

## Gender equity in Australian and New Zealand policing: a five-year review

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the impact of equity measures in Australian and New Zealand policing, involving nine police departments, from 2003/4 to 2007/8. The findings were mixed. Overall, the number of sworn female officers in both countries continued to trend slowly upwards, with an average of 24.3 per cent in Australia and 17.1 per cent in New Zealand in 2007/8. However, recruit numbers appeared to have peaked around 33 per cent and were in decline in most departments where data were available. Women continued to move up the ranks in all departments, but there were still very few women*

*in senior ranks. Although women were not separating at a higher rate than men, they were more likely than men to resign. While more positive than earlier appraisals of equity in Australia, the findings continue to reflect inadequate data collection that would address long-term inequity issues. The labour force participation rate of women in Australia has increased significantly over the last few decades. However, women are not necessarily focusing on traditional career paths but rather see employment opportunities as one of many options that include family and lifestyle balance. Nevertheless, it is argued here that police organisations should remain committed to gender equity. Affirmative action and other gender equity strategies are considered necessary to encourage greater participation by women, for the benefits to women of a policing career and for the wider good of the community and police organisations themselves. Better diagnostic data and visible commitment are required to support this objective.*

### BACKGROUND

Women in policing are of increasing interest to criminologists (Natarajan, 2008) and there are a number of good reasons for studying the status of women police. That

gender equity is a desirable goal can be argued on social justice principles; not only in terms of 'the equal performance capacity of women' (Prenzler & Hayes, 2000, p. 20) but also because there is a social justice argument that female offenders and victims of crime should have the right to access female police officers when they choose (Natarajan). As well, many of the problems of modern policing — an aggressive patrol style, abuse of power, excessive force and an emphasis on arrest and charge — are associated with a traditional male-dominated culture (Herbert, 2001). That women are less likely to abuse their power and attract allegations of misconduct has long been an argument for employing more women in police organisations (Brereton, 1999; Lonsway, Wood, & Spillar, 2002). In Australia, successive inquiries into corruption and police misconduct marginally improved the status of women in policing when two influential inquiries concluded 'there was a direct association between increasing numbers of women police officers and reducing levels of corruption' (Fleming & Lafferty, 2003, p. 47). In an era where the emphasis on customer service in policing has become paramount (Fleming & McLaughlin, 2010), evidence does suggest that women are more likely to have a more 'service-orientated commitment' to policing than their male counterparts (see Prenzler, 1995, p. 265). However, as a rationale for employing more women, these points are argued to be less significant than gender equity initiatives (Martin & Jurik, 2007) that seek to address the unequal treatment of women who have 'a history of marginalisation' (Prenzler & Hayes, p. 20).

Policing is an occupation that has traditionally been intensely hostile to women. Women were excluded from policing until the early twentieth century, and in the following decades they were employed in very small numbers. The lack of women police today in both the United Kingdom

(UK) and elsewhere is in part a 'legacy of historical recruitment patterns' (Home Office, 2010, p. 3). While there is a large body of research showing that women have the same capability as men in carrying out the physical demands of police work (Lunneborg, 1989), the arguments for denying women access to meaningful law enforcement careers were centred around the notion that women possessed 'inherent physical and emotional weaknesses' (see Seklecki & Paynich, 2007, p. 18). As a result, women police were usually restricted to working in traditional social work type roles (Brown & Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006). From the 1960s, police managers often evaded their responsibilities to women police under new equity legislation until forced to do so by legal test cases (Martin, 1990). However, in some areas, where women were integrated into work areas such as patrol work, they experienced significant problems of sexual harassment and informal discrimination in deployment and promotion (Brown & Heidensohn). Women police are still grossly under-represented in non-democratic or emerging democracies (Natarajan, 2008) and even the most advanced democracies evince a legacy of resistance to women. Reliable statistics are hard to come by — largely because of the difficulty of accessing and comparing data — but in most developed democracies it seems that the percentage of sworn women police remains below 25 per cent (Home Office; Natarajan, pp. 32ff). There is an ongoing need, therefore, for gender equity initiatives such as affirmative action, in areas such as targeted promotions, application assistance and internal support groups.

Numerical gender equality is an appropriate aspirational goal for all police departments, including equity across police organisational sub-units. However, a planned and measured approach is required

in support of this goal. A number of pioneering studies have led to the development of frameworks for evaluating the integration of women police. In the UK, Jones (1986) organised her book around four key chapters: 'Entering the Police', 'Doing "the Job"', 'Expectations and Career Choices' and 'Getting On'. In the US, Martin (1990) focused on key gateposts of a police career: recruitment, training, deployment, promotion and separation. This approach may seem obvious, but one of Martin's findings was that police departments were not collecting the most basic data in these areas in a way that would allow for an appropriate assessment of the position and experiences of women police across a career span and across a range of police functions. Prenzler's exploratory study of equal opportunity in policing in Australia came to the same conclusion (Prenzler, 1995, p. 266).

In a 1999 survey of the eight police departments in Australia, Prenzler and Hayes (2000) adopted this same approach. As in 1993, the authors found the 'fragmented nature of the data' made inter-jurisdictional comparisons difficult 'beyond the basic elements of recruitment and numbers of sworn officers' (Prenzler & Hayes, p. 24). The 1999 study found that nationally, in a five-year period, the percentage of sworn female officers increased from 13.7 per cent in 1994 to 15.2 per cent in 1998. In most departments it was clear that women were moving up the ranks, albeit at a very slow pace. There were very few formal complaints of harassment and discrimination. Women were separating at about the same rate as men, but most men were retiring while most women were resigning. There was very little information available on deployment. In terms of recruits, the percentage of female recruits had been increasing at a faster rate but appeared to be levelling out at about 30 per cent. There was also considerable divergence between departments. For example,

in 1998 women made up 42.6 per cent of recruits in New South Wales but only 12.1 per cent in Western Australia. Low female recruit numbers in Western Australia and Victoria were largely attributable at this time to a tough obstacle course test and a generally hostile management culture (Prenzler, 1995; Sugden, 2003). These findings exemplify many of the characteristic achievements and problems associated with the status of women in developed democracies (Martin & Jurik, 2007).

## METHOD

The current study updates Prenzler and Hayes' (2000) Australian study and includes New Zealand. A five-year period was chosen in order to provide a picture of change over a reasonable time period without making excessive demands for data. Data collection was carried out across 2009 and into 2010, from two primary sources. Study 1 involved collecting data from police annual reports from 2003/4 to 2007/8 on the numbers of male and female officers at all ranks. Study 2 involved writing to the directors of all the police human resource management departments seeking information not normally contained in annual reports. For each year from 2003/4 to 2007/8 we asked for:

1. Male and female application and recruitment numbers.
2. Male and female promotion application and promotion numbers.
3. Complaint or incident data, by gender, in relation to sex discrimination and/or sexual harassment, and the form of resolution.
4. Male and female separation numbers by gender and reasons for separating.
5. Male and female rates of deployment across sections (eg, general duties, detectives, specialist squads, administration).

The letters of request for Study 2 were sent

in April 2009 to the nine police departments: New Zealand; the Australian Federal Police; and the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. All departments except Victoria provided data by January 2010. As was the case in the 1999 study, Victoria Police refused to supply the information on the grounds that the department could not justify the resources of its personnel to process the data requests. It also could not see how the findings would provide 'additional benefit' to the organisation (Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee, letter to the authors, November 20, 2009)

As noted above, previous gender equity surveys of police in Australia have found that departments had inadequate data-collection processes (Prenzler, 1995; Prenzler & Hayes, 2000). This limited the capacity of researchers (and presumably the organisations themselves) to assess the progress of women police and the impact of gender-equity initiatives. In relation to work on equal employment opportunity legislation in 1997, Prenzler and Hayes noted that the initial application of equal employment management plans and evaluation reports in Australian policing were limited by lack of information. They noted, however, that it was expected 'that new computerized personnel systems would soon bring these two together' (Prenzler & Hayes, p. 22). Work conducted in 1999 revealed that this had not been the case: 'No agency could supply all the data requested and most had to make special exertions for what was provided' (Prenzler & Hayes, p. 23). The present study found that computer-based information systems were still not being utilised to collect sufficient data for gender-based evaluation.

Consequently, in the collection of data for the present study, there are a number of inconsistencies and data gaps that limit the

overall analysis. For example, in their annual reports, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Federal Police either did not report male/female recruit numbers or did not report them consistently over time. New South Wales did not report rank data, and Tasmania did not differentiate ranks by sex. The Australian Federal Police confuse the issue somewhat by employing the term 'federal agent' for all officers. For Study 2, only three of the responding police jurisdictions were able to supply male and female application and recruitment numbers. Agency-supplied information relating to sex discrimination and sexual harassment complaints was also sparse in terms of the information provided. Statistics supplied on questions such as deployment and separations came in very different formats which made analysis and inter-jurisdictional comparisons difficult. Overall, the data are patchy and it has been difficult to present a coherent and comparable picture across the jurisdictions. It is not possible to fill in the gaps in the data by other means. At the same time, it should be said that most departments supplied information in a cooperative and timely manner, and some appeared to go to considerable lengths to retrieve the data. Despite the limitations, the findings have allowed for a useful picture to be formed around key dimensions of the status of women, and have also helped identify where more information is required.

## FINDINGS

### Study 1: annual reports

Table 1 shows the percentages of women police in all departments in 2003/4 and 2007/8. The total for Australia for 2007/8 was 24.30 per cent, representing an increase of 2.52 per cent over the five-year period or

**Table 1: Sworn female officers, Australia and New Zealand**

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>2003/4 % women police</i>	<i>2007/8 % women police</i>	<i>% change</i>
Australian Federal Police	24.29	22.00	-2.29
New South Wales	24.52	26.38	+1.86
Northern Territory*	29.00	28.20	-0.80
Queensland	21.81	25.10	+3.29
South Australia	22.91	24.20	+1.29
Tasmania	22.81	26.04	+3.23
Victoria	18.94	23.48	+4.54
Western Australia	16.04	19.73	+3.69
Australia Total	21.78	24.30	+2.52
New Zealand	15.68	17.14	+1.46

Notes: 2007/8: Total female *N* Australia = 13,868, total female *N* New Zealand = 1,449.

\* Includes Aboriginal Community Police Officers (ACPOs) and auxiliary officers.

a 0.5 per cent per annum increase on average. There was, however, considerable variation between departments, with the Northern Territory having the highest percentage at 28.20 per cent (including ACPOs and auxiliaries) and Western Australia having the lowest percentage at 19.73 per cent. Changes over time were also variable, with the largest increase of 4.54 per cent in Victoria, and the Federal Police reducing in numbers by 2.29 per cent. In New Zealand there was a 1.46 per cent increase from 15.68 per cent to 17.10 per cent.

Table 2 reports the female recruit percentages for 2003/4 and 2007/8 for the five departments that include the male/female recruitment figures in their annual reports. For 2007–2008, marked variations were apparent between, on the one hand, Tasmania with 42.0 per cent and Victoria with 40.0 per cent and, on the other hand, New Zealand with 23.9 per cent. Over the five years there was an 11.95 per cent decline of female recruits in South Australia and a 2.00 per cent increase in Victoria, and an overall decline of 2.92 per cent for the other jurisdictions where data were available. In New

Zealand, there was a 2.74 per cent decline. There were only minor fluctuations within departmental figures on an annualised basis.

Table 3 summarises the percentage of females in major rank categories for Australian departments and New Zealand in 2003/4 and 2007/8 as outlined in the respective annual reports. New South Wales is not included because no rank data were reported for both periods. Tasmania is not included because rank data were not broken

**Table 2: Female recruits, Australia and New Zealand**

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>2003/4 % female</i>	<i>2007/8 % female</i>	<i>% change</i>
Queensland	35.67	33.66	-2.01
South Australia	39.86	27.91	-11.95
Tasmania	50.79	42.03	-8.76
Victoria	37.96	39.96	+2.00
New Zealand	26.61	23.87	-2.74

Note:

2007/8: Total female *N* Australia = 13,868, total female *N* New Zealand = 1,449.

**Table 3: Rank, four Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand**

<i>Rank</i>	<i>2003/4 % female</i>	<i>2007/8 % female</i>	<i>% change</i>
<i>Northern Territory</i>			
Executive and commissioned officers	16.33	21.43	+5.10
Non-commissioned officers	9.36	22.86	+13.50
Constables and recruits <sup>a</sup>	22.34	21.24	-1.10
<i>Victoria</i>			
Executive officers	9.09	18.18	+9.09
Commissioned officers	3.64	5.19	+1.55
Non-commissioned officers	6.54	8.80	+2.27
Constables	17.85	27.67	+9.83
<i>Queensland</i>			
Executive officers	6.67	13.33	+6.67
Commissioned officers	6.29	5.65	-0.64
Non-commissioned officers	9.73	13.77	+4.04
Constables	27.47	30.99	+3.52
<i>South Australia</i>			
Executive officers	16.67	22.22	+5.56
Commissioned officers	4.76	9.63	+4.87
Non-commissioned officers	7.29	11.27	+3.99
Constables	26.74	29.55	+2.80
<i>New Zealand</i>			
Executive officers	0.00	0.00	0.00
Commissioned officers	7.08	5.15	-1.93
Non-commissioned officers	6.02	9.23	+3.21
Constables	18.17	19.61	+1.45

*Note:*

<sup>a</sup> Disaggregated figures not available.

down by gender in both periods, and Western Australia is not included because the reporting format did not allow for reliable comparisons with the other Australian departments. The Australian Federal Police do not have traditional ranks — every officer is a ‘federal agent’. These figures are shown separately in Table 4. In terms of the combined ranks in Table 3, ‘executive officers’ generally include commissioners, assistant and deputy commissioners; ‘commissioned officers’ include superintendents and inspectors; ‘non-commissioned officers’

include sergeants and senior sergeants; and ‘constables’ include senior constables and constables. The results are again mixed, but with a clear upward direction in most cases.

### **Study 2: department survey**

The following sections report the data supplied by responding police departments. The complexity of the data in differing formats meant that not all data supplied could be reported. In most cases the most revealing data are included.

**Table 4: Rank, Australian Federal Police**

Rank	2003/4 % female	2007/8 % female	% change
Senior Executive Service	14.81	12.24	-2.57
Band 1	0.00	0.00	0.00
Band 2	27.68	22.03	-5.65
Band 3	30.04	23.69	-6.35
Band 4	26.60	24.49	-2.11
Band 5	30.17	21.33	-8.84
Band 6	20.43	24.32	+3.89
Band 7	20.40	20.41	+0.01
Band 8	20.41	15.69	-4.72
Band 9	14.79	15.47	+0.68

**Application**

Only three departments were able to provide total male and female application and recruitment rates from 2003/4 to 2007/8.

These are shown in Table 5. There were significantly fewer women recruits than applicants in the Northern Territory (-4.35 per cent) and significantly more female recruits than applicants in Tasmania (+5.28 per cent).

**Promotion**

Table 6 combines data from 2003/4 to 2007/8, and shows total male and female applications for promotion, as well as promotion numbers, for three departments that supplied data. Significantly more females were successful in their applications in New South Wales (+4.67 per cent) and Tasmania (+8.57 per cent).

**Sex discrimination and sexual harassment**

Departments supplied data on this topic in very different forms. Overall, the complaints data indicated very small numbers of

**Table 5: Applicants and recruits, 2003/4 to 2007/8**

Jurisdiction	% F applicants	% M applicants	% F recruits	% M recruits	% change	$\chi^2$
Northern Territory <sup>a</sup>	23.68 (635)	76.32 (2,047)	19.33 (92)	80.67 (384)	-4.35	$p < 0.05$
Tasmania	31.92 (544)	68.08 (1,160)	37.20 (154)	62.80 (260)	+5.28	$p < 0.05$
Western Australia	24.67 (1,669)	75.32 (5,095)	25.88 (469)	74.12 (1,343)	+1.21	NS

Note:

<sup>a</sup> NT figures do not include Aboriginal Community Police Officers (ACPOs) and auxiliary officers.

**Table 6: Applications and promotions, 2003/4 to 2007/8**

Jurisdiction	% F applications	% M applications	% F promotions	% M promotions	% change	$\chi^2$
New South Wales	11.70 (2,548)	88.30 (19,221)	16.37 (520)	83.63 (2,656)	+4.67	$p < 0.01$
Tasmania <sup>a</sup>	8.30 (63)	91.70 (696)	16.87 (14)	83.13 (69)	+8.57	$p < 0.01$
Western Australia	9.45 (444)	90.55 (4,255)	11.05 (102)	88.95 (821)	+1.60	NS

Note:

<sup>a</sup> Data for Tasmania cover 4.5 years from 1 January 2004.

formal complaints or notifications, with the large majority of complaints being made by women. Complaints by women averaged between 5 and 15 per year in the larger departments. Very limited (and somewhat vague) information was available on the resolution of complaints. Where information was clear, most cases were resolved with an apology, informally or with 'no action taken'.

### Separations

Table 7 shows male/female separations for the four reasons that were able to be matched across five Australian departments that supplied data for the five years. The average male/female separation rate of 77.04/22.96 per cent approximates the average male/female proportion of sworn officers at 75.80/24.20 (from Table 1). However, males were most likely to retire, die or be dismissed; while females were likely to resign at a slightly higher rate per capita. These features were fairly consistent across the departments. Only New South Wales included 'Resignation — Family/Domestic' as a reason for separating. In New South Wales, for the period, women accounted for 17.86 per cent of all officers who separated; men made up 82.14 per cent. For 'Resignation — Family/Domestic' reasons, 7 female officers (38.89

per cent) separated, whilst 11 males (61.11) separated.

### Deployment

Data on deployment were supplied in very different forms. Sample data are supplied for Western Australia in Table 8. Overall, the available figures indicate a fairly wide distribution of women across a range of duty types, with only a few cases of high levels of female representation in traditional roles, such as 'domestic violence and victim support liaison officer' or low levels of female representation in other areas, such as in 'tactical operations', 'duty officer', 'corporate service', 'dog section' and 'counter terrorism and state protection'. It was encouraging to see strong male representation in areas such as personnel, human resource services and training.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from this study support the findings from previous studies on the status of women in policing, both in Australia and overseas (Home Office, 2010; Martin & Jurik, 2007; Natarajan, 2008; Prenzler & Hayes 2000). A first key point to reiterate is that data quality was very uneven, and the available data were often not suited for

**Table 7: Separations, Tasmania, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Federal Police, 2003/4 to 2007/8**

<i>Reason for separation</i>	<i>Total separations</i>	<i>Total female separations</i>	<i>% female</i>	<i>Total male separations</i>	<i>% male</i>
Retired	814	42	5.16	772	94.84
Resigned	4,728	1,248	26.40	3,480	73.60
Death	92	12	13.04	80	86.96
Dismissed	85	11	12.94	74	87.06
Total	5,719	1,313	22.96	4,406	77.04

*Note:*

Dismissed figures exclude Western Australia.

**Table 8: Female deployment, Western Australia, 2003/4 to 2007/8**

<i>Role</i>	<i>% F</i>	<i>% M</i>
<i>Total sworn officers</i>	18.28	81.72
Administration	21.86	78.14
Corruption prevention and investigation	15.73	84.27
Counter terrorism and State protection	9.40	90.60
Metropolitan support	19.03	80.97
North Metropolitan Region	19.06	80.94
Regional WA Region	16.80	83.20
South Metropolitan Region	20.70	79.30
Specialist crime	12.52	87.48
State intelligence	31.21	68.79
Traffic and operations	15.83	84.17

*Note:*

Average total police over 5 years  $N = 5,235$ .

analysis related to important gender variables. Ideally, male/female data across all elements of the police organisational profile would be collected by all departments as a matter of routine, both for diagnostic and accountability purposes.

Overall, the Australian and New Zealand data showed steady small increases in the proportion of female officers employed. In Australia, the proportion of women police increased from 21.78 per cent in 2003/4 to 24.30 per cent in 2007/8. As noted, there was variation between departments, with the Northern Territory having the highest percentage at 28.20 per cent (including ACPOs and auxiliaries) and Western Australia having the lowest percentage at 19.73 per cent. At the same time, Western Australia and also Victoria showed considerable improvement from the 1990s when sex discrimination was entrenched in these departments. Earlier studies of these changes suggest that the main causal factor was the appointment of Commissioners

who were supportive of gender equity policies and removed barriers to recruitment (Prenzler & Hayes, 2000; Sugden, 2003). One surprise finding was the decrease in the proportion of women in the Australian Federal Police, normally associated with progressive gender equity policies (Prenzler & Hayes). In New Zealand there has also been a slow increase in overall female representation, but the proportion of women police officers remained relatively low at 17.14 per cent in 2007/8.

In Australia, available data show female recruits are still hovering around one-third, and there were worrying signs of a decline in most departments. A decline in female recruit numbers was also apparent in New Zealand, with only 23.87 per cent in 2007/8. Only three agencies were able to report male/female application and recruitment rates, with one recruiting females significantly above the female application rate. On a more positive note, women were found to be slowly but surely moving up the ranks. The rate of increase varied in most cases and there were declines at some ranks in some jurisdictions: commissioned officers in Queensland and New Zealand for example, and in the Senior Executive Service in the Australian Federal Police. However, a general improvement was apparent. At the time of writing, Australia's first and only female police commissioner had recently retired. New South Wales and Queensland had female deputy commissioners and all jurisdictions had senior women (commander/assistant commissioner) in post. New Zealand Police had no women currently at assistant commissioner or general manager level. Despite this improvement, women police in Australia, as in the United Kingdom, are grossly under-represented at the higher ranks (Home Office, 2010).

Only three agencies were able to report male/female application and promotion

rates, with two recruiting females at a rate significantly above their application rate. Women also appeared to be fairly well distributed across police duties and organisational elements, with only a few cases of possible residual gender stereotyping. Although women were not separating at a higher rate than men (relative to their overall representation), they were resigning at a slightly higher rate than men. There was a problem with insufficient information about why women were resigning. 'Family reasons' is an explanation that needs to be investigated. Recent research in Australia may throw some light on this issue. The labour force participation rate of women in Australia has increased significantly over the last few decades, from 48 per cent in 1986 to 58 per cent in 2006, for example (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009). However, Andres and Wyn (2010) found that women leaving high school in 1991 — 'Gen. Y' — were redefining notions of what it means to have a career. With the increasing complexity of links between education and employment, and as employment is seen as less secure, a career is being seen more as a 'personal journey' than a single pathway within a single occupation or organisation. Traditional values relating to family and homemaking are now being considered as part of a stronger life-work balance scenario which, for many, precludes the notion of a long-term or single career (Wynn, Smith, Stokes, Tyler, & Woodman, 2008).

This scenario has direct implications for Australian policing. In the past women were attracted to policing 'for the security and relatively high remuneration' it provided (Lunneborg, 1989, pp. 18, 84, 87; Swanston, 1983). If life-work balance becomes a greater priority for women, a lifelong role in policing may not remain as an attractive option regardless of pay and conditions. If the trajectory suggested in this present study continues, the proportion

of sworn women police will peak at one-third or below over the next decade. After that it will decline as a result of female recruitment currently peaking at about the same rate (and possibly declining) and higher resignation rates. The figures suggest that the situation is even worse in New Zealand. In both countries women will never get close to parity at the sworn level without significant increases in recruit numbers. The effect of the low recruitment rate is obviously exacerbated by the resignation rate. These two factors subsequently reduce the pool of women eligible for promotion. The New South Wales respondent to the survey neatly summed up the problem as follows:

To increase women's representation to 50 per cent in 10 years would require all future attestations to be at least 65 per cent female (based on current attrition and recruitment levels).

The situation underscores the need for police departments to investigate affirmative action options to recruit and retain more women. It is well known that removing discriminatory barriers — such as height and age restrictions and physical obstacle course tests — will most likely lead to increases in the number of female recruits (Martin & Jurik, 2007, p. 56). A good first step would involve national audits of all procedures for recruitment, training, deployment, promotion and separation to ensure there are no remaining formal barriers to equality. Such an audit would in all likelihood insist on some standardisation of data collection, both in terms of what is collected and how it is recorded. Such information would alert interested parties to discrepancies and gender issues. Information, for example on women's representation in specialist roles, ethnicity, and

part-time/work-share arrangements, would also provide a broader picture of the contemporary police organisation. Information collected by gender on such issues as discipline complaints, public satisfaction ratings, sickness/absence rates and declines in recruitment would allow some co-relational analyses which, in turn, would allow academics and practitioners alike to consider the implications of increasing (or not) the numbers of women in police organisations. As part of the audit process, surveys would presumably also highlight any cultural barriers and provide a better picture of harassment and discrimination issues.

In Australia, with eight jurisdictions, the audit process would be best managed by a national agency located in the federal Department of Justice, or perhaps by the relatively newly established Australia and New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA). ANZPAA is a joint initiative of the Australian and New Zealand Police Ministers and Commissioners. It provides strategic policy and research advice and secretariat services on cross-jurisdictional policing initiatives to help achieve policing excellence (Australia and New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency [ANZPAA], 2010). The agency could have a permanent role in monitoring and promoting gender equity in policing. A national agency could also review affirmative action options, make recommendations for strategies that could be implemented by departments, and encourage experimentation and show-casing of innovative strategies in particular departments (Home Office, 2010). Examples include targeted recruitment, flexible employment, childcare assistance, rejoining policies and mentoring programmes (Prenzler & Hayes, 2000). There are also often lessons to be learnt from high-achieving departments. A closer examination of gender policies in higher achieving departments might, for example, reveal a

number of widely applicable effective strategies.

## CONCLUSION

This survey of the status of women in Australian and New Zealand policing revealed a complex if somewhat limited picture. On the one hand, the proportion of women police was found to be increasing and women were also moving up the ranks and out across organisational elements. At the same time, recruitment levels appear stuck around one-third at best and there is a problem with women resigning at a rate above their representation in the ranks. The situation indicates the need for a much more explicit commitment to implementing affirmative action policies and experimenting with different equity strategies to bring women's representation in the police closer to that of the general population. As Fleming and Lafferty (2003, p. 46) have noted, in their discussion about the distinctive characteristics of police organisations that potentially impact on gender equity issues, 'measures explicitly designed to achieve greater equity may not in practice be the ones that are most significant in the achievement of more equitable employment outcomes'. Even if we accept that there are early indications that many Australians are less likely to think about long-term careers in occupations that may impact heavily on families and work-life balance now, and in the future, the arguments for increasing the number of women in policing remain. The systematic recording of numerical data across a broader range of variables would allow for a more complete examination of the relevant issues to take place across all jurisdictions. A more diagnostic and experimental approach towards the recruitment and retention of policewomen in what has become an increasingly service-orientated occupation across all organisations, and a visible commitment to gender equity,

would at least ensure that departments are doing all that can be done, in a context of fairness and equity, to support women's participation in all areas of policing.

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