Queensland Police Service Women’s Safety Project
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Why a Women’s Safety Project?
The Women’s Safety project was undertaken by the Queensland Police Service to enhance the safety of women in Queensland by focusing on the prevention of actual violence and the heightened fear of violence against women. The corporate goals of the Queensland Police Service are:
- to enhance to safety of people in Queensland;
- to prevent crime;
- to investigate crime and apprehend offenders;
- to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the police organisation;
- to enhance the professionalism of the Police Service;
- to restore public confidence in the Queensland Police Service.

As women comprise 52 per cent of our population, women's safety is definitely part of the mandate of the Queensland Police Service. The Queensland Police Service recognises that violence and the fear of violence are major social issues and that the community looks to the police to respond to and protect them from incidents of violence. The Women's Safety project was established to develop strategies which can be implemented and achieve a more effective response to violence when it occurs. These strategies must also, and more importantly, focus on crime prevention. In undertaking the Women's Safety project, the Queensland Police Service acknowledges that violence against women is a complex and multidimensional problem for crime prevention agencies. Women's safety, as well as the community's safety,
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requires the cooperation of the community, all levels of government, the media and the police.

Objectives
The objectives of the Women’s Safety project are:
• to have a coordinated approach to women’s safety in Queensland;
• to develop and implement inter-agency and community-based crime prevention strategies that enhance the safety of women in Queensland;
• to develop and implement policing strategies directed at enhancing women’s safety by the Queensland Police Service;
• to develop and implement strategies that provide compassionate and effective responses to the needs of victims of crime;
• to enhance the quality of life for women in Queensland by reducing unwarranted fears of crime;
• consideration of women with special needs;
• to establish an ongoing forum on women’s safety beyond the life of the Women’s Safety project.

Background
In October 1990 the Queensland Police Service began the Women’s Safety project with a project officer and now Manager, Acting Senior Sergeant Peter Pyke. In December 1990, Acting Sergeant Lisa Rosier joined the project and a ‘team’ approach to women’s safety developed.

A broad-based reference group was established, comprising senior representatives from local government and community agencies, as well as state government departments, including the Women’s Policy Branch. The reference group provides a forum for community and inter-agency input into the Women’s Safety project. It comprises over thirty agencies and community representatives and has proved invaluable in providing input on immediate concerns. The reference group is also a resource for contacts, networking and exchanging ideas outside the formal Women’s Safety project group. The Women’s Safety project has also developed links with the National Police Research Unit, the National Committee on Violence Against Women, the Federal Ministry for Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women, and all other police agencies in Australia.
Strategies
A number of strategies were initiated by the Women’s Safety project at its inception. While these strategies are being further developed, others are currently being developed for future implementation.

Community awareness campaign

In marketing the crime prevention messages of ending violence against women it is understood that media awareness campaigns and strategies should relate to and target different audience groups. At the same time, the community should be encouraged to assist police agencies in the prevention of violence against women.

In changing community attitudes, it is necessary to change:
- men's attitudes towards women;
- women's expectations of what is appropriate male behaviour towards them; and
- further, to empower women in unsafe situations.

The Women's Safety project chose the theme 'Women's Safety: A Community Responsibility' to encourage the community to take responsibility for violence and to reinforce the message that violence against women is legally and socially unacceptable. Such messages have been directed at the community through the cooperation of both the print and electronic media. The media coverage has included regular features in a leading newspaper covering topics such as the Women's Safety project, domestic violence, child abuse, home security and how the media can assist in empowering women by publishing positive articles and photographs.

When addressing the media, delivering community awareness lectures, or messages of empowerment to women, the project uses the 'team approach' ideology as the most effective means of promoting the issue of violence against women. The female-male team approach has been particularly useful in presenting community awareness messages. It is derived from the view that it may be patronising and inappropriate for men to inform and advise women on how to act to be safe from male violence and that women have equal rights and status to men in our community.

In line with the objectives of the Women's Safety project and the corporate goals of the Queensland Police Service, a statewide, regional training program-containing safety and security information for women, seniors and children, as well as the objectives and strategies developed-will be packaged in the form of a training and lecture kit for police. From this kit, information booklets may be extracted and disseminated to the community. This material will be an important resource for police and can be taught in schools, the workplace and in the community by uniformed police officers, thereby reinforcing the crime prevention and empowerment messages, particularly through uniformed policewomen addressing women in the community.

Up until 1991, the community awareness campaign has been at no cost to the Queensland Police Service. Channel 7 have offered to produce a
documentary on violence against women, and this proposal is currently under consideration.

**HomeSafe**

Violence in the home is acknowledged as the most common form of violence against women. Its impact is occasionally lethal and always harmful, not only to the victim, but to other family members or people involved. Other instances of violence in the home may include psychological, sexual, social and economic abuse, date rape, and the fear of victimisation by women who may be alone at home, whether by choice or by separation. All these factors can, in turn, affect women’s self-esteem and quality of life.

The Queensland Police Commissioner publicly announced a ‘go hard’, pro-arrest policy for police on domestic violence, through the formal departmental processes, as well as in the media through a press conference with the Police Minister in late 1990. The Police Commissioner instructed police to take a hard line with perpetrators of domestic violence by taking immediate action under the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989 (Qld) or, where evidence indicates that a criminal offence has occurred, the offender is to be charged in accordance with that evidence.

A departmental Domestic Violence working party was convened by the Women’s Safety project to identify and develop strategies that address operational, departmental, procedural or other difficulties police may experience in responding to domestic violence. The working party also had to develop recommendations for senior management so that they could resolve these problems.

The working party comprises a range of operational and specialised police officers from general duties, training, lecturing and administration areas as well as the Queensland Police Service Domestic Violence Unit, which has the full support of the working party. The aim of the working party is to provide a forum for reviewing the effectiveness of departmental policies, procedures and responses by police to domestic violence.

The community awareness campaign mentioned previously addresses all of these HomeSafe. It also provides information on home security, prowlers and the need for the community to assist in the prevention of violence against women, whether in the home, or on the street, by reporting acts of violence to the police.

**Senior citizens program**

The Seniors Program is currently being developed. It is designed to involve the police and community agencies (such as the Lions Club, Rotary and Community Watch) from local regions to enhance the safety and perceptions of safety of seniors citizens who may be more fearful due to isolation, loneliness or sensationalised media.

This seniors citizens program may include the ‘Grant-A-Wish to a Senior’ and ‘Adopt-A-Senior’ programs, with the objective of mobilising community support networks and reducing the isolation and fear of victimisation that may be felt by senior women living alone.
StreetSafe

Although it is recognised that most violence against women occurs within the home or family environment, street violence does exist and cannot be ignored. This strategy is aimed at providing a safer public environment for women in Queensland. StreetSafe was introduced quickly for the Christmas/New Year period to enhance the safety of women who were more likely to be active during the holiday season in the course of late-night shopping, working late, or attending social events.

StreetSafe involves the cooperation of both public and private sector agencies that are reputable, mobile 24-hours a day, and have radio or telephone communications that enable them to provide police with information of unlawful or suspicious behaviour. These agencies can assist members of the community-especially women-whose cars may have broken down, or who may need help and quick access to police services. StreetSafe agencies include South East Queensland Electricity Board (SEQEB), Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ), local government authorities, RAAF and military police, Wormald and MSS security companies, and the Transport Department.

Female commuters were provided with information on how to access the safest public transport systems with the cooperation of the Transport Department, including:

- Bus-Taxi-link: Brisbane City Council Bus and some private Bus Companies upon request would radio ahead for taxis meet women at the end of their destinations on some routes and where practicable would wait until women were safely in their cars before continuing;
- certain taxi ranks were recommended to women that were patrolled by taxi inspectors, supervisors and police as well as bus terminals that had inspectors, television monitors and frequent services; and
- police, railway employees and security firms patrolled trains and platforms. Queensland Rail had many of their female employees working to provide women commuters with a female face and an empowering message.

Five Women Only carparks were established at railway stations. These ‘safe’ carparks were selected and reserved for women and patrolled by security guards, donated by the MSS and Wormald security companies. The guards would report disturbances on trains and stations to police, as well as walking women and children from the stations to their cars. This strategy was designed to enhance women’s safety by creating designated ‘safe’ areas that women could have access to. It was also hoped that community safety awareness would also be increased.

StreetSafe was promoted through a community awareness campaign involving the media, promotional materials obtained from community sponsorship, involved agencies, and the police. StreetSafe is not intended to make women more fearful, nor to restrict women’s activities, but rather aims to provide women with a safer public environment. It is also aimed at
enhancing women’s safety and security over a period of higher public social activity. StreetSafe is being reviewed and is under further development.

**CabSafe**

CabSafe is a cooperative crime prevention strategy involving police, Transport Department and taxi industry resources. It is designed to enhance the safety of women using taxis and drivers in the taxi industry. The CabSafe strategy aims to prevent crimes of violence against women by enhancing effective regulation of the taxi industry, and by encouraging the industry to take responsibility for the safety of its passengers and drivers, particularly women. The CabSafe strategies involve:

- the implementation of a thorough system of criminal history checks of all renewals and applications for hire licences;
- ensuring that those drivers who have a history of crimes of violence against the community are removed from the industry;
- increased enforcement of licensing requirements;
- a better system of identification of drivers and vehicles. Proposals have been made to introduce postcard size photographs of the drivers with licence details, including the renewal date, to be prominently displayed within the vehicle, as well as the introduction of larger reflectorised numbers to be displayed on both sides of the taxi, including the front, rear and roof as well as inside the windscreen. A taxi can therefore be readily identified and if necessary tracked from the air should a passenger or driver’s safety be at risk;
- an Accredited Driver Scheme is an option to be developed and fostered by the taxi industry, whereby women passengers, or other taxi users could request an accredited driver when a pre-booking is made. Accredited drivers could be selected from those who have been with the company for a certain number of years, have no history of misbehaviour, and are trustworthy and competent drivers who have passed a driver education course;
- A Driver of the Month Award could be fostered by the taxi industry. The Brisbane business community has offered support for this scheme in the form of an award and prize presentation.

The CabSafe strategy has been developed with great interest and support from both the Transport Department and the Taxi Council. Once the necessary changes to regulations and history checks have been completed, these sorts of measures can be enhanced by community awareness and with the participating agencies involved, will offer the community and the drivers a safer form of transport.
CitiSafe

CitiSafe is currently being developed with the cooperation of the Brisbane City Council, Queensland Police Service, and community agencies. It is based on the Canadian Metrac System and will be designed for implementation in Brisbane and other Metropolitan areas, as well as country centres, the workplace, university campuses and schools. CitiSafe may include safety audits of problem areas (such as homes, parks and buildings) to ensure existing and future town plans consider the safety of the community, particularly that of women.

A proposal that safety audit kits (when developed), and safety and security information be sent to householders and accompany rates notices is being considered. This information would also be available upon request at council offices. It is important to acknowledge the assistance and shared information given to the Women’s Safety project by Victoria’s ‘Safety, Security and Women’ initiative to the development of CitiSafe.

Conclusion

The Queensland Police Service Women’s Safety project has received support from the community. This is evidenced by a number of calls and letters received from other departments requesting information and assistance in developing similar projects. The cooperation and readiness of areas of the media, agencies, departments and the community to become involved in the prevention of crimes against women has been encouraging. For example, a Radio Program Director, John Miller, volunteered his services to act as a media consultant and chairperson of ‘EXPO 88’ and Sir Llewellyn Edwards has offered written support for the project.

The Queensland Police Service acknowledges that strategies designed to enhance the safety of women will also enhance the safety of all community members and it is critical that crime prevention agencies be at the forefront of elimination of violence against women and the community. It is also clear that there is a need for police and community agencies to work in partnership to develop and implement crime prevention strategies at local, state and national levels. Violence has no boundaries, and is not unique to any one particular state. These objectives can be achieved when all are working towards a common goal, that is, the safety of women and all community members.

Addendum

In July 1991, Ms Dianne Jeans, Principal Policy Officer for the Queensland Police Service became manager of the Women’s Safety Project, which is also staffed by Sergeant Lisa Rosier and Nerida McIntosh.

The Women’s Safety Project identified as main priority strategies for 1991/92 to develop and implement: Safety Audits and Step Ahead crime prevention material on personal safety.
Safety Audits
Safety Audits are about the community, local government, police, businesses, the South East Queensland Electricity Board, Telecom and others working together to inspect their neighbourhood and determine the actions necessary to make the community safer. Safety Audits are about taking back public space and are a simple, practical community-based crime prevention program.

Process
Small community teams are formed to undertake a Safety Audit of the local neighbourhood. Aspects of the environment which make community members feel unsafe are noted and strategies to improve safety in the neighbourhood are suggested. As there are many different perceptions of fear, it is important that each team has a balance of men, women, students and the elderly—each opinion is significant.

Safety Audit was successfully piloted in the Morningside Police Division. The action plan developed from the Safety Audit process in this area has been acted upon by the relevant authorities and the issues noted by the community teams were also addressed.

As a result of the successful pilot, the Queensland Police Service developed a Safety Audit kit for statewide distribution which is due to be launched in late 1992. The Queensland Government has also announced the allocation of funds to enable the Safety Audit concept to be introduced across the state. Safety Audit will then be administered by a unit within the Administrative Services Department, who would also coordinate activities and work needs as identified by the Safety Audit processes.

Step Ahead Brochures
As a result of increasing demand by the community to access accurate and standardised information relating to the area of personal safety, the Women’s Safety Project has developed eight different brochures in the ‘Step Ahead Safety Information for Women’ series: Safety in the Car; Safety Out and About; Safety Around the Home; Safety on Public Transport; Safety in the Workplace; Safety for Teenagers; Self Confidence and Self Defence; and Rape and Sexual Assault.

These brochures emphasise the need to develop a safety plan to address areas of personal fear or concern. For example, individuals are encouraged to identify situations which make them feel unsafe and to think about options available to them should the envisaged situation arise.

The Step Ahead brochures were launched in late July 1992. Initially, 50,000 of each in the series was printed and distributed. However, due to the demand and popularity of the brochures—supplies were exhausted within six weeks—reprints have been necessary. The Step Ahead brochures are being used in some schools as part of a personal development program and have also been converted to braille.