the incident?*
- *Did the PO use any of the use of force options on the suspect(s)? (Pepper spray, taser)*
- *Did the PO employ hand to hand techniques on the suspect?*
- *Were these techniques soft (open hand) or hard (punching)?*
- *Was the assault minor or serious?*
- *What level of resistance was demonstrated by the suspect?*
- *Was resistance passive (sits down, goes limp), defensive (pushing/pulling officer, holding fixed objects), or active/assaultive (punching).*
- *What was the relative force displayed by PO (low, commensurate, high)*

Table 8 – Assault Impact

- *Was the PO seriously injured due to the assault?*
- *Was the suspect forcibly removed from the scene (handcuffed)?*
- *Were other frontline workers (paramedics) present at the scene?*
- *Were any bystanders charged by police at the scene?*

Analysis of the Video Footage

Before the research team formally analysed the 5 case studies cited earlier, a preliminary test was conducted on a sixth case study so as to determine the usability as well as effectiveness of the video observation checklist. As a result of this pilot run, the following issues were identified:

- In order for the video observation checklist to be used effectively, the questions in the tables had to be read a number of times beforehand so as to increase the researchers' familiarity of them.
- The videos had to be viewed at least 3 times before the observation checklist could be fully completed.
- Parts of the video footage were visually and audibly confronting as they involved violence and the shouting of obscenities.

Once these issues had been taken into account, the research team thereafter analysed the 5 case studies that were provided by the Queensland Police Service.

Case Study No. 1

Observations

This evening incident (9.45 pm) occurred at a private residential dwelling and involved the threat of use of a weapon against the police. The police officers were responding to a call for service made by a female domestic partner, who appeared to be Caucasian, about her male domestic partner, who appeared to be Indigenous. There had been previous multiple domestic violence call-outs to this residence, and the police were aware of this. The footage begins with the female domestic partner sitting outside the house in the patio/small garden area, while her male domestic partner was inside the house (living room) together with a male police officer. As the male police officer was attempting to calm down the male domestic partner and to arrest him, the latter suddenly wanted to use the toilet to urinate. The male police officer then asked a female police officer to check the bathroom first. While she was doing that, the male domestic partner then made an effort to go to the toilet before being specifically allowed to do so by the male police officer. The male police officer then tackled the male domestic partner and held on to him. Another two police officers came to assist in the arrest. While this was going on, the female domestic partner started yelling for the police officers to allow her domestic male partner to be allowed to use the toilet. It appeared from the video footage that the female domestic partner was trying to pressurise the police into allowing her domestic male partner to use the toilet by threatening to harm herself or the police officers with a pair of shearers or garden scissors. She was warned numerous times not to do anything but in the end, she did harm herself by attempting to stab her own belly with the weapon. She was then Tasered by at least one police officer and thereafter subdued by the other police officers before she could inflict more harm on herself.

Comments

It should be noted that even though the male domestic partner was the first to be arrested – it was actually the female domestic partner, ostensibly here the victim of a domestic dispute, who was arrested for the serious police assault charge. That, however, is the nature of domestic disputes where quarrelling partners can quickly turn to aggressive allies against the police. Consequently, this is something that should be anticipated in all domestic dispute call-outs,

and appropriate defensive measures be taken right from the start. For example, the domestic partner who is the victim also has to be searched for weapons or items that can be used as a weapon, and thereafter placed in a secure area/room where he/she will have no access to anything that can be used to effectively assault or threaten the police officer. Further, when effecting an arrest against one domestic partner, the police officers must be ready for the other domestic partner to potentially defend their counterpart.

Case Study No. 2

Observations

This evening (6.10 pm) incident occurred by the beach, and was initially brought to the attention of the police by complaints from passers-by and/or users of the park that public disturbances and fighting had transpired there. The actual assault against the police officer though (being spat at) did not happen during the course of any public fight. The suspect (who ultimately assaulted one of the male police officers) divulged that the earlier public disturbance and fight had been over a bottle or bottles of wine. This suspect was a middle-aged Indigenous lady. Another male police officer was dealing with one or two other males Indigenous persons, who appeared to have been arrested for the previous fighting. The suspect was initially conversing with the male police officer in a civil manner but was progressively becoming increasingly verbally belligerent. The police officer tried to calm her down but in the end, arrested, handcuffed, and made her sit on the ground. The suspect put up very little physical resistance although continued to be verbally belligerent towards the police officer. Allegations of racism were made by the suspect against the police officer as she was being restrained and arrested. In the course of the police officer restraining the suspect because she was trying to get up, the suspect then spat at the police officer, of which a little of the spittle landed on his arm. This constituted a serious assault against the police officer. The police officer scolded her for doing that, and the suspect appeared to be apologetic but wanted to leave and take care of her children who, she said, were on the beach. She did not spit at the police officer again nor did she act in a violent way against him even when she was escorted, along with a female police officer, to an unmarked police vehicle, and searched there.

Comments

While the assault against the male police officer could not have been avoided given that he was trying very hard to calm the suspect down without being too rough with her, what is worrying though is that he kept showing her where the spittle landed on his arm. By doing this several times, the police officer placed himself in a vulnerable position where he could have been spat at in the face or even bitten by the suspect. In all other respects, the police officer acted in a restrained and calm way but by frequently showing the suspect his arm to get her to acknowledge her fault in doing so, he inadvertently put himself in an unreasonably dangerous position of being more seriously assaulted. This was particularly risky also because it appeared that the suspect was intoxicated with alcohol or other substances, and hence could not be relied upon to act in a reasonable and mature way.

Case Study No. 3

Comments

The problem with this case study is that the suspect who was arrested by the police officers, had not physically or verbally threatened the latter with violence. Rather, the suspect had thrown a stick at their police vehicle. However, the police officers were not inside that vehicle but were a fair distance away from it. Consequently, it could be argued that no assault against the police had occurred. That said, the father of the suspect then confronted the two police officers when they were arresting and placing the suspect (his daughter) into the van. The father verbally threatened the male police officer with violence but it was done in this way – that if the male police officer was not uniform or if he was not a police officer, then the father would have beaten him up. Hence, the threat of violence was conditional on a term that could not be satisfied. Consequently, the police officers did not arrest the father – presumably because this was not considered to be a criminal assault.

Case Study No. 4

Observations

This early morning incident (around 2.51 am) occurred at a public space in the city's entertainment precinct. The assault involved a male suspect pushing and grabbing at a male police officer, which resulted in the police officer's button on his uniform to be pulled off. The police appeared to have been informed that a fight had occurred at some other part of the entertainment precinct that evening, and one of the persons who had witnessed it, arrived at the Rest & Recover Marquee in an emotionally distressed state. This lady was then taken care of by one or two of the Rest & Recover volunteers. Shortly thereafter, a male police officer approached her to ask about the public fight that she had witnessed. Apparently, the suspect, her boyfriend, may have been a victim or a participant of that fight. While that male police officer was talking to the lady, the suspect, her boyfriend, entered into the Marquee and wanted to speak to his partner. The suspect may have potentially been a victim himself, as evidenced by bruising/swelling on his face. The conversation between the suspect and the male police officer had initially started off quite calm and polite but got increasingly heated when the police officer refused to allow the suspect to speak to his female partner, who was only a few feet away. This then resulted in the suspect becoming more and more verbally belligerent. The police officer was trying to calm down the suspect but it quickly reached a point where the suspect tried to barge his way to check to see if his partner was fine, and in the process pushed and/or grabbed at the male police officer. This may then have resulted in the police officer's uniform button being pulled off as a result of the assault. The suspect was quickly restrained and arrested by the male police officer, who had backup in the form of another female police officer who rushed into the Marquee to assist.

Comments

It is important to note that the suspect may have been a victim of a prior assault himself, and

hence appeared to be emotionally distraught when he asked to speak to his female partner. Also important to note was that the suspect appeared to be worried for his female partner who was at the Rest and Recover Marquee as well. There does not seem to be any domestic dispute issue between the suspect and his female partner. It is unclear why the police officer refused to allow the suspect to speak to his female partner but if there were concerns over her safety, the police officer should have immediately asked her if she was comfortable to have a quick chat with her male partner, and reassure her that he would stay beside them, just in case. If the police officer however was seeking more information from the lady because he suspected that her boyfriend was involved in the fight as a potential offender, then he should have made the suspect sit down first, call for backup, and advise him of that. Otherwise, it is unclear as to what is the legal basis upon which the police officer was preventing the suspect from talking to his female partner or to check to see if she was unhurt. By preventing him from reasonably speaking to his female partner in those highly emotional circumstances, this increased the likelihood of there being a physical altercation occurring.

Case Study No. 5

Observations

This early morning incident (around 2.02 am) occurred on a sidewalk, just in front of a night club. A serious assault was committed by a male Indigenous suspect, who kicked a male Caucasian police officer in the face. It would appear from the video footage that night club security officers and perhaps one of the patrons who was previously assaulted by the suspect, were restraining the suspect along with the police officers. The suspect was behaving in a hysterical way, screaming allegations of racism against the police and those who were holding him down. It should be noted that there were many people (passers-by, patrons, and security officers) milling around the suspect when he was being restrained on the ground. In fact, 2 of the suspect's apparent friends were just next to him, and talking to him while he was being held down. The police officers were trying to calm down the suspect but he continued to resist arrest and was verbally belligerent. It reached a point when the suspect kicked out at the face of one of the male police officers, and as a consequence, the suspect was shot with a Taser (unclear how many times but at least once), and thereafter handcuffed. The male Caucasian police officer who had been kicked, also had the suspect's blood on him. The suspect was then initially dragged by his legs across the sidewalk/road by the police and security officers, towards the paddy wagon. One of the patrons (a young Indigenous female adult) tried to stop the police officers from dragging the suspect by the legs and shouted that the suspect should not be dragged around like a dog because he was still a human being. This lady was subsequently warned by another police officer to back away otherwise she would be arrested too.

Comments:

It is unclear from the provided video footage as to how the whole incident started but there are a number of issues which clearly show that the police officers were at an increased risk of being

further assaulted at the scene of the crime. Firstly, having the suspect being held down by the night club security officers as well as, perhaps even a patron who had allegedly been previously assaulted by the suspect, when the police were already in control of the scene, was not the best of options to go with. This is because the suspect was already alleging that those who were restraining him were racists, and that he was being held down by Caucasian people because he was Indigenous. Having civilians (even though they may be licensed security officers) to continue restraining him would only reinforce in his mind, as well as potentially in the minds of the passers-by and patrons, that the suspect was being unfairly or unjustly treated. The suspect's hysterical response and resistance to arrest could well be attributed to him being intoxicated but the apparent injustice in the way he was restrained and arrested may likewise have inflamed him further. There was also a risk that this may engender in the minds of the passers-by and patrons that the suspect was being unfairly bullied as well. Secondly, the area around the suspect was not controlled or cordoned off properly. There were too many passers-by walking in and out of the crime scene, and it could have easily resulted in a riot, particularly because the suspect was screaming that he was a victim of racism. This could have inflamed the crowd that was already there as they were not effectively dispersed by the police officers.

Summary

The lessons learnt from analysing these videos can be divided into two categories. The first category relates to factors that increase the risk of police officers being initially assaulted; while the second, concerns factors that heighten the likelihood of further or additional victimisation after the initial assault.

Factors that increase the risk of police officers being initially assaulted

It is the nature of domestic disputes where quarrelling partners can quickly turn to aggressive allies against the police; and extra care must be exercised when the suspect is:

- Intoxicated with alcohol or other substances;
- Emotionally distraught;
- Already a victim of another crime;
- Is extremely worried about the welfare or wellbeing of their family or loved ones; and
- Alleging that they are victims of racial discrimination

Factors that heighten the likelihood of further or additional victimisation after the initial assault

- Once a police officer has been assaulted, they must ensure that they do not place themselves in a vulnerable position where they can be victimised again or victimised more seriously than the initial attack;
- Do not let civilians (even licensed security officers) to continue to assist in the apprehension and arrest of a suspect once the police officers are in control of the volatile situation; and
- The crime scene around the suspect must be effectively controlled as soon as possible, and cordoned off properly.



Chapter Seven

**CONCLUSIONS TO
THE STUDY**

The data from the previous four chapters of this report allow for the formulation of a number of conclusions and subsequent recommendations which may be considered for implementation by QPS as a means of addressing the high numbers of police officers who are the victims of assaults by members of the general public.

The review of the literature in chapter one of this report shows that there is a paucity of research into the factors which contribute to police being assaulted. By comparison there is a considerable body of research in the USA for example which has focused on police as being the perpetrators of assaults against community members which has gained considerable media attention particularly when the victims have been from racial minority groups such as African Americans or Latino's.

While there have been some studies in the USA focusing on police as victims of assaults, there is less research from an Australian perspective. In addition there is no existing research about police who serve in remote rural and urban contexts in Northern Australia. This study goes some way in addressing the gaps in research into this ongoing problem. It is ironic however that there has been more public attention about assaults against other frontline workers such as paramedics, front line ER workers and school teachers compared to the relative under-reportage about the plight of police officers who often sustain very serious injuries due to their interactions with members of the community. It is hoped that the outcomes of this report will result in some changes which result in less frontline officers sustaining physical injuries and in some cases suffering psychological impacts as a result of these incidents.

The triangulation of the four data sets presented in the previous chapters indicates that individual as well as situational factors contribute to assaults against police. The fine grained ethnographic interview data with QPS staff clearly indicates that the individual characteristics of officers in terms of their body language, the way they communicate with individuals as well as the way they assess a situation contribute to whether a situation will be elevated or de-escalated. These views were more predominant among senior officers compared to less experienced junior officers. In addition some of the interviews with the prison cohort underlines that some potential conflict situations could have been avoided if more time had been spent in communicating with the offender before resorting to other options of force which in these cases resulted in a police officer sustaining an injury. The data from the psychological scales indicates that many of the prisoners who were charged with assaulting police shared characteristics such as aggressiveness, impulsiveness and often do not think about the repercussions of their actions. This useful insight could be incorporated into the training scenarios for recruits at the academy as a means of employing strategies for stabilising potential conflict situations and increasing situational awareness to avoid injury. It is also suggested that police recruits

at the training academy may benefit from exposure to study materials based on sociological concepts based on the principles of social class, ethnicity and gender as a way of increasing their understanding about the diversity of people they are likely to interact with.

The situational crime prevention framework outlined in chapter two is a useful conduit to identifying strategies police could employ to reduce the likelihood of being assaulted in specific situations. The police interviews contain a myriad of accounts by officers who readily identified high risk call out situations such as domestic violence scenarios which involved officers entering dwellings which were potentially high risk in terms of the unknown psychological state or numbers of inhabitants, potential weapons such as knives in kitchens and levels of drug or alcohol usage among people within the dwelling. Other accounts of police officers in rural/remote locations attending incidents alone or being clearly outnumbered by hostile groups were also identified as potentially dangerous and unpredictable situations by police officers.

The situational crime prevention framework is therefore helpful in reinforcing and identifying ways that police can minimize potential harm in a conflict situation. For example the concept of **target hardening** through the use protective vests, ensuring that equipment is in working order and that police stations have adequate quantities of protective equipment to suit all officers who have to attend call outs is a paramount consideration for reducing the impact of assaults against QPS staff.

The element of **strengthening forms of formal surveillance** through the use of body worn cameras and the use of CCTV cameras in high crime areas was identified by some of the research subjects as important for recording incidents as reported in the analysis of the five body worn cameras incidents in this report. In addition a high number of police supported the use of body worn cameras as a means of corroborating the claims of police when the matter came before the courts. It is argued that the use of body worn cameras footage would be a useful tool for training recruits as well as existing police in terms of analysing real life situations which often portray multiple police perspectives about the one incident.

A third element of the framework focuses on strategies for **reducing provocations** with potentially violent offenders. The data underlined the importance of communication strategies for de-escalating potential conflict situations as well as officers being aware of their body distance in relation to a perpetrator. Experienced officers who had served in smaller police stations in rural/remote contexts also identified that tactical withdrawal was often a preferred option when police were heavily outnumbered or confronted hostile groups.

Another key element of the framework was **setting the rules of engagement** with potential perpetrators. This relates again to the reliance of good communication skills and involved officers talking in an unambiguous way with clear directions while clearly outlining the repercussions for

breaking the rules. Experienced officers identified that setting clear boundaries for acceptable behaviours was important and that a consistent approach often reduced the need to consider other use of force options.

In addition to individual and situational factors the other major outcome of the study is the need for QPS as an institution to support staff who have been assaulted as well as their families. The interviews with the forty police officers shows a shared perception that officers under-report the incidence of assaults due to a belief that there is a risk that their confidential details will become common knowledge within their workspace which could in turn negatively impact on their career advancement. There are also reports from officers in this study that highlight that the service does not adequately support injured officers in terms of their rehabilitation and return to work. In addition there is a perception that some officers suffer psychological as well as physical injuries which impacts on their relationships with loved ones. There was also belief that the current judicial system does not support QPS officers due to the perception that many perpetrators do not receive adequate or in some cases no sanctions for their assault on an officer.

In summary, it can be argued that front line police face increasing complex and unpredictable situations when interacting with members of the community. Often police have to confront people who may be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or may have a mental health conditions. In these situations officers often have to react very quickly and make on the spot decisions in order to protect the perpetrator, nearby bystanders as well as themselves. At the same time police are now under constant scrutiny due to the prevalence of social media as well as body worn camera footage which places greater pressure on officers in terms of accounting for their actions at the community as well as at the institutional levels.

The complexity of the job means that police require the best training and ongoing professional development and support from their institution as well as the judicial system as a means of addressing the problem of assaults against officers. By focusing on individual, situational as well as institutional factors it is hoped that the key recommendations of this report can be adopted as a means of reducing the incidence as well as the impacts of assaults against police. Finally, this report also reflects the human face of men and women who serve not only as officers but also as partners, fathers and mothers as well as other roles in their communities. It is cogent to note the words of one of the female constables who stated: "At the end of the day everyone hopes to go home the same way that they arrived for work that morning".



References

REFERENCES

- Anderson, J. (2010). *Bushfire arson prevention handbook* (Research in practice No. 11). Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.
- Barrick, K., Strom, K. J., & Richardson, N. (2018). Individual and situational influences on injurious assaults against the police. *Policing: An International Journal*, 41(2), 202-214. doi: 10.1108/PIJPSM-09-2016-0144
- Bierie, D.M. (2017). Assault of police. *Crime & Delinquency*, 63(8), 899-925.
- Bryant, F. B., & Smith, B. D. (2001). Refining the architecture of aggression: A measurement model for the Buss-Perry aggression questionnaire. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 35(2), 138-167.
- Clarke, R. V. G., & Cornish, D. B. (1985). Modelling offenders' decisions: A framework for research and policy. In M. Tonry & N. Norris (Eds.), *Crime and justice* (Vol. 6, pp. 147-185). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Clarke, R. V. G., & Eck, J. E. (2005). Crime analysis for problem solvers in 60 small steps. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.
- Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American Sociological Review*, 44(4), 588-608.
- Covington, M. W., Huff-Corzine, L., & Corzine, J. (2014). Battered police: Risk factors for violence against law enforcement officers. *Violence and Victims*, 29(1), 34 – 52. doi: 10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-12-00022
- Crawford, S. (2016, March 24). Man faces fourth assault charge on police while on a good behaviour bond. *Daily Telegraph*.
- Felson, M. (2008). Routine activity approach. In R. Wortley & L. Mazerolle (Eds.), *Environmental criminology and crime analysis* (pp. 70-77). Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxford: Routledge.
- Field, A. (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (5th ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Hamlyn, C. (2016, February 29). Daniell Staskos sentenced to mandatory 6 months in jail over police officer assault. *ABC News*.
- Hine, K. A., Porter, L. E., Westera, N. J., & Alpert, G. P. (2016). The understated ugly side of police–citizen encounters: situation, suspect, officer, decision-making, and force predictors of officer injuries. *Policing and Society*, 28(6), 665-683. doi:10.1080/10439463.2016.1251430
- Jacobs, D., & Carmichael, J. T. (2002). Subordination and violence against state control agents: Testing political explanations for lethal assaults against the police. *Social Forces*, 80(4), 1223-1251. doi: 10.1353/sof.2002.0027
- Johnson, R. R. (2011). Predicting officer physical assaults at domestic assault calls. *Journal of Family Violence*, 26(3), 163-169. doi: 10.1007/s10896-010-9346-0
- Johnson, R. R. (2017). Show me your hands! Police and public perceptions of violent interpersonal cues. *Police and Criminal Psychology*, 32. doi: 10.1007/s11896-016-9221-x

- Johnson, R.R. (2018). Exploring the validity of behavioral cues predictive of physically resisting arrest. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-018-9280-2>
- Kaminski, R. J., & Sorensen, D. W. M. (1995). A multivariate analysis of individual, situational and environmental factors associated with police assault injuries. *American Journal of Police*, 14(3/4), 3-48. doi: 10.1108/07358549510111938
- Katsambanis, K. (2016, March 6). Don't assault a police officer and you won't go to jail. *Sydney Morning Herald*
- Longworth, K. (2010). Criminal Code (Serious Assaults on Police and Particular Other Persons) Amendment Bill 2010 (Qld). Brisbane: Queensland Parliamentary Library.
- Mastrofski, S. D., Snipes, J. B. and Supina, A. E. (1996). Compliance on demand: The public's response to specific police requests. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 33(4) 269-305. doi: 10.1177/0022427896033003001
- Mayhew, C. (2001). *Occupational health and safety risks faced by police officers*. (Trends and Issues in crime and criminal justice No. 196). Australian Institute of Criminology.
- Morean, M. E., DeMartini, K. S., Leeman, R. F., Pearlson, G. D., Anticevic, A., Krishnan-Sarin, S., Krystal, J. H., & O'Malley, S. S. (2014). Psychometrically improved, abbreviated versions of three classic measures of impulsivity and self-control. *Psychological Assessment*, 26(3), 1003–1020.
- Ozkan, T., Worrall, J. L., & Piquero, A. R. (2016). Does minority representation in police agencies reduce assaults on the police? *American Journal of Criminal Justice*. doi: 10.1007/s12103-016-9338-6
- Prenzler, T. (2006). Towards prevention: A situational study of police deaths on duty in Queensland. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 18(1), 147-164. doi: 10.1080/10345329.2006.12036382
- Rigby, K. (1982). A concise scale for the assessment of attitudes towards institutional authority. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 34(2), 195-204.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.
- Sandy, A., MacDonald, A., & Baskin, B. (2011, June 28). Assaults on police officers are escalating. *The Courier Mail*.
- Simon, H. A. (1957). *Models of man, social and rational: Mathematical essays on rational human behavior in a social setting*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Sykes, G. M., & Matza, D. (1957). Techniques of neutralization: A theory of delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, 22(6), 664-670.
- Willits, D. (2014). The organizational structure of police departments and assaults on police officers. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 16(2), 140-154. doi:10.1350/ijps.2014.16.2.334

- Wilson, S., & Zhao, J. (2008). Determining the correlates of police victimization: An analysis of organizational level factors on injurious assaults. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 36, 461-468. doi: 10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2008.07.009
- Wortley R., & Tilley N. (2014). Theories for situational and environmental crime prevention. In Bruinsma, G. & Weisburd, D. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of criminology and criminal justice*. New York, NY: Springer.



Appendices

APPENDICES

(police interview questions, prisoner interview questions, body worn camera observation checklist, psychological scales, state legislation for assaults against police)

Appendix 1. Police Interview Questions

- a. Please tell me how long you have worked as a police officer? What rank do you currently hold with QPS.
- b. Can you describe the typical duties you undertake in this role?
- c. Where did you do your initial training?
- d. What locations have you worked in as a police officer?
- e. In your opinion what has contributed to the surge in violence within communities across the country?
- f. From your experience do you think there has been an upsurge in violence against police since you entered the force?
- g. How have QPS had to respond with this increase in assaults?
- h. Can you describe the type of pre-service training you had in terms of dealing with potential conflict situations?
- i. What is the standard operating procedure that police are taught in their training for dealing with potential conflict situations?
- j. What does a police officer take into account when confronted with a potentially violent situation?
- k. Can you describe the various options a police officer has at his/her disposal when confronted with a conflict with a member of the public?
- l. Can you tell me how many times you have been assaulted in the line of duty. Can you tell me the types of assaults which have been inflicted on you?
- m. When considering what you consider to be the most serious of assaults against you can you describe for me the events which led you to being assaulted?
- n. During this time were you accompanied by another QPS officer? If so how did they react to this situation?
- o. What happened to the perpetrator of the assault? Did he go to court, receive a fine or receive a custodial sentence as an outcome?
- p. In your opinion was this a satisfactory outcome considering the seriousness of the crime?

- q. Can you describe the physical impact on yourself as a result of this assault?
- r. Were there any psychological impacts on yourself as a result of this assault?
- s. Did you receive counselling or support from QPS or other professionals?
- t. Did this event cause you to miss any time at work?
- u. In your opinion has there been any long term effects on you as a result of this assault?
- v. Since this assault do you act in a different manner when confronting a potentially violent offender?
- w. In terms of ongoing professional development have you attended any courses or information sessions about how to handle violent situations?
- x. In your opinion do you think QPS officers are suitably prepared to deal with the rise of violence in our communities.
- y. Do you have any suggestions as to how police officers could be better prepared to deal with violent situations? Do you think there is a need for more professional development or pre-service work for QPS so police can avoid being the victims of assaults.

Appendix 2. Prisoner Interview Questions

Prisoners Interview Questions

1. What is your current age and where were you born?
2. What is your ethnicity?
3. Can you tell me about your family (mother, father?, siblings, position in family)
4. What grade did you reach before you left school?
5. What did you think about school when you were a student? (likes, dislikes, teachers, other students, subjects)
6. Can you tell me about the types of jobs that you have been employed in since leaving school?
7. Before coming to prison were you employed?
8. When was the first time that you came into contact with police?
9. What was the first time that you attended court?
10. How old were you when you first went to prison?
11. How many times have you been to prison . What were the charges?
12. In general what do you think about the police who you have come into contact with?
13. Is this the first time that you have been charged with assaulting another person?
14. How many times have you been charged with assaulting a police officer?
15. One of the reasons that you are in prison at the moment is for assaulting a police officer.
Can you tell me about the event which led you to assaulting the police?
16. How many police were there when you first came into contact with them?
17. Were you with friends or family members when you assaulted the police officer?
18. Did any of them get involved with the police at this time?
19. Were any of these people charged by police ?
20. Did the police try to talk to you so you fully understood what you were in trouble for?
What was /were the other officers doing while they were talking to you?
21. How were you feeling when they were talking to you?
22. Were you drunk or under the influence of a drug when you were stopped by the police?
23. When you assaulted the police officer, did you punch or kick him/her? Or did you also bite, spit or use an instrument or weapon as well?
24. Just before the assault, had the police officer drawn a weapon such as a taser, baton or gun?
25. If so, why did you still decide to assault the police officer knowing that you could be hurt or injured by the police officer?

26. Did you notice if the police officer you assaulted was wearing any protective clothing, helmet or armour?
27. If so, why did you still decide to assault the police officer knowing that he/she was protected?
28. If so, why did you still decide to assault the police officer knowing that you were outnumbered and could be hurt or injured by the police officers?
- 26: When you assaulted the police officer, did you notice or know whether there were CCTV cameras recording what you were doing?
27. Did you know or were you aware that the police officer you assaulted was carrying a video and audio recorder as part of their gear?
28. What punishment did you receive when you went to court?
29. Do you feel that this was a fair punishment for assaulting the police officer?
30. If not, what do you think should have happened in court with relation to your assault charge?
31. Looking back what could you have done so that you did not assault the police?
32. Could the police could have done anything different so that this did not occur?

Appendix 3. Body Worn Camera Observation Checklist

Observation Checklist

Incident No. _____ Source: BWC/CCTV Observer _____

Environment

Q. No.	Factor	Observation	Ambiguous	Remarks
1	What sort of neighbourhood did the assault take place (public, private, entertainment)?			
2	Where did the incident take place? (see notes)			
3	Time of assault (day/month/year/season)			
4	Were bystanders present?			
5	Did bystanders become involved?			
6	Was alcohol sold in licensed premises close by?			
7	Did it appear that the suspect(s) assaulted PO because there was a perception that the presence of officer was a threat to civil liberties (or cultural mores)?			
8	Did it appear that the suspect(s) assaulted PO because there was a perception that the presence of officer was a threat to family?			
Additional comments:				

Individual - Offender

Q. No.	Factor	Observation	Ambiguous	Remarks
1	How many suspects were involved in the assault incident?			
2	Did the suspect(s) appear to be adult(s) or juvenile(s)?			
3	What was the apparent race/ethnicity of the suspect(s)?			
4	What was the apparent gender of the suspect(s)?			
Additional comments:				

Individual – Police Officer

Q. No.	Factor	Observation	Ambiguous	Remarks
1	What was the gender of officer assaulted?			
2	What was the race/ethnicity of officer assaulted?			
3	What was the rank of officer assaulted?			
4	Roughly, what was the height/weight/build of the assaulted officer?			
5	Was the PO larger than the suspect? (by height/weight)			
6	Did the PO appear older than the suspect?			
7	Were other officers in attendance (how many)?			
8	What was the gender of other officer(s) (if applicable)?			
Additional comments:				

Characteristics of citizen victims

Q. No.	Factor	Observation	Ambiguous	Remarks
1	Were there victims at the scene when police arrived?			
2	How many victims were apparently involved in the incident which required police officer attendance?			
3	Did the victim appear to be adult or juvenile?			
4	What was the apparent gender of the victim(s)			
5	What was the apparent race/ethnicity of victim(s)			
6	Was there apparent relationship between suspects and victims (acquaintance, family, partner)?			
7	Was the victim a resident at the location?			
Additional comments:				

Activity (Reason for police intervention)

Q. No.	Factor	Observation	Ambiguous	Remarks
1	Did the suspect appear to be committing an offence prior to the assault?			
2	What action did the suspect demonstrate immediately prior to the assault (approach, converse, yell, flee, fight)?			
3	Were police called to the incident?			
4	Did the police locate the suspect on random patrol?			
5	What type of encounter was the PO responding to (DV, traffic etc.)?			
Additional comments:				

Catalyst for the assault

Q. No.	Factor	Observation	Ambiguous	Remarks
1	Was there apparent alcohol use by the suspect(s) involved in the assault incident?			
2	Was there apparent drug use by the suspect(s) involved in the assault incident?			
3	Did the suspect(s) appear to suffer from a mental illness condition?			
4	Did the PO appear aware that the suspect may have mental illness?			
5	Did the PO appear aware of the suspect's criminal history?			
6	How physically close was the PO to the suspect prior to assault?			
7	Did the suspect indicate intent to harm him/her self, others, or PO?			
8	Was the suspect hiding to ambush the PO?			
Additional comments:				

Assault Details

Q. No.	Factor	Observation	Ambiguous	Remarks
1	Was the police officer attempting to negotiate face-to-face with the suspect(s) before he/she was assaulted?			
2	Did the suspect(s) attack the PO without provocation or warning?			
3	Did the PO know the suspect from previous interactions with the CJS?			
4	Did the suspect(s) have a weapon(s)?			
5	Was the PO wearing a protective vest at the time of the incident?			
6	Did the PO use any of the use of force options on the suspect(s)? (Pepper spray, taser)			
7	Did the PO employ hand to hand techniques on the suspect?			
8	Were these techniques soft (open hand) or hard (punching)?			
9	Was the assault minor or serious?			
10	What level of resistance was demonstrated by the suspect?			
11	Was resistance passive (sits down, goes limp), defensive (pushing/pulling officer, holding fixed objects), or active/assaultive (punching).			
12	What was the relative force displayed by PO (low, commensurate, high)			

Additional comments:

Assault Impact

Q. No.	Factor	Observation	Ambiguous	Remarks
1	Was the PO seriously injured due to the assault?			
2	Was the suspect forcibly removed from the scene (handcuffed)?			
3	Were other frontline workers (paramedics) present at the scene?			
4	Were any bystanders charged by police at the scene?			
Additional comments:				

APPENDIX 4

ATTACHMENT THREE : PERSONALITY SCALES AND INTEVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Barratt Impulsiveness Scale

Items rated on a 4-point scale ranging from *rarely/never* to *almost always/always*.

1. I plan tasks carefully
2. I do things without thinking
3. I don't pay attention
4. I am self-controlled
5. I concentrate easily
6. I am a careful thinker
7. I say things without thinking
8. I act on the spur of the moment

2. Behavioural Inhibition and Activation Scale

Items rated on a 4-point rating scale from 1 _ *not true at all for me* to 4 _ *very true for me*)

1. I go out of my way to get things I want
2. When I'm doing well at something, I love to keep at it
3. When I get something I want, I feel excited and energized
4. Criticism or scolding hurts me quite a bit
5. When I want something I usually go all-out to get it
6. I will often do things for no other reason than that they might be fun
7. If I see a chance to get something I want, I move on it right away
8. I feel pretty worried or upset when I think or know somebody is angry at me
9. I often act on the spur of the moment
10. If I think something unpleasant is going to happen I usually get pretty worked up

11. I crave excitement and new sensations
12. It would excite me to win a contest
13. I worry about making mistakes

3. Brief Self-Control Scale

Items rated on a 5-point rating scale (from 1 *_not at all like me_* to 5 *_very much like me_*)

1. I am good at resisting temptation
2. I do certain things that are bad for me, if they are fun
3. People would say that I have iron self-discipline
4. Pleasure and fun sometimes keep me from getting work done
5. I am able to work effectively toward long-term goals.
6. Sometimes I can't stop myself from doing something, even if I know it is wrong
7. I often act without thinking through all the alternatives

4. Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire

-
- Q1: Given enough provocation, I may hit another person. (P)
 Q2: I often find myself disagreeing with people. (V)
 Q3: At times I feel I have gotten a raw deal out of life. (H)
 Q4: There are people who have pushed me so far that we have come to blows. (P)
 Q5: I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me. (V)
 Q6: Sometimes I fly off the handle for no good reason. (A)
 Q7: Other people always seem to get the breaks. (H)
 Q8: I have threatened people I know. (P)
 Q9: My friends say that I'm somewhat argumentative. (V)
 Q10: I have trouble controlling my temper. (P)
 Q11: I wonder why sometimes I feel so bitter about things. (H)
 Q12: I sometimes feel like a powder keg ready to explode. (A)
-

1. NOTE: Items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very unlike me*) to 5 (*very like me*).; P = physical; V = verbal; A = anger; H = hostility.

5. General Attitude toward Institutional Authority Scale

Each item is rated on a scale of

“agree strongly” (++); “agree but not strongly” (+); “uncertain” (?); “disagree but not strongly” (-); “disagree strongly” (--)

1. The Police in Australia are pretty trustworthy
2. I would dislike having to salute an Army Officer (R)
3. The Law rightly claims the allegiance of every citizen at all times
4. Teachers seldom have a 'sense of proportion' (R)
5. A person should obey only those laws that seem reasonable
6. The Army develops initiative
7. It is reasonable to say that as a rule teachers work in the best interests of their students
8. The Police are quite unfair in their treatment of certain groups (R)
9. The Law is the embodiment of Justice and Equality
10. I disagree with what the Army stands for (R)
11. The Police have a hard job which they carry out well
12. A teacher is a somewhat ridiculous figure, posing as an authority on the important things in life, when in fact, he/she is often ignorant and immature (R)
13. Laws are so often made for the benefit of small, selfish groups that one cannot respect the law (R)
14. The Police are unnecessarily violent in handling people the dislike
15. Teachers freely acknowledge and respect the rights of their students
16. Military drill helps to improve a person's character
17. The Army reduces men to robots (R)
18. The Law represents the wisdom of ages
19. Teachers do not respect the individual personalities of the students (R)
20. The Police are generally quite impartial and fair in the way they carry out the Law
21. The Law is an ass (R)
22. Police like to bully people (R)
23. I expect there is a good reason for most rules and regulations in the Army
24. Teachers are usually ready to take quite seriously whatever it is that students feel strongly about
25. The Police help the weaker members of society
26. Obedience to the law constitutes a value representing the highest citizenship

27. In this day and age students should not be expected to call a teacher 'sir' (R)
28. The Army brutalizes people (R)
29. The disciplinary measures taken by teachers are usually well considered and desirable
30. The Police use their 'badge' as an excuse to push people around (R)
31. The sentences of judges in court are determined by their prejudices (R)
32. People should feel proud to serve in the Army

Notes: (R) = reverse scored

6. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle **SA**. If you agree with the statement, circle **A**. If you disagree, circle **D**. If you strongly disagree, circle **SD**.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|---|---|----|
| 1. | On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 2.* | At times, I think I am no good at all. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 3. | I feel that I have a number of good qualities. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 4. | I am able to do things as well as most other people. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 5.* | I feel I do not have much to be proud of. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 6.* | I certainly feel useless at times. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 7. | I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 8.* | I wish I could have more respect for myself. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 9.* | All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 10. | I take a positive attitude toward myself. | SA | A | D | SD |

Scoring: SA=3, A=2, D=1, SD=0. Items with an asterisk are reverse scored, that is, SA=0, A=1, D=2, SD=3. Sum the scores for the 10 items. The higher the score, the higher the self esteem.

APPENDIX 5 : Penalties for assaulting a police officer in other States of Australia as at 2010:

Legislation

Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld)

Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012

Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2012 – Explanatory notes

New South Wales

In New South Wales, the [Crimes Act 1900 \(NSW\), Div 8A](#) makes assaulting, throwing missiles at, stalking, harassing or intimidating a police officer while the officer is executing his or her duty an offence liable to 5 years imprisonment (7 years imprisonment if the officer suffers actual bodily harm). Higher sentences of up to 9 years apply if the conduct occurs during a public disorder. Malicious wounding or inflicting grievous bodily harm on a police officer makes an offender liable to 12 years imprisonment (14 years if during a public disorder): s 60.

ACT

In the Australian Capital Territory, s 27(4) of the [Crimes Act 1900 \(ACT\)](#), provides that an act endangering life done “intending to prevent or hinder a police officer from lawfully investigating an act or matter” is punishable by imprisonment for 15 years. Section 32 provides that preventing or hindering a police officer from lawfully investigating an act or matter with a threat to kill or inflict grievous bodily harm on a person, or with a threat to endanger the health, safety or physical wellbeing of a person, is punishable by imprisonment for 20 years and 10 years, respectively.

South Australia

In South Australia, s 5AA(1)(c) of the [Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 \(SA\)](#) makes it an aggravated offence to commit an assault on a police officer, prison officer or other law enforcement officer who is acting in the course of his or her official duty or in retribution for something done by the officer in the course of his or her official duty. Under s 20, this offence incurs a maximum penalty of 3 years imprisonment and 4 years if the assault causes harm (5 years if a weapon is involved). Under s 6 of the [Summary Offences Act 1953 \(SA\)](#)⁷ assaulting a police officer in the execution of the officer’s duty incurs a maximum penalty of \$10,000 or imprisonment for 2 years (\$2,500 fine or imprisonment for 6 months if a person hinders or resists a police officer).

On 3 June 2009, a Private Member’s Bill entitled the [Statutes Amendment \(Assaults on Police\) Bill 2009](#) was introduced by the Hon [Robert Brokenshire](#) MLC to amend the [Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 \(SA\)](#) and the [Criminal Law \(Sentencing\) Act 1988 \(SA\)](#). The bill

provides for a range of mandatory sentences for assaults against police officers (e.g., a mandatory sentence of 6 months for assaulting, and 2 years for intentionally causing serious harm to, a police officer where the aggravating circumstances provided for in s 5AA(1)(c) (see above) exist). These provisions are stated to apply whether the offender is a youth or an adult and cannot be reduced, mitigated or suspended. This bill is currently still before the Legislative Council. Click [here](#) to follow the progress of this bill.

Tasmania

Under s 34B of the [Police Offences Act 1935 \(Tas\)](#), it is an offence to assault, resist, or wilfully obstruct a police officer in the execution of the officer's duty or assault, resist, or wilfully obstruct a person assisting the officer. Threatening, intimidating, or using abusive language to any such police officer or a person assisting the officer is also an offence. The offender is liable on summary conviction to a penalty not exceeding [\\$5000](#) or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years.

On 3 March 2010, the Opposition Leader, the Hon Will Hodgman MP, announced, as part of its "[Tough on Crime](#)" election policy, that if the Liberal party were to be elected at the 20 March 2010 election, it would introduce legislation within six months that would introduce mandatory jail terms of six months for serious assaults by a person over the age of 17 on emergency services personnel being, police, ambulance officers, firefighters, hospital workers, prison officers and child protection workers.

Northern Territory

Under s189A of the [Criminal Code Act \(NT\)](#), it is an offence to unlawfully assault a police officer in the execution of the officer's duty with an offender liable to imprisonment for 5 years or, upon being found guilty summarily, to imprisonment for 2 years. If the police officer suffers harm, the offender is liable to imprisonment for 7 years, or, upon being found guilty summarily, to imprisonment for 3 years. If the police officer suffers serious harm, the offender can go to prison for 16 years.

Victoria

Section 31 of the [Crimes Act \(1958\) \(Vic\)](#) provides that assaulting or threatening to assault, resisting or intentionally obstructing a member of the police force in the due execution of the member's duty, or a person aiding the member of the police force, attracts a penalty of a maximum of 5 years imprisonment. 8

Section 52 of the [Summary Offences Act 1996 \(Vic\)](#) provides that assaulting, resisting, obstructing, hindering or delaying a member of the police force in the execution of his or her duty, or a person assisting in the execution of the police officer's duty under the Act is an offence and attracts a penalty of a fine or imprisonment for up to 6 months (see [Sentencing](#)

[Act 1991 \(Vic\)](#), s 111 regarding the effect of penalty provisions).

Since the violent bashing of a senior police officer in October 2009, there have been calls from the public and the Victorian Police Association to introduce mandatory minimum sentences of one month for anyone who assaults a police officer. Recently, however, the Attorney-General for Victoria, the Hon [Rob Hulls](#) MP was reported in the *Age* on 4 February 2010 as stating that mandatory sentencing is the “recourse of lazy politics” and is not an effective deterrent against re-offending.

Western Australia was recently the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce minimum mandatory sentencing for certain assault offences.

On 22 September 2009, the substantive provisions of the [Criminal Code Amendment Act 2009 \(WA\)](#) came into effect. This legislation amended s 297 (grievous bodily harm) and s 318 (serious assaults) of the [Criminal Code 1913 \(WA\)](#) to provide for:

Western Australia

A mandatory minimum 12 months sentence for a person aged 18 or over who unlawfully does grievous bodily harm to certain specified persons, including a police officer, a prison officer, a security officer, an ambulance officer and certain contract workers providing services under the *Court Security and Custodial Services Act 1999 (WA)* and the *Prisons Act 1981 (WA)* (see s 297(7));

a mandatory minimum six months sentence for a person aged 18 or over who assaults certain specified persons, including a police officer, a prison officer, a security officer, an ambulance officer, and certain contract workers providing services under the *Court Security and Custodial Services Act 1999 (WA)* and the *Prisons Act 1981 (WA)* and that person suffers bodily harm (see s 318(4)(b) and (5));

a mandatory minimum nine months sentence for a person aged 18 or over who commits an aggravated assault (*i.e.*, where the person is armed or in the company of others) against certain specified persons, including a police officer, a prison officer, a security officer, an ambulance officer and certain contract workers providing services under the *Court Security and Custodial Services Act 1999 (WA)* and the *Prisons Act 1981 (WA)* and that person suffers bodily harm (see s 318(4)(a) and (5)); and

if the person, convicted of an offence under either s 297 (grievous bodily harm) and s 318 (serious assaults) against a specified person, is a juvenile aged between 16 and 18, then that person will be subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of three months of imprisonment or detention. The court may not suspend the term of imprisonment and must record a conviction against the juvenile offender: (see s 297(5) and s 318(2)).

BACK COVER

BACK COVER