

Media Release

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Equal Opportunity Commission Review highlights need for change in SAPOL

An independent Review of South Australia Police has recommended major changes to combat sex discrimination, sexual harassment and predatory behaviour in the workplace.

Commissioner for Equal Opportunity Dr Niki Vincent today handed her final report, the *Independent Review into Sex Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Predatory Behaviour in South Australia Police*, to Police Commissioner Grant Stevens.

Dr Vincent praised Commissioner Stevens for his commitment to addressing the issue of sex discrimination and sexual harassment head-on by commissioning this report in April 2016 and providing ongoing cooperation throughout the process.

“By shining light on these issues, Commissioner Stevens has shown not only courage – but a genuine commitment to tackling issues that some would prefer to ignore or dismiss as being ‘too hard’,” she said.

“Many of the incidents outlined in this Review are very disturbing and I thank those current and former SAPOL staff who had the bravery to come forward to share their experiences.”

The Review received survey responses from nearly 2,000 former and current SAPOL staff and volunteers, and conducted face-to-face interviews with a further 53 in both regional and metropolitan areas.

Of those surveyed, 45 per cent had experienced sex discrimination. These were more likely to be women – many of whom described SAPOL as a ‘boys club’.

Women were also more likely to be the targets of sexual harassment – with 21 per cent of respondents reporting that they had experienced this in the last five years (compared to eight per cent of male respondents).

“The most common forms of sexual harassment experienced were suggestive comments or jokes, intrusive questions about their private life or comments on their physical appearance and unwelcome touching, hugging, or cornering,” Dr Vincent said.

“At the most serious end, around one per cent – or 20 people – indicated they experienced sexual assault.

“Another cause for concern was the amount of predatory behaviour - that’s where the sexual harassment is perpetrated by someone in authority or influence over the victim.

“The Review found this was significantly higher in SAPOL than in the general workforce.”



The Review has made 38 recommendations aimed at supporting the development of a culture of gender equality including:

- The development and implementation of a Gender Equality Strategy
- Overhauling SAPOL's approach to handling internal complaints of sexual harassment or sex discrimination
- Training for all staff on sex discrimination, sexual harassment and unconscious bias
- Addressing outdated attitudes towards flexible work to ensure this is valued, normalised and equitably accessible at any position or level.

"What we know is that organisations that have gender equality perform better - especially those that have more women in strategic and leadership roles," she said.

"I look forward to continuing to work closely with Commissioner Stevens as he drives forward to implement recommendations and seeks to foster a workplace culture where gender equality is simply part of how business is done."

The full Review and a summary can be found on the [Equal Opportunity Commission website](#).

For all Equal Opportunity Commission media enquiries contact the 24-hour AGD Media Line **0422 007 069**
For all SAPOL media enquiries contact the media section 08 **732 23848**