Report on a page

The community expects a lot from police. The Queensland Police Service (QPS) plays a pivotal role in keeping our communities safe 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. However, it is facing increased pressures including a growing demand for its services. The pressures stem from changes in population and the nature of crimes; new legislation and government initiatives; and major challenges, such as the response by governments to the pandemic, natural disasters, and international sporting events, like the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In this audit, we examined how effectively and efficiently QPS identifies and manages demand for its services.

Understanding demand for service

QPS does not have a complete picture of all demand for its services. It has a demand model, but the information it currently collects is mainly based on responding to calls for service (assistance). It does not capture the time officers spend on proactive policing, administrative tasks, and non-frontline work. This limits its ability to effectively prioritise the efforts of its officers to meet overall current demand. It also limits its ability to forecast and plan for a workforce to meet future demand. QPS has not effectively identified emerging and changing demands or considered the impact these will have on its resourcing.

Planning a workforce for the future

QPS does not have a strategic approach to workforce planning. Its workforce growth target is not informed by evidence-based analysis of demand for services. It stems from a 2020 Queensland Government election commitment to increase the QPS workforce by 2,025 (including 1,450 police officers) by the year 2025. QPS is not on track to meet this target, as attracting and retaining staff is a challenge. Higher-than-expected attrition rates, a change in society's perceptions of policing as a career, and recent shortages of labour resources have all contributed. QPS has started implementing strategies to attract and retain more staff. It has also merged some central commands and restructured business units to change some roles to free up police officers to focus on frontline services. But it needs a strategic approach to growing, optimising, and upskilling its workforce if it is to meet future demand.

Responding to calls for service

A major part of current demand for policing involves responding to calls requesting police services. Since 2016, the calls have increased by 30 per cent, with the police officer head count increasing over the same period by 25 per cent. QPS prioritises its efforts towards responding to these calls, based on level of urgency. While it attends most calls requiring attention, it does not meet its response time targets set for high-priority calls. In 2021–22, QPS aimed to respond to 85 per cent of its high-priority calls from 000 within 12 minutes. But it met this target only 78.2 per cent of the time. Responsiveness varies between regions due to factors such as remoteness, distance, and the availability of resources.

Rostering police resources to meet demand

QPS rostering practices vary across regions and often do not match demand for service. The greatest number of reported incidents occurs between 5:00 pm and 11:00 pm, particularly at weekends, but the availability of officers does not align with these peak times. During high-demand periods, frontline officers typically spend less time at incidents. QPS has not assessed whether this results in compromised quality of service provided during these periods.