

## **The ideal cop in 2011: still macho?**

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### **Author**

Celeste Lawson  
Building 355  
240 Quay St  
Rockhampton, Queensland 4700  
celeste.lawson@hotmail.com

PhD candidate  
Central Queensland University

### **Abstract**

'Typical' police culture has defined the ideal police officer as male, arrest oriented, aggressive, loyal, and socially isolated. Historically resistant to change, police culture has been inundated with pressures from 21<sup>st</sup> century policing including technological advances, diverse recruitment of officers, and more holistic, strategic policing methods. There is current debate as to whether these pressures have resulted in changes to the cultural ideal. What does police culture dictate that an 'ideal' police officer look like in 2011? This paper will consider how police culture is constructed within police organisations and how cultural change can be measured, using the Queensland Police Service as a case study.

### **Key words**

Police; police culture; Fitzgerald Inquiry; Wood Royal Commission; Kennedy Royal Commission; organisational culture; Queensland Police Service.

### **Caveat**

The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the Queensland Police Service. The interviewees do not necessarily represent a true indication of events in Queensland.

## Introduction

This paper begins by posing a question: what does an 'ideal' police officer look like? There are three ways of answering this question: the use of demographics to describe 'typical' characteristics such as sex, age and education; the selection of officers based on individual characteristics such as 'honesty', 'integrity', 'emotional stability' and 'social maturity'; and the 'organisational' view of the ideal. It is the organisational view that forms the basis of this paper. This view allows the 'ideal' to be revealed through organisational culture. Police culture allows policing to be described in terms of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. A significant body of research exists explaining how the power and uniqueness of police culture has enabled corruption to occur within policing organisations. In this same way, it is proposed that culture can also be used to describe the ideal (that is: the 'good' as opposed to the 'bad'). The paper begins by considering the role and function of policing. The environment in which police operate is inextricably linked to behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of police officers. This environment has undergone significant change in terms of technological advances and strategic policing methods, but despite this, the role and function of policing has remained the same. The paper then looks at some ways police culture has been used in an attempt to describe police actions, including police Inquiries and Royal Commissions. The cultural characteristics of risk aversion, loyalty and conformity are specifically considered, both in terms of corruption and labelling ideal. The paper considers attempts to influence change in culture as a means of changing police behaviour.

Using the Queensland Police Service as a case study, research was conducted on the 'non-typical' section of crime prevention to illustrate the cultural characteristic of conformity. As a service-oriented role, as opposed to a law enforcement-oriented role, crime prevention is non-typical in the field of policing. An analysis of crime prevention can reveal how the culture of conformity pressures 'non-typical' police officers to modify their behaviour.

The paper presents police culture as the ultimate paradox. Police culture reinforces its own characteristics because of the nature of police work. Change to culture can not be achieved while police are required to perform a law enforcement function.

## Role and function of police

Policing is a relatively modern phenomenon, with the concept of a civilian police force (separate to the military and the rest of the criminal justice process) formalised in England in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel. Considered the father of policing, Peel set out a system aimed at preventing crime and reforming criminals. Colonial Australia adopted the same model when the number of free settlers grew beyond the scope of the military (Finnane, 1994). But, unlike their British counterparts, Australian police were strongly influenced by the new colony where it was expected they be armed, that they hunt bushrangers when required and that they escort gold shipments (Bryett, 1993).

Modern Australian police organisations maintain the military-styled bureaucracy developed during the colonial years. Each state in Australia operates its own police service through the respective State Government. Operating autonomously, the various police services are bureaucratic organisations, formally structured with a quasi-military hierarchy. There is a rank structure and a great many rules and regulations to be scrupulously followed. At the street level, however, police officers exercise extremely wide discretion with limited or no supervision (Chan, 1999). This situation is not unique to Australia, and is common police experience throughout the western world. Police officers are responsible for upholding the law, investigating offences and prosecuting offenders. They are tasked with the preservation of peace and good order, and the protection of life and property (Queensland Police Service, 2006). The way police officers perform these functions has changed dramatically from the community-focused police of Peel's era. From the introduction of the motorcar to forensic analysis at crime scenes, the development of technology has meant policing has become faster. Radios and mobile phones allow police to be notified of crimes quickly; computers and forensics aid investigations; and police efficiency is now measured on how long it takes to respond to a call for service.

Police officers operate within this broad function and environment. There are many performance indicators to measure the tasks that police perform. The number of arrests are counted, and the number of calls for service. It is more difficult to measure how well a police officer performs their duties. Attempts have been made by measuring community satisfaction with police, or discipline against police officers, but this doesn't allow a measurement of the 'ideal' officer. Broadly, there are three ways of typifying a police officer: through the use of demographics; individual characteristics; and more generally through the organisation itself.

The use of demographics allows researchers to describe a 'typical' police officer. An average officer can be labelled in terms of age, sex, race, education. Police recruits are mostly male, 26 years of age and white (White, 2008). Whilst longitudinal analysis can reveal trends, these demographics don't reveal anything beyond what a typical officer looks like. The officer is also generally physically fit and educated. These physical characteristics make him 'ideal' can not be used to determine 'ideal' characteristics. It is not necessary to be a man, or young, or white, to perform the duties of a police officer. Certainly some level of fitness and intelligence is required, particularly for general duties, but this does not define ideal.

Individual characteristics such as 'honesty', 'integrity', 'maturity' and 'emotional stability' can be used to describe characteristics that are useful for police officers to possess. Indeed, much recruitment and selection is undertaken to ensure individuals are intellectually capable of handling the stresses associated with police work (White, 2008).

From an organisational perspective, the ideal can be determined by looking within the organisation at behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of police. Essentially, this means that the culture of the organisation can reveal the ideal. It is the

function of police that dictates culture, as opposed to individual characteristics, technology or societal expectations. This aspect of the 'ideal' forms the basis of this paper.

## **Police culture**

Organisational culture is the widely held set of shared attitudes, values and norms that contribute to the day-to-day interactions of staff. It is shared by all employees and is expressed in a variety of ways, both subtly and overtly. Employees have a frame of reference by which they understand the organisation and determine appropriate behaviour or communication (Daniels & Spiker, 1994). As a formal bureaucratic organisation, the police organisation also has a culture.

The nature of the policing role has created a culture specific to that function. Like any organisational culture, police culture consists of widely shared attitudes, values and norms. What differentiates police culture from other organisational cultures are the strains that originate in the policing environment (Paoline, Meyers, & Worden, 2000). It is generally accepted that there is a direct connection between police work and a unique occupational culture (Chan, 1999; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993; Manning & Van Maanen, 1978; Reiner, 1992). There are 'traditional' recurring features of police culture, many of which have assumed the status of something Loftus (2010) calls 'sociological orthodoxy'. These characteristics include: an exaggerated sense of mission towards the policing role and craving work that is crime-oriented and promises excitement; the celebration of masculine exploits; the willingness to use force and engage in informal working practices; suspicion; social isolation; defensive solidarity; cynicism; pessimism and intolerance towards those who challenge the status quo (Reiner, 1992; Bayley, 1996).

The impact of organisational culture is often unconscious by members of the organisation (Clampitt, 2005). Therefore, police officers may be unaware of the influence that is being exerted on them by the organisation, or the influence they are exerting on others. Whilst most police would be aware there is a 'culture', they may be unaware of how that culture impacts their decisions and work performance.

## **Labeling 'ideal'**

In Australia, there have been numerous Inquiries into policing, including Royal Commissions. The Royal Commissions most relevant to a discussion on culture include the Fitzgerald Inquiry in Queensland in 1989, the Wood Royal Commission in New South Wales in 1997 and the Kennedy Royal Commission in Western Australia in 2004. Credited as being one of the most significant inquiries into police corruption, the Fitzgerald Inquiry set a benchmark in terms of the consideration of police culture as a contributing factor in the behaviour of officers. The influence of culture was labelled as something negative. The Fitzgerald Inquiry found that the police culture allowed corruption to flourish.

The Fitzgerald Inquiry was critical of many of the cultural elements identified as typical of police culture – including solidarity, conformity and secrecy – using the example of the unwritten ‘police code’ which reinforced behaviour where misconduct could occur. The Fitzgerald Report made recommendations about the structure of the Queensland police organisation, including decentralisation and promoting a new policing philosophy in an attempt to prompt cultural change. Following in the footsteps of the Fitzgerald Inquiry, the Wood Royal Commission also spent considerable effort defining police culture and attempted to explain how the culture allowed misconduct and corruption to exist. Like Fitzgerald, Wood also made significant recommendations in relation to cultural change. When the Kennedy Royal Commission was conducted in 2004, it was expected that elements of police culture would be used to explain police behaviour. If culture can be used to define what causes corruption, then it may be argued that it can also be used to define ‘ideal’ policing. This is the crux behind many of the recommendations made in Fitzgerald, Wood, and Kennedy, which essentially related to cultural change.

## Changing culture

Fitzgerald, and others, believed that the culture (amongst other things) contributed to corruption. In order to have an ‘ideal’ police service and rid the police of corruption, part of the solution recommended was to change the culture. There are two problems associated with changing and organisational culture: the first problem relates to the cultural characteristics themselves; and the second problem relates to imposing change on an organisation.

### Problem 1 – cultural characteristics

Many of the cultural elements that allowed corruption to flourish, are the same elements that make police officers good at what they do. For example, risk aversion, loyalty and conformity are cultural characteristics that allow police officers to perform their duties, as well as allowing some to engage in corruption. These elements are unlikely to change if police are to perform their expected function.

Risk aversion is a dominant characteristic in police culture. In their study of evaluation criteria for police officers, Lilley and Hinduja (2006) found that the largest portion of rating items among all agency categories were designed to control or limit mistakes. Chan refers to this as officers learning to ‘stay out of trouble’ (1999, p.110). Police officers have learnt to protect themselves, and Chan believes that this risk aversion and self-preservation has made police officers resistant to change and defensive about the protection of accepted rituals, beliefs and assumptions. Schein (2010, p. 215) calls this ‘anxiety-avoidance’. Chan believes many aspects of police culture have developed as anxiety-avoidance mechanisms. For example Chan quotes a study that found police officers preferred to be overly suspicious rather than overly trusting of people. If they are proved wrong, the officer may be unhappy but at least they are alive to appreciate the unhappiness. If an officer was trusting and this trust was misplaced, the consequence could be death. By not trusting anyone, there is

no need to check the correctness of any assumptions. This is efficient because it protects the officer and saves time (Chan, 1999, pp.113-115).

The Fitzgerald Inquiry found that loyalty was evident in the unwritten police code in Queensland, which 'punished' police officers who criticised other police. Fitzgerald used this as an example of why corruption was allowed to flourish (1989, p.202) since police officers would not 'dog' on other officers, nor investigate questionable performance. If the code was breached, the police officers would be ostracised, shunned. Yet, this cultural element is not necessarily a bad thing. Like risk aversion, it has the potential to save lives. Trust is provided to other police, which allows officers to do their jobs knowing that other police 'have their back'.

Conformity is valued by police agencies as an important officer trait (Lilley and Hinduja, 2006). Lilley and Hinduja undertook a study about formal evaluation criteria of police officers. They found that 70% of officer evaluations conducted within police agencies emphasised conforming to norms or standards within the agency. Also, officers are encouraged to conform to 'typical' police functions such as crime fighting (Garcia, 2005). In her study, Garcia found that those officers who did not conform were stigmatised and labelled as 'deviant', using the example of police officers assigned to community policing roles (2005, p. 66). Paoline, Meyers and Worden (2000) agree that police culture reinforces the law enforcement role rather than the service role of police officers.

### **Problem 2 – imposing change**

There are two broad arguments in relation to cultural change. The first is that police culture has not, and will not, change; that the very role of policing reinforces the cultural characteristics that makes the police culture unique and unmalleable. The second argument is that police culture can, and has, changed; that recruitment practices, technology, and societal expectations have changed the way police go about their business, and therefore the way police culture impacts on police work. Whilst the first argument holds that cultural change is near impossible, the second argument suggests that cultural change is constant. Both arguments agree on the characteristics of police culture, the culture that evolved from the historical development of policing as a function of society, as already discussed.

The argument that police culture will not change stems from the belief that culture is reinforced by the police function itself. More precisely, it is the police officers' understanding of their role and function that informs their conduct. The police culture allows officers to manage the strains that originate in such a work environment (Paoline et. al., 2000). In many cases, the transferral of culture is unconscious. Basic assumptions and ideologies have become so ingrained that they remain unquestioned, perceptions and ways of thinking have developed because of repeated successes in solving problems over extended periods of time (Holgersson & Gottschalk, 2008). Schein's theory on 'anxiety-avoidance' (2010) reinforces behaviour that has been effective in avoiding painful situations, even if the original source of pain is no longer evident. This means the successful behaviour is repeated because it continues to 'work' regardless of whether a

different type of behaviour would work just as well. This argument is valid for police researchers such as Loftus, who states that it is the function of police that dictates the culture, as opposed to individual characteristics, technology or societal expectations. Loftus believes that the timeless qualities of police culture endure because the basic pressures associated with the police role have not changed, and because social transformations have exacerbated, rather than reduced the basic definitions of inequality. In his study of a British police force, Loftus investigated the actions of police officers as indicators of police culture. He found that the views of contemporary police officers were similar to classic views, and that the traditional police culture endures. Loftus believes this is the case because the role of police has remained the same, and the basic pressures of policing are the same. (Loftus, 2010)

Schein warns managers not to assume that they can manipulate culture; more likely, managers are being controlled by culture without even being aware of it. Managers are also told not to assume that all aspects of the culture are relevant to the effectiveness of the organisation (Schein, 2010). Like other writers whose work is directed at managers, Schein's approach is essentially top-down with a great deal of emphasis on leadership. Chan (1999) does not believe this is an effective approach for attempting cultural change in policing. She quotes the experience of the New South Wales Police Force who attempted cultural reform in the top-down approach for a decade. She said that apart from top-level executives, there was little evidence that the majority of officers at the operational level changed. Chan used the examples of the various inquiries and Royal Commissions into the New South Wales Police Force (then Service, then Force again) to illustrate the point that change only occurred following intense media interest.

Coleman (2008, p. 311) states that traditional police culture manifests itself as inertial pressures. Coleman believes this has made it difficult for organisations to adapt strategies and structures in response to environmental changes, which, in turn, has negatively affected the ability to implement the necessary organisational change. Loftus's (2010) study found that contemporary police attitudes were the same as older patterns, that police culture had exerted influence over the way officers thought about the public. Police officers had communicated culture through on-the-job socialisation and the culture was reinforced as officers adapted to the demands of the police role. Coleman quotes police research authorities Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990) and Kelling and Moore (1997) that traditional police culture made it difficult for police organisations to adapt their strategies and structures in response to the dynamic external environment and, therefore, change. The resistance to change has been recognised by academics for decades. Chan (1999, p.101) quotes a 1978 study that found that police culture was resistant to changes despite persistent efforts to change it. This was regardless of 'sophisticated technology, tighter organisations controls and new ways of policing'.

The argument that police culture has changed, and is in constant change, is centred in the reform and innovations of policing (Chan, 1999). Recruiting and technology are dramatic, obvious changes that have occurred within policing

organisations in the past two decades. The composition of police forces has changed, as have departmental philosophies. This can be seen in Queensland, where in the past twenty years the organisation has undergone significant structural change, change of philosophy and change of policy, as a result of the Fitzgerald Inquiry. It was Fitzgerald's intention that police culture would change as a result of this reform. Paoline et.al. (2000) agree, stating that one might now expect to find greater variation in officers' attitudes, because of diversity of police officers and a changing work environment. Police officers have traditionally been white, heterosexual men. The change in recruitment practices means there has been a gradual rise in, and a concerted effort to recruit, non-Caucasian, female and gay and lesbian officers. Patterns of interaction have altered because of the demographic diversity now found in police officers who would not be readily accepted into the 'traditional' culture. Chan (1999) believes police officers and police organisations are not passive carriers of the police culture. They take an active part in the construction of their environments. Cultural change can only be sustained with commitment and reinforcement from inside and outside the organisation.

## **Method and data**

The question now to be answered is whether there has been cultural change in policing because of diversity in recruiting, technological advances and changes in police practices, or whether the dominance of the policing role has reinforced the 'typical' culture within the organisation. Does the organisation determine its own 'ideal'?

This research will use the Queensland Police Service as a case study to investigate the cultural characteristic of 'conformity'. That is to say, the conformity of police officers to the belief that the law enforcement policing role is more important than the service-oriented role. This will reveal whether 'conformity' is considered culturally important and part of the cultural ideal. This research forms part of ongoing doctoral research that examines other cultural characteristics including loyalty, solidarity, risk aversion and secrecy. For the purposes of this paper, the single element 'conformity' has been selected.

Two data collection methods were used. The first was a content analysis of position descriptions of police officers, and the second was interviews with police officers. The analysis of position descriptions can establish both manifest and latent meaning at an organisational level: that meaning which is obvious and deliberate, and that meaning which is hidden or implied. Interviews are an appropriate methodology to demonstrate the behaviour of individuals (Sarantakos, 2005; Van Riel, 1997). Although hesitant to use interviews as a means of establishing knowledge of culture, Schein (2010) acknowledges that individuals are aware of actions. It is through the analysis of these actions that culture can be revealed. The method of analysis selected for this study was discourse analysis. This method is both qualitative and interpretative. It is an ideal analysis method for this study because it is suited to analysis of language, both written and spoken. This form of analysis will allow the study to determine the discourse of culture at both an organisational and individual level.

Consistent with suggestions from police researchers Rosenbaum (2010) and Bradley and Nixon (2009), this approach combines 'policy and practice', not only taking an academic stance, but by also producing practical results.

For the purpose of this research a 'non-typical' service-oriented aspect of policing was chosen. If conformity existed, it would impact on those officers involved in areas of policing that were outside 'typical' policing. The specialist section of crime prevention was selected. Crime prevention was introduced as a new section as part of the reforms of the Fitzgerald Inquiry. Now, twenty years later, the section is well established and well recognised (but not necessarily well understood). The role of the crime prevention officer is different to other 'typical' police functions that tend to take place after the criminal event. A crime is committed and it is reported, investigated and prosecuted. This is typical reactive policing. The aim of crime prevention is to be proactive by addressing the crime before it happens. Through interactions with the community and promotion of police, the crime prevention officer can build relationships with the community, who will then be aware of crime and policing, and take precautions to prevent themselves from becoming victims of crime. If a crime occurs, then the crime prevention officer can assist victims being less afraid to report the matter, and less fearful of becoming a repeat victim. It is a service-oriented role.

Two position descriptions were selected for analysis: a general duties officer and the specialised crime prevention officer. At the time of analysis, the general duties position description had last been updated in March 2005 and the crime prevention position in October 2004. The position description for crime prevention officers was very broad and generic which afforded the individual officer a great deal of freedom in determining their individual role, while the position objective is essentially the same as general duties. There were four principal responsibilities in crime prevention and six in general duties. Three were common to both. Two related to administration of budgetary and human resources. The third related to the implementation of community policing initiatives. The principal responsibility specific to crime prevention related to media representation. The selection criteria were the same except for the level of knowledge of legislation (sound for crime prevention officers versus thorough for general duties) and ability to research problems (for general duties) or complex problems (for crime prevention). The key selection criteria relating to communication emphasised media management in the crime prevention position.

Content analysis can be used to describe the messages sent by an organisation, but not how the messages were received or acted upon (Weerakkody, 2009). Interviews were used to illustrate how conformity influenced the actions and beliefs of 'non-typical' police officers. Crime prevention police officers were selected as service-oriented officers, and officers to whom the specialist position description related. A 'purposive sample' (ibid. 2009, p.99) of crime prevention officers provides sufficiently rich data for interviews about their cultural experiences as a police officer. Ten officers were selected to provide an adequate cross-section of variables such as rank, experience, gender and geographical location. These officers ranged in rank from Constable to Senior Sergeant. A

small sample size is acceptable in qualitative studies because of the in-depth nature of the information being gathered (Sarantakos, 2005). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in November 2007 and the interview transcripts were coded using themes. Officers have not been individually identified as per ethical requirements of the Queensland Police Service.

## Results

The study revealed evidence of 'conformity'. The formal layout of the position description document and the classification of criteria as 'essential' reinforced the behaviour expected of police officers in those roles. Despite a broad and generic function, it was implied that if officers did not perform the functions as stated, they were not performing the function of a police officer. The tone of the document implied that the criteria were not negotiable. The very existence of a document such as a position description also illustrates conformity. The document implies that all officers are part of the same 'team'. When a person is appointed to the position, they join that group. The Queensland Police Service is sending an organisational message that the expectation on all officers is the same. This is consistent with the function of policing.

The characteristic of conformity is also evident in the interviews. A number of crime prevention officers felt obliged to justify their role during the interview. Because the service-oriented role of a crime prevention officer is the opposite of the culturally acceptable law enforcement-oriented police officer, this justification was considered necessary, otherwise it would be assumed the crime prevention role was worthless or a waste of time, since it did not conform to 'real' policing. In a negative context, this imposition generally came from officers (either junior or senior) who saw crime prevention as distinct from traditional policing. This was a consistent perspective regardless of the length of service of the crime prevention officer or the geographical location. Consistent with Fitzgerald's findings, officers were shunned because their role did not conform to the cultural ideal. Some officers stated that other non-crime prevention police believed the role was a 'nothing'.

Once upon a time nobody went and spoke to the [crime prevention officers]. Nobody knew what [we] did and that's why we probably had a reputation about having cuppas with people. ... Some junior staff don't see the big picture. They don't know how it all fits in. *Officer 1*

They don't see that crime prevention does anything. They just see it as tea and scones at Neighbourhood Watch type meetings. They haven't got a clue on what's done with crime prevention. *Officer 2*

I don't know what they think I do... I don't think they understand, because I can't really define it, so once I can establish what it is, I can say well hang on that's not my role. *Officer 3*

But a lot of people think, like I did prior to joining the DCPC role, that it was a cushy job. That mentality. That we do nothing, we just swan around and have morning teas and cups of coffee, go and have a chat to the old ladies at

the nursing home. That sort of mentality is what other people think we do.  
*Officer 7*

It's almost like a position that's non-existent. Why the hell would you want to go over to that position? They don't do anything. Yadda yadda yadda.  
*Officer 8*

It seems to me that those people that don't know what crime prevention is are the ones that will criticise. [They] will say things that it's warm and fuzzy and it doesn't have a practical application. *Officer 9*

The actual role itself is seen as a little bit of a wishy washy role. No real benefit to the QPS, to [station] staff. *Officer 10*

Officer 3 has 15 years service and moved from being the Officer in Charge of a small station to the crime prevention role. Her operational policing experience is extensive.

I'd only started the [crime prevention] job two weeks and I already had a lecture from someone saying we expect you to help us if we go to a blue. Just the mentality they have because I am not on the road, and how would you know what night shift feels like, and all I can do is laugh. *Officer 3*

Officer 4 recounted a personal experience where she went to a police social function and the conversation turned to policing experiences. As an officer with extensive general duties service, it was the first time she had attended a social event as a crime prevention officer.

Obviously in that sort of social setting what I'm doing as police work now isn't, it's not really classed so much as police work. So you sit there and say nothing because what you've got to say is just as uninteresting as a person who's not in the police. I really felt on an outer. And I was actually able to look at the conversation for the first time, and go 'Oh my God, are these people for real?' *Officer 4*

Conformity was also evident in a positive context by crime prevention officers. Some interviewees stated that they felt it was their responsibility to make the crime prevention role 'fit' so it was deemed acceptable to other police. Officer 4 said the strength of support towards crime prevention from other police had increased because of the effort she put into the role. Officer 1, in crime prevention positions four years and current position one year, said she was a valued member of the policing team. She participated in weekly management meetings, and was involved in the District planning.

This is probably not only my opinion but what I am seeing across the state is I think we're being more valued. And we're being called upon more rather than just reactive policing. It's more of a holistic approach now. ... Now staff know that they can come to me and they will get something in return,

and there will be a result. And so I'm finding that staff culture towards crime prevention is becoming increasingly favourable. *Officer 1*

Officer 9 stated he believed the reason why he and his partner were accepted was because crime prevention was part of management decision making, and because both officers had worked hard to explain their role to those not well informed. Officer 9 said the support had continued because of his ongoing effort to link crime prevention to other operational sections of policing.

It comes down in a lot of cases to the respect as an individual and I have a good relationship with all sections because they've been involved in different aspects of crime prevention. *Officer 9*

Officer 7 said her experience had noticeably improved in the last few years.

I've come from a general duties background, which was pfft crime prevention what a bunch of wanks, that sort of mentality. And I was one of them as well. And even when I started my role in the crime prevention unit, in 2004, which is not very long ago, I still had that mentality. But I had a bit of service as well. I came out just after Fitzgerald, so I'm still one of the baby boomers so to speak. I had a bit of the old way, a lot of the new way and a lot of the changes and things are progressing. *Officer 7*

Officer 10 had only been in a crime prevention role for three months, and the actual crime prevention position was introduced only 16 months previously. He was able to bring the cultural element of conformity to crime prevention from his operational experience.

A lot of people didn't really fully understand the benefits of [crime prevention], and not trying to blow my own horn, but with the effort and the relationships, like I've been [here] for seven years so I've got a working relationship already with the outlying groups, so that reputation assists you in doing that [crime prevention] role. *Officer 10*

## **The ultimate paradox**

This evidence of 'conformity' through police officers' actions is not surprising. Nor is it surprising that evidence of conformity was found in an analysis of position descriptions. It is the function of policing and the legislative requirements of the organisation that result in conformity being a significant part of police culture. Whilst technological, recruiting and structural changes mean that the style of policing may have changed, the actual function of policing has remained the same. What this reveals is that there are aspects of the police culture that will not change unless the nature of police work changes. The operational nature of policing, dealing with criminals and enforcing the law, is unlikely to alter the cultural characteristic of conformity. In order to change culture, the function of policing must change. It is the ultimate paradox – cultural elements are required by officers to perform their duties and the role performed by the officers reinforces this culture.

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