



**BRUTE FORCE
THE NEED FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN THE
VICTORIA POLICE FORCE**

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BRUTE FORCE - The Need for Affirmative Action in the Victoria Police Force

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INTRODUCTION

This article, identifies recruitment policies and practices that prohibit equal participation by women in the police force and recommends changes to the recruitment and promotion practices that have historically institutionalised discrimination within the force and promoted a work place culture out of step with community expectations and attitudes.

A previously unreleased report by Victoria Police on the Impact of Equal Opportunity on Policing in Victoria⁰ (hereafter referred to as the report), obtained under Freedom of Information legislation, reveals that Victoria Police unlawfully discriminate against women. This discrimination contravenes equal opportunity legislation.

The preamble to the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (Vic)*. states that it is 'An Act to render unlawful certain kinds of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different status...and for other purposes.' 'Status' is defined in section 4 of the Act to include the sex of a person.

Discrimination against female applicants to the police force and female police officers takes the form of discrimination in recruitment and promotion along with sexual harassment and inequitable working conditions.

Unlawful discrimination in recruitment denies those women in Victoria who wish to join the force a fair chance of gaining such employment. It ensures that those women who are successful in obtaining such employment remain only a small minority unable to challenge a status quo that largely excludes female experience and perspectives. The marginal position of women in the police force is reinforced by discrimination in promotion which contributes to the small number of women in the higher ranks of the force.

The small number of female officers and females in senior positions combined with the attitudes that underlie discrimination in recruitment and employment has implications for the type of service women in the community receive from the police force. It also has implications for policing practices generally.

⁰ Victoria Police, Review and Evaluation Division, Research and Development Department, *The Impact of Equal Opportunity On Policing in Victoria - Final Report*, Victoria: Victoria Police, July 1990.

MEN AND WOMEN IN THE POLICE FORCE

As at June, 1992, women made up 14.4% of the 10,025 members in the Victoria Police. Of the 447 police who are of the rank of Inspector or higher, only 8 (or 1.8%) are women. As in 1991, there were 6 Inspectors and 1 Chief Inspector and 1 Assistant Commissioner.⁰

In the Metropolitan area women make up about twenty per cent of police but in the country they make up less than ten per cent of police numbers.⁰ The small number of female police in country areas, maternity leave and other forms of leave that female officers take, result in vast geographical areas not having access to female officers. The implications of this are discussed below.

Female police are largely confined to welfare, domestic and administrative roles within the police force. While women make up the majority of members within the Community Policing Squad (CPS) they are not represented, or very poorly represented, in what are considered 'real' policing areas, such as the Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB), The Homicide Squad, The Special Operations Group and Search and Rescue.⁰ It is no coincidence that the squads that exclude women altogether are considered the elite in the police force. The Homicide Squad which has never had a female member is described as the 'elite of the elite' within the force. The Special Operations Group has always been an all male squad and is also known as the 'Sons of God'. A name that signals that the squad is both elite and for men only.

At least one former police officer has commented publicly that the integration of female police into operational duties has had a bad effect on morale in the force.⁰

The report predicts that based on trends over the previous five years, the proportion of females in the Victoria Police in 1993 will be in excess of 17% of total strength.⁰ This prediction has not proved accurate.

Given that in the last four years, the proportion of females in the force has increased from 14% to only 14.4%,⁰ the estimate was unduly optimistic particularly given the decline in the success of female applicants to the force since 1988, as discussed below.

⁰ See Appendix 1 - Figures obtained from Victoria Police under *Freedom of Information Act* 1982 (Vic). The female Assistant Commissioner resigned on 15/12/92

⁰ Summary of the Report, *op. cit.* paragraph 86 n.1.

⁰ *Police Life*. August 1992.

⁰ Paul Delianis *The Age* 26/7/89

⁰ Summary Report, *op. cit.* paragraph 87, n.1.

⁰ See appendix

RECRUITMENT

The report acknowledges that women who apply to join the police force are more likely to fail to gain admittance than males who apply to join. There are four tests required to be taken by applicants to the force each of which must be passed in order for the applicant to be admitted. These four tests are an education test; an agility test; an interview with a selection panel; and a medical examination.

The Agility Test

The major reason so few women are recruited is that they fail to pass a physical agility test. A new agility test was introduced in January 1989. The report states that since the introduction of this test the female pass rate dropped 24% from 57% in 1988 to 33% in 1989, while the male pass rate remained at 88%.⁰ The report does not provide any explanation as to why the test was introduced. The agility test discriminates against women in a number of ways.

The agility test includes a fat test. The current body fat measures allow males 21% body fat and females 24% body fat. The body fat rates for an average male is 18% and a female is 28%.⁰ Women naturally have greater than 10% more body fat than men. Women have more fat cells than men, and the cells are larger.⁰ The test requires that females must have four per cent *less* body fat than the average female while males who pass are allowed three per cent *more* body fat than the average male. In other words women need to be leaner than average to pass the force's fat test while men can be flabbier than average and still pass. However, the report erroneously states that the allowable body fat ratios accurately represent the physiological differences between men and women.⁰ The fat test requirement is clearly discrimination within the definition of discrimination in the *Equal Opportunity Act* (Vic.) 1984 in that it is more difficult for females to pass such a test than males and it is not a reasonable test.⁰

In addition the agility tests has a pronounced emphasis on upper body strength. Just over two-thirds of female applicants fail the part of the agility test which requires great upper body strength. Only 11% of male applicants fail these tests.⁰

Women, relative to men have more strength in their lower body than upper body. Women's leg strength is significantly closer to men's than is their arm strength.⁰ Whilst a test that looked at overall strength would fail more women than men, because on average men are stronger than women, a test which primarily tests upper body strength will fail significantly more women than men.

The report comments that applicants who fail the test can go away and build themselves up and apply for the test again. This does not address the question of discrimination but amounts to advising those

⁰ Report, *op. cit.* 39, n. 1.

⁰ Forbes G.B. "Growth of Lean Body Mass in Man" in *Growth*, 36, 325- 338, 1972.

⁰ Chumlea WC, "Physical Growth in Adolescence", in BB Woolman's Handbook of Development Psychology, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice - Hall, 1982

⁰ Report, *op. cit.* 36 n. 1.

⁰ see section 17 (5)... a person discriminates against another person on the ground of the status or by reason of the private life of the other person if -

(a) the...person imposes on that other person a requirement or condition with which a substantially higher proportion of persons of a different status or with a different private life do or can comply...

(c) the requirement or condition is not reasonable.

⁰ Report *op. cit.* 43 n.1.

⁰ Lloyd L. Laubach, "Comparative Muscular Strength of Men and Women: A Review of the Literature". *Aviation, Space, and Environmental Medicine*. May 1986.

people who fail, mainly women, to go away and work to make themselves more like men. The agility test, like the fat test, discriminates unlawfully against women.

Selection Panel Interviews

An interview before a Selection Panel assesses the applicants character, background, motivation, capability, maturity, social attitudes and general suitability for a police career. More female applicants than male fail this test.⁰

Forty-four per cent of female recruits surveyed for the report claimed to have experienced sex discrimination in the interview, including sexist language, disparaging comments, questions of marital status and comments on female ineffectiveness or their physical limitations, despite the fact that these women had already passed the agility test. No males claimed that they had experienced sex discrimination in the interview.⁰ Selection panels have been predominantly all male and there is no policy on gender composition of panels, unlike the Public Service which requires mixed-gender panels.⁰ The report claims that these problems have now been addressed. However there is no indication that there is a policy in place which requires women on the selection panels.⁰ Given the problems with the panels in the past such a policy is obviously necessary to ensure that women applicants are not discriminated against. Such a policy is also necessary to ensure that men with inappropriate attitudes toward women are not accepted into the force.

Education and Medical Examinations

These two tests appear to be fair and not to involve discrimination against female applicants.

⁰ Report *op. cit.* 41 n. 1. According to the report about 20% of male applicants fail while about 25% of females fail.

⁰ *ibid.*, 44

⁰ *ibid.*, 45

⁰ *ibid.*, 45-46

PROMOTION

Those women who become police are less likely than men to be promoted in the force. As stated previously, the report found that females are proportionately under represented in the higher ranks of the Victoria Police.⁰ It also found that a much higher proportion of females with more than ten years service had not attained the supervisory ranks of their male counterparts. There has been virtually no change in the representation of women in the higher ranks in the past ten years.⁰

When a police officer is eligible for promotion, selection for a position involves a procedure of application and screening. A selection panel is usually convened to assess the relative efficiency and suitability of applicants for appointment to a position. The panel then recommends the most suitable applicant.

A selection panel *must* be convened for appointment to all officers positions, and all positions of Senior Sergeant in charge of a police station.

Selection panels comprise a convenor, who must be at least two ranks senior to the vacant position and have management responsibility for the position; an independent member appointed from outside the district, who is at least one rank senior to the position; a third member at least one rank senior to the position, and should be in the immediate line supervisor/commander of the position; and where appropriate, an additional member where the position involves specialist or technical skills.

The guidelines stipulate that where a female member is an applicant for the position, one member of the selection panel, *where practicable*, should be a female member at least one rank senior to the position. However, the report also makes it clear that the boards have usually been made up of all male police officers.

The report noted that there was evidence that female applicants for promotions have been questioned on their marital status, ability to combine policing with family commitments, and their general capability to deal with male subordinates. The physical capabilities of females has also often been challenged.

The report found that across all ranks, but particularly Sergeant rank and below, there was a degree of gender discrimination in promotions boards and transfers. These factors no doubt contribute to the low number of female officers in senior positions.⁰

The *Equal Opportunity Act* 1984(Vic.) makes it unlawful to discriminate in promotion. Section 21(2) of the Act states:

"It is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against an employee on the ground of status or by reason of the private life of the employee -

⁰ Summary,*ibid.*, para 88.

⁰ The number of policewomen of the rank of Inspector or higher has increased from only 0.7% in 1982 to only 1.8% in 1992. In 1987, women made up 1.8% of the total of Senior Sergeants, and only 2.7% of the total of Sergeants. Women made up 15.4% of the total number of Constables and Senior Constables. In 1990, the proportions were 2.5%, 3.3% and 18.7% respectively. By June 1992, the respective representations were 2.5%, 3.9% and 18.6%. Figures based on Victoria Police Annual Reports, 1987-1991 and from the Victoria Police under Freedom of Information legislation.

⁰ Summary, *op. cit.*n.1. Conclusion 1.16.

(a) by denying the employee access, or limiting access by the employee, to opportunities for ***promotion***, transfer or training or to any other benefits connected with employment;"

The report recommends that promotional board members be given instructions and guidelines on the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act. This would include guidelines in interviewing techniques incorporating Equal Opportunity issues being provided to all potential promotion board members.⁰

It is clear that there is a need for promotional boards to be comprised of both males and females and the report recommends this. However it waters down this recommendation by including the words 'wherever possible', stating that including males and females on these boards and panels may not always be feasible with the low number of policewomen of officer rank at present.⁰ This is a 'Catch 22' situation. Women have been discriminated against in promotion as a result of all male panels and this has contributed to their small numbers in the higher ranks of the force. Because there are few women in the higher ranks of the police force, panels will continue to be all male, when there are not sufficient women of high enough rank to be on them. The absence of a clear affirmative action guidelines on the composition of promotion boards will result in the continued small number of policewomen of high rank.

In order to break this cycle and to ensure that there are more female police represented in higher ranks there needs to be an adoption of affirmative action in the selection of police for promotion.

Such a policy would go some way towards recognising that there has been discrimination against women in the past and that an increase in the number of female senior police is necessary to ensure that female experience and perceptions are taken into account in the implementation and formulation of police policy and practise.

⁰ *ibid.*, Conclusions 1.17, 1.18.

⁰ *ibid.*, Conclusion 1.19.

FEMALE POLICE

Employment conditions

The report noted the absence of a number of key employment conditions resulted in problems in staff retention. These conditions included: part time policing, parental leave, job sharing and the availability of child care facilities. The lack of these job conditions has a greater effect on female police than male police. As a result women are less likely to stay in the force and further their policing careers. In addition women will be more likely than men to be discouraged from applying to join the police force due to the lack of these employment conditions.

Sexual Harassment

The report found that sexually harassing behaviour was quite common throughout the Victoria Police. What the report describes as 'more serious incidents' such as touching and sexual advances, were believed to occur relatively infrequently. However, more common behaviour such as displays of magazines and pictures of a sexual nature and sexual jokes were viewed as 'part of police culture', in spite of the fact that a large proportion of both male and female police found such behaviour to be offensive.⁰

An example of the sexist perceptions of gender roles within the force appeared in the March 1992 edition of *Police Life*, an official police force publication. An article titled 'Not Just a Pretty Face', described the first female policewoman to receive a valour award as 'attractive'. In a subsequent *Police Life* edition, the editor admitted that had the subject of the article been a policeman, the author (a male) would not have used these descriptions, but still denied the use of these descriptions amounted to sexism.⁰

The report found that 20% of police officers reported having subordinates come to them with complaints of sexual harassment. The most commonly reported complaint was of male supervisors harassing junior females.⁰ Women suffering sexual harassment within the police force may find it difficult to complain about their treatment within the force given that they will have to complain to someone more senior who, in the overwhelming majority of cases, will be a man and it is likely to be a superior who is the perpetrator of the harassment. Sexual harassment is unlawful under section 20 (1) (a) of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984.

In July, 1992, five Victorian policewomen lodged a complaint with the Equal Opportunity Board. They claimed that they had notified the police force but that no action had been taken. The five women alleged that they were physically and sexually harassed at a police station.⁰

An article in *Police Life*, quoted the then Assistant Commissioner, Bernice Masterson, on the subject of sexual harassment. Former Assistant Commissioner Masterson said "it is exacerbated by our rank structure. Vast attitude changes would be required for the problem to be completely wiped out. As the more junior members come up through the ranks, possibly it will be less of a problem as women are becoming far more accepted in the force."⁰ In an interview after her retirement the former Assistant

⁰ *ibid.*, para 61

⁰ *ibid.*, April 1992, 23.

⁰ Summary, *op. cit.*, para 62.

⁰ *The Age*, 8/7/92.

⁰ *Police Life*, July/August 1992,9.

Commissioner was quoted as saying "I would bare my bum in Myer's if you could find a policewoman who hasn't been subject to sexual harassment in her time".⁰ Given the low representation of women in the ranks of Sergeant, Senior Sergeant, Inspector and above, and the little growth in the numbers of women in these ranks over the last ten years, (see footnote 20) it is most probable that the problem will remain for quite some time unless the force ensures that affirmative action is practised in recruitment and promotion.

⁰ The *Sunday Age* 21/3/93.

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF POLICING

Criminal Assault in the Home

Criminal assault in the home is an extremely serious and wide spread crime. Women and children are largely the victims of this crime and men the perpetrators. A woman is far more likely to be assaulted in her home by a man she is or has been in a relationship with than by a stranger. By far the largest category of reported homicides consist of those classed as 'domestics' and in about half of these homicides there had been at least one prior incident of physical abuse, almost always involving the wife or defacto partner as victim.⁰

Police consistently fail to treat criminal assault in the home as 'real' police work and fail to enforce the law to protect women and children. Their inaction when it comes to arresting violent offenders when the crime is assault in the home places women and children in danger and serves to reinforce the myth that violence against people in the home is not a crime.

Australian research undertaken into the behaviour of police when dealing with domestic violence has found that the majority hold sexist and stereotyped views about men and women. Attacks by men upon women in the domestic context are excused by police officers, on the basis that women ask for it, deserve their beating or like violence. The violence against women in these situations is trivialised and officers frequently identify with the man. Women victims of assault are often perceived as hysterical and mentally unstable. As one researcher put it, police cast women 'as failures or oppressors and men as heroic victims'.⁰

These attitudes are sometimes excused or explained on the grounds that they only reflect attitudes in the community. While it is true that surveys have found that an alarming significant minority of the general public find domestic violence acceptable research has shown that the *majority* of police have attitudes which condone or excuse such violence.⁰ Research comparing the attitude of police and other professionals to domestic violence found that police saw domestic violence as a less severe problem than did any of the other professionals, showed the least sympathy for the victim and held the most stereotyped view of women.⁰ The police are a public service paid to enforce the law. It is unacceptable that these public servants are unable to offer services to women in a non discriminatory fashion. Most incidents of family violence reported to the police occur outside normal business hours.⁰

Often the police are the only available service. "Research findings all over the world point universally to the crucial role the police play in being the first and in many cases the only point of contact for a victim of family violence. At the same time we read about the reluctance of police to act, to assist and/or to follow through with the protection and advice desperately needed by the victims who report abuse to the police."⁰ The failure of police to provide a proper service to women in domestic violence situations clearly endangers women's lives. A family law solicitor told a Victorian Committee inquiring

⁰ Law Reform Discussion Paper No. 13 *Homicide*, Victoria: March 1988.

⁰ Suzanne E. Hatty "Policing and Male Violence in Australia" in Women, Policing, and Male Violence. Editors Jalna Hanmer, Jill Radford and Elizabeth Stanko 82 London and New York: Routledge 1989

⁰ *ibid.*, 78

⁰ Urban and Social Research Centre Humanities Department, Footscray Institute of Technology, Ballarat Road, Footscray. "Police Powers and Domestic Violence" Prepared by: Harry Van Moorst. May 1983.

⁰ According to the Police Department Family Violence Project Office, 85% of incidents reported to the police occur outside normal business hours.

⁰ Rosemary Wearing; " I was told to go down to the Magistrate's Court to see the Clerk...", Socio Legal Bulletin, No 7 Spring 1992,3

into community violence that "if police responded actively to calls for assistance in situations of domestic violence by laying criminal charges...some homicides may be prevented".⁰

Female victim/survivors of domestic violence are clearly unhappy with the police service they receive and report deep disappointment and frustration at police inaction.⁰

Recent research indicates that one of the reasons women do not seek police assistance in domestic violence situations is that the overwhelming majority of police are male. Women who participated in this research found the CPS, which is made up mainly of women, to be more responsive to their needs.⁰

Rape

Like victims of domestic violence female victims/survivors of rape cannot depend on police assistance or sympathy. It is well known that the police treat with suspicion women's reports of rape. One study of rapes reported to Victoria police found that 34.5% of reports were not proceeded with due to police assessments that there was insufficient evidence or a false report had been made.⁰ The now disbanded Victorian Police Complaints Authority undertook a study on police response to victims of sexual assault after receiving many complaints that police treated victims of rape as if they were guilty of something themselves. Their discussion paper contains a number of case studies which illustrates this point. The Police Complaints Authority paper comments that "the attitudes of some members of the police remain sexist, stereotyped and judgemental, ... unnecessarily distressing and alienating those female victims who come forward, and discouraging others from reporting crimes".⁰

A recently held Victorian sexual assault phone-in found that two-thirds of callers had never reported the assault to police. The report on the phone-in concludes that: "The reasons callers gave for not reporting these assaults indicate a significant lack of faith in the legal system, and widespread cynicism about police responses".⁰ Many of those who reported rapes felt that reporting had been 'a waste of time' and that they had been let down by the legal system. Dissatisfaction related to attitudes and comments expressed by individual police officers, as well as to more general police procedures and methods of investigation. The victims who were dissatisfied found the police to be unsympathetic. They said the police asked inappropriate and irrelevant questions and made them feel disbelieved, uncomfortable, devalued, guilty or blamed.

Victims were more likely to make positive comments about the police when female officers were involved, and a significant number of callers made a distinction between their positive experiences with members of the CPS and more negative ones with members of the CIB. They felt there was greater sympathy and support offered by members of the CPS in contrast to the CIB.⁰ The CPS has about 85% female membership while the CIB is predominantly male.

Women in police custody

⁰ Renata Alexander quoted in *The Herald* 29/9/88.

⁰ Hatty, *ibid.*, 86

⁰ Dr Rosemary Wearing, "Report Monitoring the Impact of the Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987". La Trobe University, April 1992.

⁰ Victorian Community Council Against Violence, *A profile of Rapes (Reported to Police in Victoria 1987-90)*, 1991 77

⁰ Police Complaints Authority, *Sexual Assault Victims and the Police*, Melbourne, Government Printer, 1988. 17

⁰ Real Rape Law Coalition, *No Real Justice - The findings of a confidential phone in on sexual assault*, 1992. 15

⁰ *ibid.*, 27-31

One in four people arrested by the police are female.⁰ Apart from the general psychological and physical abuse which sometimes takes place in police custody, women are often subject to abuse of a sexual nature. The very fact that the overwhelming majority of police officers are male puts women in a vulnerable position when they enter police custody.

A survey done by the Federation of Community Legal Centres on police mistreatment of young people included a number of reports of police sexual assault of women. One woman reported the following:

"A police car pulled up, asked me what I was doing, and told me to get in the car. I was taken back to the police station, through a back door, and told to strip. I was questioned whilst I was naked, and police tried to insert an instrument. They then hit and kicked me." ⁰

The Coroner investigating a number of fatal shootings by police was told by a woman that she witnessed police sexually assault her friend with a gun and later found another friend deeply distressed in another room saying that the police had sexually assaulted him. The woman gave evidence at the Coroner's Court that:

"... at about 10.45pm when the police sledge hammered the door down and came running through the place ... Doug ran out the back. The police went out the back and fired three shots, and then they came back in laughing and said, "We put one in him". We were crying. They said that would not help. They punched Diane and put a long barrellled gun between her legs ... There was a young kid about eighteen ... who was staying in the front room... They punched him, pulled down his pants and put a gun up his behind. He was screaming and crying. Afterwards he told us what happened. He had marks on his neck and all over him."⁰

Aboriginal women are massively over represented amongst women who are arrested. They are not only subject to racist abuse but also sexual abuse by police. The Inquiry Into Racist Violence heard that Aboriginal women were physically abused by police, raped and threatened with rape.⁰ Given that sexual assault is almost exclusively perpetrated by men, women and children would be far less likely to suffer sexual threats and abuse at the hands of police if more police officers were female.

Country women

As a result of the low numbers of female police officers in the country women who are raped or assaulted are less likely than city women to be able to act on any preference to speak to a woman about such crimes. Country women face particular problems when the perpetrator of the violence against them is a 'mate' of the local police officer or worse still when it is the local police officer himself. These factors combined with other more general issues involved in living in small rural communities such as isolation, distance, lack of privacy and being economically dependent on family enterprises, makes it less likely that country women will report violent crimes against them. Strip searching of female suspects will more often be carried out by male officers in the country because of lack of female officers and more female suspects will be interviewed, detained etc in an all male environment.

Pornographic materials in police stations

⁰ Mukherjee, Neuhaus and Walker Crime and Justice in Australia. Australian Institute of Criminology. 1990 25

⁰ Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Report into the Mistreatment of Young People by Police*, June 1991. .

⁰ The families of Mark Militano, Graeme Jensen and Jedd Houghton and Flemington\Kensington Community Legal Centre. Police Shootings in Victoria 1987-1989. Fitzroy Legal Service, 1992 46

⁰ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Racist Violence. Report of National Inquiry into Racist Violence in Australia. Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 1991. 88

Community legal centres have received a number of complaints from people about the display of pornographic posters in police stations. Display of such materials in police stations is totally unacceptable and demonstrates that there is little understanding or concern amongst police that such materials are likely to distress women who enter police stations.

POLICE CULTURE

Police as a group make up a strongly bonded social group which has a unique culture.⁰ The strength of this culture is contributed to by a number of factors including shift work, the wearing of a uniform and the nature of the job along with the virtual exclusion of women and people from minority groups. Victoria police are overwhelmingly white males from English speaking backgrounds. The bonding that takes place amongst police results in a male peer solidarity. This solidarity has led to the description of the police as a 'brotherhood' amongst whom a cult of masculinity has been well documented. Amongst police certain attitudes and codes of behaviour prevail. The subculture equips officers with certain characteristics. These characteristics include suspicion, isolation, conservatism, machismo, and action.⁰ As a result physical strength and confrontation are glorified and other perspectives which include alternative methods of conflict resolution are undervalued or dismissed. This leads to the predominance of a certain style of policing which adds to violence within the community.

STYLES OF POLICING

It is the perception of legal centres, based on the reported experience of their clients, that police officers frequently engage in violent and unlawful attacks upon members of the public.⁰ It is clear that the most vulnerable members of the community including aboriginal people⁰ and young homeless people⁰ are more likely than others to be subjected to police violence. It is reported that police officers often respond to any perceived affront to their authority with physical force. Young people, in particular, report that if they attempt to assert their rights in dealings with the police they are often physically assaulted or threatened with physical assault.

It appears that some police provoke confrontations between citizens and themselves by approaching their duties in an overly aggressive and hostile manner. It is our view that many young people at eighteen and a half (the minimum age for recruitment) are too immature to properly undertake the responsibilities and powers that go with the provision of police uniform and weapons, including guns. It is our perception that this is particularly true of young men who too often bring to the job the desire to test their manhood through confrontation with others.

LIMITS TO REFORM THROUGH EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The presence of more women in the police force will not automatically change policing practices. The strength of the police culture will ensure that recruits are changed as much as they change the organisation.

⁰ G.E. Fitzgerald, *Report of a Commission of Inquiry Pursuant to Orders in Council*, Queensland, 1989.200

⁰ M. Brogden, T. Jefferson, S. Walklate, *Introducing Policework*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1988. 33.

⁰ See for example Sam Biondo and Darren Palmer, *Report into Mistreatment by Police*, Federation of Community Legal Centres, May 1993.

⁰ National Committee on Violence. *Violence Today*. No. 8. Australian Institute of Criminology. December 1989.

⁰ Christine Alder, *Homeless Youth as Victims of Violence*, Criminology Department. University of Melbourne. 1989.

An evaluation of an affirmative action program in a United States police force found that, 'The officers do appear to take on an attitude that can be described as "cloning" in which a diverse group is so indoctrinated into the police culture that they become all but indistinguishable'.⁰

Australian research on the attitude and response of police to domestic violence found that misogynist beliefs about the violence were held by officers regardless of their sex and that these attitudes were reproduced within the police force with young officers quickly adopting the dominant views on male violence.⁰

Other research has found that women in the force tend to fall into two categories. They become 'one of the boys' adopting similar attitudes and behaviours to their male counterparts or they conform to female stereotypes.⁰ Neither of these behaviours will seriously challenge accepted ideas and practices.

The studies conducted to date, however, have taken place in police forces that remain overwhelmingly male. It remains to be seen what impact women have on policing when they make up more than a small minority. The fact that Victorian women have expressed greater satisfaction with the CPS, a predominantly female squad, indicates that women in significant numbers may have an impact on styles of policing.

While equal opportunity approaches may ensure that more women than men are employed in the police force and that women once in the force have equal access to promotion it in no way addresses the fundamental issues about policing. The police force is an archetypically male organisation: militaristic and strictly hierarchical. Fundamentally police are employed to ensure that maintenance of the existing social order: a social order based on the oppression of women and other groups. Police forces were conceived by men in dominant race and class positions to protect their interests. Equal Opportunity Legislation which enables women to join the force and to participate in the force in an equal manner can only enable women to participate in what is essentially the product of male vision.

While it is clear that more women in the force will not alone change the nature of policing the fact that the institution has remained so resistant to admitting women in any significant numbers hints at women's potential threat to the male order. Female police officers will not change the nature of policing but women in large numbers and in positions of seniority are ingredients essential for change.

CONCLUSION

The emphasis on brute force in recruiting defines the policing ethos as one of physical confrontation rather than service to the community.

The Chief Commissioner Niel Comrie has said publicly that the community are the police and the police are the community. This is clearly not the case. Over half of the community are female whilst only 14.4% of the police force is female. If we are to have a police force that is more truly representative of the community then it is imperative that the number of women as a proportion of the police force increase.

⁰ George T. Felkenes, "Affirmative Action in the Los Angeles Police Department," Criminal Justice Research Bulletin, 6., no 4 Huntsville, TX : Sam Houston State University, 1991:8. cited in Jerome H. Skolnick and James J. Fyfe Above the Law - Police and the Excessive Use of Force. New York: The Free Press 1993 138

⁰ Hatty, *op.cit.*, n. 31 78

⁰ Mike Brogden Tony Jefferson Sandra Walklate *op cit.*, n. 48. 117

Such an increase will only occur if there is a removal of discrimination in recruitment combined with affirmative action both in recruitment and in promotion.

A commitment to affirmative action requires the recognition that the current male domination of the police force is to a large part responsible for a culture of violence within the force and the inadequate response to female victims of crime.

An increase in the number of women in the force should be accompanied by a fundamental change in the nature of policing away from confrontation and brute force and towards a more conciliatory style of policing.

If the police are genuine in their commitment to community policing they must ensure that the force is more representative of the community and capable of giving appropriate service to all of the community, including women.

APPENDIX 1 - Historical Breakdown of Victoria Police by Gender

31/12/82

<i>Total Police:</i>			<i>Rank of Brevet Inspector or higher:</i>		
Male	7626	91.9%	402	99.3%	
Female	676	8.1%	*3	0.7%	
Total	<u>8302</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>405</u>	<u>100.00%</u>	

(*2 Inspectors, 1 Chief Inspector)

30/6/83

<i>Total Police:</i>			<i>Rank of Brevet Inspector or higher:</i>		
Male	7698	92.1%	394	99.2%	
Female	666	7.9%	*3	0.8%	
Total	<u>8364</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>397</u>	<u>100.00%</u>	

(*2 Inspectors, 1 Chief Inspector)

30/6/84

<i>Total Police:</i>			<i>Rank of Brevet Inspector or higher:</i>		
Male	7564	90.4%	411	99.1%	
Female	801	9.6%	*4	0.9%	
Total	<u>8365</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>415</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	

(*3 Inspectors, 1 Chief Inspector)

30/6/86

<i>Total Police:</i>			<i>Rank of Brevet Inspector of higher:</i>		
Male	7900	88%	443	98.9%	
Female	1078	12%	*5	1.1%	
Total	<u>8978</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>448</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	

(*4 Inspectors, 1 Superintendent)

30/6/87

		<i>Total Police:</i>		<i>Rank of Inspector of higher:</i>	
Male		7878	87.7%	406	98.5%
Female	1102		12.3%	*6	1.5%
Total		<u>8980</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>412</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

(*4 Inspectors, 1 Chief Inspector, 1 Chief Superintendent)

30/6/88

		<i>Total Police:</i>		<i>Rank of Inspector of higher:</i>	
Male		7935	86.0%	402	98.3%
Female	1294		14.0%	*7	1.7%
Total		<u>9229</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>409</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

(*4 Inspectors, 2 Chief Inspectors, 1 Chief Superintendent)

30/6/89

		<i>Total Police:</i>		<i>Rank of Inspector of higher:</i>	
Male		8310	85.9%	444	98.2%
Female	1368		14.1%	*8	1.8%
Total		<u>9678</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>452</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

(*6 Inspectors, 1 Chief Inspector , 1 Chief Superintendent)

30/6/90

		<i>Total Police:</i>		<i>Rank of Inspector of higher:</i>	
Male		8498	85.4%	417	98.1%
Female	1450		14.6%	*8	1.9%
Total		<u>9948</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>425</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

(*6 Inspectors, 1 Chief Inspector , 1 Assistant Commissioner)

30/6/91

		<i>Total Police:</i>		<i>Rank of Inspector of higher:</i>	
Male		8515	85.5%	434	98.2%

Female	1442	14.5%	*8	1.8%
Total	<u>9957</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>442</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

(*6 Inspectors, 1 Chief Inspector , 1 Assistant Commissioner)

30/6/92

Total Police:

Rank of Inspector of higher:

Male	8459	85.6%		439	98.2%
Female	1421	14.4%	*8		1.8%
Total	<u>9880</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>447</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	

(*6 Inspectors, 1 Chief Inspector , 1 Assistant Commissioner)