

Media Release

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“Seismic shifts” in SAPOL workplace culture welcomed

South Australia’s Equal Opportunity Commissioner Dr Niki Vincent has welcomed what she’s described as a “seismic shift” in SA Police’s attitude towards flexible working arrangements.

Dr Vincent today released the Equal Opportunity Commission’s second progress report looking at the work done by SAPOL to tackle sexual harassment and predatory behaviour in the workplace, following the release of the Commission’s independent review in December 2016.

The report found that by September this year, of the 38 recommendations made by the EOC in its independent review, 20 had been fully implemented, 14 were underway and four were in the planning stages.

“These changes are important, but they are not the be all and end all,” Dr Vincent said.

“Over the coming months, we’ll also be looking at how SAPOL employees have reacted to these changes, and their willingness to promote their use.”

Dr Vincent said she was pleased by what she called a “seismic shift” in SAPOL’s approach to flexible working arrangements.

“SAPOL has re-written its policies to make flexible work simpler, less prescriptive and open to negotiation,” she said.

“It is also actively encouraging men to take up flexible working arrangements, with messaging challenging the stigma around flexible work and its association only with women who have caring responsibilities. In addition, measures such as identifying facilities within the workplace that can be used for breastfeeding, and uniform options for pregnant women have demonstrated a genuine commitment to change.

“I hope these and other changes will help demonstrate that the work of SAPOL employees is valued, regardless of how – or where – that work is done.”

Dr Vincent said that while women in SAPOL remain over-represented in unsworn administrative and support roles, and underrepresented in sworn roles, she was nevertheless pleased to see that female representation at leadership levels overall had increased by 3.5% since 2016 (to 20.4%). At the Inspector level (the first leadership level) female representation has increased by 10% (from 13% to 23%) since 2016.

Dr Vincent said figures from SAPOL had shown that – after an initial upswing in complaints following the release of the initial EOC Review – the number of notifications of inappropriate behaviour had levelled off to around one or two cases a month.

“While it’s too early to provide any meaningful analysis of these figures, the newly-established Diversity and Inclusion Branch – which is now handling such complaints – so far bears the hallmarks of a fair, confidential, accessible, transparent and efficient process which has the potential to rebuild confidence in SAPOL’s ability to handle discrimination and harassment complaints appropriately,” she said.

The second progress report can be found at <https://eoc.sa.gov.au/initiatives/sapol-monitoring-project>

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