

Managing the mental health of Queensland Police employees (Report 2: 2017–18).

Tabled 10 October 2017.

Slide 1: Welcome

This is a presentation about the performance audit report on the effectiveness of the Queensland Police Service in managing the mental health of its employees.

Please note this is a summary, the full report can be read on our website.

Slide 2: Audit objective

In this audit, we assessed whether the Queensland Police Service—QPS—is effective in preventing mental illness and monitoring and managing the mental health of its employees. We looked at its effectiveness in promoting and monitoring mental health, preventing mental illness, and managing illness when it does occur.

Slide 3: Context

*Please note—if you or anyone you know experience mental health issues or a personal crisis please contact the organisations that may help, listed on page 1 of our report.

Some context...

Policing is a people service—it's about police interacting with the public, often in tense, distressing, and challenging circumstances. These interactions can affect mental health and wellbeing. Coupled with the stressors that impact on the wider population, police are considered more susceptible to mental illness, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Slide 4: Our conclusions

We concluded that the QPS has many of the necessary elements in place to effectively monitor and manage the mental health of its employees and prevent mental illness.

In our report on page 6, Figure A shows our assessment of the maturity of the QPS mental health framework based on beyondblue's *Good practice framework for mental health and wellbeing in first responder organisations*.

We found several areas for QPS to improve the maturity of its framework including better implementing, promoting and coordinating the framework's various elements to improve the effectiveness of its mental health services.

Monitoring the use and effectiveness of support services, and other risk factors, will also inform better decision-making.

In particular, QPS needs to focus on developing its strategy, exploring ways to proactively monitor the mental health of general duties officers, and improve employee trust.

Slide 5: Our conclusions on strategy, trust and general duties staff

Regarding our specific conclusions...

Strategy:

The QPS has an opportunity to improve employee trust by effectively implementing its new *Our People Matter* health and wellbeing strategy, once developed, which will take considerable ongoing effort to implement. The challenge for senior leadership will be building and sustaining support for the strategy and other wellbeing initiatives.

Trust and confidentiality:

The QPS needs to increase the level of trust that employees have in its mental health services as some are reluctant to seek help. Employees across the service raised concerns about the potential for breaches of confidentiality, and some believe their career would be at risk. This is despite staff being required to maintain confidentiality under the QPS and professional codes of ethics.

General duties staff:

QPS is not proactively monitoring the mental health of its General duties staff, who are the biggest part of the QPS workforce. They are front line officers who are often the least experienced but almost always the first to respond to emergency situations. Extending monitoring to cover them has potentially significant benefits, but presents logistical challenges. We are not aware of any police jurisdiction in Australia that proactively monitors the mental health of its general duties officers on an ongoing basis.

Slide 6: Our other conclusions

Regarding our other conclusions...

Recruitment and screening:

The QPS has in place effective recruitment and employee screening processes.

Training:

The QPS offers a wide range of training in mental health and resilience, but, it cannot demonstrate that the training is effective or that employees attend where required. The training is largely uncoordinated, and attendance records are not up to date.

Managers and leaders:

QPS needs to do more to educate, train and equip managers and leaders to help them monitor and manage the mental health of the workforce. These leaders have a crucial role in increasing trust, ensuring messages from senior executives are embraced, and cultural change occurs.

Slide 7: What we recommend

We made six recommendations in our report aimed at:

- better coordinating and enhancing its mental health support
- understanding and addressing staff trust and confidentiality concerns
- enhancing its mental health training
- improving the consistency and coverage of mental health screening and monitoring, and
- developing processes and measures for analysing its data.

Slide 8: For more information

For more information on the issues, opportunities and recommendations highlighted in this summary presentation, please see the full report on our website.

Thank you.