INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND THE ADAPTIVE ORGANISATION: A WORK-BASED STUDY OF QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

A Thesis submitted by

Janine Taylor
GradDipExecLship (P&ES)

For the award of

Master of Professional Studies (Research)

2024

ABSTRACT

Historically, public safety organisations, including police, fire and emergency services, have been influenced by an alignment to paramilitary or quasi-military origins in the context of organisational origins and the ensuing influence on organisational structures and leadership styles. However, reliance on command-and-control leadership styles and hierarchical operating models are progressively being challenged. Increasingly, such organisations are facing new and emerging issues and risks that impact at the local, national or global level. A switch in focus is required to enhance the development of capabilities to be more than the traditional command-and-control style leadership by bringing forward a focus on people-orientation, supporting and valuing the ability of leaders to leverage different perspectives for an organisation to be more adaptive. This work-based project explores the perspectives of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) workforce in relation to the influence inclusive leadership capability has on the ability of an organisation to be adaptive. Research methods included semi-structured interviews with a cohort of executive and senior leaders, and a modified Delphi approach undertaken by a cohort representative of the QFES workforce. Practice-based processes, systems, and learnings were used for the engagement of potential participants, calls to action, and management of communications with participants. This research offers an initial contribution to address gaps in literature regarding inclusive leadership capability and its impact on organisational adaptive capability. the study identified a strong association between a person experiencing inclusive leadership capability through their leaders as having a positive effect of inculcating inclusive leadership to take forward into their own leadership style. The research has emphasised an intrinsic link between inclusive leadership capability of QFES leaders and the ability of QFES to be an adaptive organisation. This finding has significance for the implementation of the new Queensland Fire Department (QFD) on 1 July 2024 as the organisation navigates its way as a new department.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I, Janine Louise Taylor declare that the Thesis entitled *Inclusive Leadership and the Adaptive Organisation*: *A Work-based study of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services* is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Date: 26 June 2024

Endorsed by:

Dr Lee Ferguson
Principal Supervisor

Dr Lindsay Helwig
Associate Supervisor

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the Turrbal and Yuggara peoples as custodians of the lands on which I live, work, and play. I pay my respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors and elders who have gone before us. I also pay my respects to the leaders of today and those of the future as we navigate our path together in the spirit of reconciliation, recognising our First Nation peoples' continuing connection to lands, waters, cultures and communities.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Paddy Taylor-Rosie who I believe has instilled in me the concepts of service and continuous learning. Your dedication to the various organisations which you have supported over the years and your endless hours of volunteering in many capacities continues to be an inspiration, and you have shaped the lives of many through your life-long commitment to early childhood education.

I know you would not accept this dedication without mentioning my two grandmothers, your mother Jean Beets (nee Lange) and your mother-in-law Alice Hutchins (formerly Taylor, nee Swannell) both of whom survived loss, separation, adversity, and hardship. Their courage, strength of character, and resilience enabled them to be the strong matriarchs our families benefited from through their love, guidance, and humour.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

ELT .... Executive Leadership Team

ESA ....Eastern Seaboard of Australia

ESO.................................. Emergency Service Organisation

MPSR.................... Master of Professional Studies (Research)

PSC .... Public Sector Commission

PPRR……............... Preparation-Planning-Response-Recovery

QFD..................................... Queensland Fire Department

QFES .... Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

USQ ....University of Southern Queensland

VUCA..................... Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This thesis describes a research project aimed at generating new knowledge to inform actions and decisions within the context of inclusive leadership and adaptive organisations at Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) in Queensland, Australia. This chapter will provide:

   a. the background to, and context for, the research topic;

   b. the research aim;

   c. a description of the research constructs; and

   d. a description of how the research project was developed, designed, and undertaken (including research questions and sub-questions).

1.2. Background

Historically, public safety organisations, including police, fire and emergency services, have been influenced by an alignment to their paramilitary foundations. A paramilitary organisation is a non-military organisation that shares some similarities with the military, such as a hierarchical organisational structure where each person is required to follow the 'chain of command' and where individuals in the organisation have a shared mission or focus (Halfpenny et al., 2016). Within such organisations, strong individual command-and-control leadership styles have been seen

as essential for smooth response operations, achieving a task, and providing a successful outcome for an incident or event.

However, an over-reliance on command and control by individual leaders comes with risk. For example, more than 20 years ago, Aldisert (2001) asserted that a person's imagination does not thrive in command-and-control structures, there is potential then that this could hamper innovation or new ideas being generated from the workforce.

In previous research, Spears and Lawrence (2002) also suggested that leaders with a strong command-and-control focus may place structure and systems reinforcement ahead of people-centred approaches or considerations. They also posited that traditional, autocratic, and hierarchical modes of leadership are making way for newer models, including a model based on teamwork.

More recently Adams et al. (2017), in their comprehensive study on leadership, culture, and risk, identified the need for to challenge the understanding of leadership beyond hierarchy and the traditions of command and control. They suggest a more collaborative model, arguing that real power in leadership comes not from power over others but from bringing people together: the power of the collective. Further they posit that "leaders cannot command commitment and cooperation. At best, a leader can command compliance" (Adams et al., 2017, p. 23).

Similarly in their seminal research, Young, Jones, and Kummick (2018) identify a critical barrier to cultural change within emergency management organisations being the reliance on response-based tactical

leadership styles and an eventuating tension with a more strategic, facilitative, and inclusive leadership style.

Globally, there are new and emerging issues and risks which require a broader set of leadership capabilities (Bloemhard, 2016), including a shift to a greater focus on people-orientation, and an ability to leverage different perspectives to adapt more effectively to environments and situations of ever-increasing complexity and uncertainty. This shift in modes of leadership will require a challenge to existing views regarding traditional command-and-control leadership styles. This may also require exploration of additional capabilities which are necessary for leaders to lead people in situations and environments which are increasingly more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, the so-called 'VUCA' world.

The acronym VUCA—volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity—has been adopted to describe a suggested new normal in environments of constant change (Kinsinger & Walch, 2012; Rimita, 2019). Adding to the VUCA environment in the context of fire and emergency services are the increases in frequency, severity and impact of natural hazards and severe weather events being experienced around the globe (Alimonit & Mariani, 2024) and the proclivity for human-induced disasters and conflicts to provoke serious disruptions of the economy, agriculture and health-care sectors of a society (Coronese et al., 2019).

Turbulent environments make for unpredictable and unplannable responses in the traditional sense of control and optimisation (Ramezani & Camarinha-Matos, 2020). Such disruptions will require many sectors,

including the public safety sector, to effectively adapt to this ever-evolving change. The ability to be adaptive will be a requirement, not just in an operational, disaster management sense through the spectrum of planning, preparation, response, and recovery (PPRR) activities (QFES, 2018a), but in many other ways that will potentially benefit the organisation.

Benefits may be realised through enhanced programs and systems design, and the development of strategies, plans and supporting activities to achieve success. An exploration of this type of adaptiveness, as it applies to QFES, is at the core of this research project. Figure 1 shows how QFES has conceptualised risk in the face of the VUCA environment.
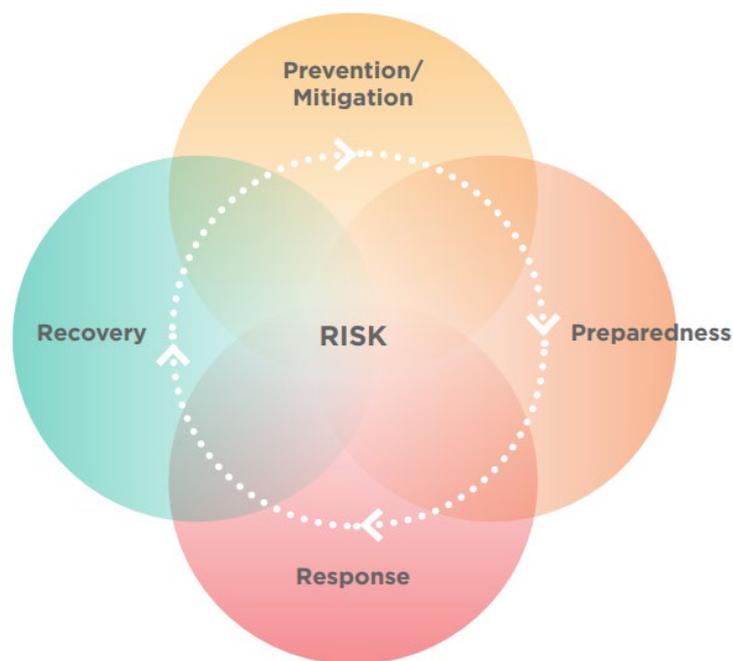
Figure 1. The 'comprehensive approach' to disaster management (QFES, 2018a)

Figure 1 shows that the approach to mitigating or minimising risk in emergency management requires a comprehensive, holistic approach

across the PPRR elements, and one which fundamentally considers the needs and perspectives of communities, stakeholders, and the workforce to achieve success.

In turbulent times new, complex and unpredictable phenomena emerge, presenting challenges which can impact both operational and non-operational areas. Recent literature by Feduzi, Runde and Shcwarz (2022) describe gaps in knowledge as 'unknowns' and unpredictable events as 'Black Swans'. Former U.S. Secretary of defence, Donald Rumsfield (2002, 37:53), famously described the idea of unknowns in the following way:

> …there are known knowns, things we know that we know; and there are known unknowns, things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns-the ones we don't know we don't know.

Previous literature on 'black swan' events suggest they are an event that is highly improbable and characterised by key elements: it is unpredicted, it results in massive impacts, and the consequential emotions and shocks that come from the event are then rationalised in an explanation to make it appear less random that what it was. (Parameswar, Chaubey & Dhir, 2021; Taleb, 2007).

Feduzi et al. (2022) further describe how the terms 'unknowns' and 'Black Swans' have become familiar within public administration literature. They discuss how the respective elements of each term relate and attempt to deconflict the terms, recommending how public sector organisations might reduce psychological and organisational barriers by uncovering

'unknowns' before they escalate to becoming 'Black Swan' events. These concepts present several challenges for organisations which may be intensified by organisational barriers.

Such organisational barriers may include structural complexities, organisational silos, loss of organisational memory, problems of accountability, and issues of power and politics (Barthélemy, 2023). These can be regarded as organisation-level constraints on individuals and teams and have the potential to hinder effective gathering, sharing, integration, and use of information. These complexities may also result in an environment where 'standard operating procedures' and 'out-of-the-box' solutions cannot be counted on to deal with unforeseen events that create chaotic conditions and uncertain outcomes (Lempiala, 2010).

In a strategic sense, there is a need to understand the changing needs of the community, the impacts of climate change, and the rapid pace of technological change. These factors collectively affect almost every area of the economy, society, and culture in Australia and internationally. The factors described reinforce the need for leaders who are open to, and capable of, harnessing diverse perspectives to solve problems and create opportunities for new and innovative solutions.

It is leadership capability which can provide opportunities to build individual and collective capability to adapt more effectively to change. Adaptive capability includes the ability to adapt both in the moment and with a continuous improvement approach to providing services that meet community expectations and operational needs.

Leaders can also benefit from the opportunity and an inherent capability to work with their teams to generate creative solutions to complex problems, while developing capability and capacity to manage across a broader range of leadership responsibilities (Reiter-Palmon & Royston, 2017).

1.3. Context

This thesis describes a practice-based project undertaken as the major component of the Master of Professional Studies (Research) (MPSR) degree offered by the University of Southern Queensland. The practice-based project focuses on inclusive leadership capability and adaptive organisation within QFES. It explores individual perspectives of the QFES workforce to demonstrate their understanding of inclusive leadership and observe perceptions on the relationship between inclusive leadership capability and the ability of the organisation to adapt effectively and efficiently.

The project was supported through the then Office of the Assistant Commissioner - QFES People, as Executive Sponsor of the project. The project was championed by the Executive Sponsor through socialisation of the project to Executive Leadership Team (ELT) colleagues, inviting them to participate in the research. This process recruited nine senior leaders as volunteers to take part in individual semi-structured interviews.

With a diversity of roles, services and geographical locations within QFES, existing practice-based systems, tools and communication channels were applied to maximise results. This included a call-to-action to attract

participants and to encourage a wide range of participants to undertake two rounds of online enquiry using a modified Delphi technique. The approach of using a modified Delphi technique will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

In their work focusing on work team diversity, Joshi and Roh (2009) discussed the importance of context-focused research and encourage researchers to carefully account for context within their research. They emphasise that this can facilitate greater theoretical integration of research and can create potential for new theoretical and methodological developments in how research outcomes are utilised or applied. Thus, while this study focuses on perspectives in QFES, its design may inform other agencies across the Australasian fire and emergency services sector, and the broader public safety sector.

This study was conducted using an action research approach, making use of data gathered over two phases. Action research by its nature, is action disciplined by enquiry (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). It is a personal attempt at understanding while being engaged in a process of improvement and reform, offering practitioners (and participants) a powerful tool to enhance their professional confidence (Efron & Ravid, 2019).

As outlined in Table 1, the research was conducted in two phases. Phase One was split into two parts:

Part A involved a group of 9 senior QFES leaders undertaking semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for their ability to capture individual views as personal narratives, offering a rich

data set often elicited with this research method (Buys et al., 2022). This allowed participants to share their personal experiences and insights.

Part B consisted of an online question form with 50 members of the QFES workforce, utilising a modified Delphi technique. The modified Delphi technique was selected as the best and most efficient way to connect with a cross-section of the workforce.

Table 1 – Outline of data collection methods.

Phase	Part	Activity	Participants
Phase 1	Part A	9 x semi structured interviews	QFES Leaders
	Part B	First round: online inquiry using online question form	50 QFES workforce members
Phase 2		Second round: online inquiry, using modified online question form	44 QFES workforce members

As Sekayi and Kennedy (2017) identify in their research, there has been debate over the Delphi method. Some scholars suggest the Delphi approach is a qualitative method, others suggest it is the purest form of mixed methodology. A third cohort argue that Delphi is, in the final analysis, a quantitative method. They point out that, although Delphi techniques have traditionally been used in decision-making and forecasting, they can be used to gather expert perspectives for a broader purpose.

For the purpose of this study, it could be argued that as a qualitative data collection method, the modified Delphi approach is an example of inclusive practice due to its ability to include diverse perspectives.

Phase Two involved a second round of online enquiry with the same participants from the first round. The second round questions were developed from the results of the first round responses. This approach, part of an action research methodology, encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences and gain insight into their own capabilities through analysis and interpretation of their responses, the second round of enquiry allowing for a narrowing of focus and reflection.

The methodology of this study will be fully discussed in Chapter 4.

1.4. Purpose

The study aims to address gaps in the existing literature about how inclusive leadership capability impacts an organisation's adaptive capability specifically within QFES, which is traditionally structured as a command-and-control, operationally focused organisation. The findings will inform the design and delivery of leadership development programs across QFES, particularly in areas that could benefit from enhanced awareness and understanding of the role inclusive leadership can have in fostering adaptive capability at the organisational level.

Ultimately, the study seeks to provide evidence-based leadership development strategies that can improve both individual and organisational performance across all leadership levels and contexts within QFES.

1.5. Research Problem

A focus on leadership capability, as a critical driver in bringing about culture change within QFES, is an on-going focus for the QFES People Directorate and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

In their 2018 study, Young et al. (pp. 28-29) identified several barriers to cultural change in emergency management organisations, particularly those focused on diversity and equity. These barriers include ingrained organisational cultures, a reliance on tactical, response-based leadership, and tension with a more inclusive and strategic leadership style. Additional challenges include inconsistent leadership quality, a lack of diversity within leadership roles, and leaders failing to model the desired behaviours for change.

The barriers identified in the research align with a risk noted by Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson (2010), who observed that leaders within command-and-control structures are often mentored by others with the same leadership style. They argued that this command-and-control approach can undermine up to 90% of transformational change efforts.

More recently, Adams et al. (2017) challenged myths surrounding leadership in traditional command-and-control organisations. They emphasised leadership as constructive influence, distinct from hierarchical power. They critiqued the presumption of power as the right to command and dominate, proposing instead that effective leadership is about "power with" others, not "power over." Adams et al. argued that transformational

change is a leadership-driven process that fosters significant cultural and process improvements, ultimately enhancing organisational performance.

The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 is an example of how a catastrophic failure in leadership can lead to extreme consequences. A failure in leadership along with numerous failures of infrastructure and systems, and lack of learnings from prior incidents, were attributes as causal factors (Ojuola, Mostafa, & Mohamed, 2020).

The explosion of the oil rig and subsequent oil spill is considered the largest in history resulting in significant human and environmental loss and devastation, and commercial, economic, and political fallout. Eleven workers lost their lives and the equivalent of an estimated 4.9 million barrels of oil were released into the Gulf of Mexico.

In reviewing the circumstances that led to the disaster, the safety programs of oil giant British Petroleum (BP) were heavily criticised when it was discovered that many of the perspectives and opinions highlighting safety and security concerns raised by workers and teams had been ignored by management. This resulted in a culture of not speaking up and where "brand exuberance" (Balmer et al., 2011, p. 7), the assertions of corporate aspirations regarding safety and security, took precedence over actual safety and security and, critically, the concerns and perspectives of employees.

It could be argued that the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill is an example of 'dysfunctional momentum', a concept originally highlighted by Barton and Sutcliffe (2009) in the context of wildland fire management. In their

work, the authors discuss dysfunctional momentum as being a threat to an organisation's ability to adapt and adjust flexibly. Further, their research identified the social processes of "giving voice to concerns and actively seeking alternative perspectives" (Barton & Sutcliffe, 2009, p. 1336).

Ensuring there are open lines of communication was identified as one of the key drivers when there is a critical need to re-evaluate actions and when considering making changes to the current course of action within operational response. This study will focus on the notion of how leaders contribute to providing environments which allow the perspectives of the workforce to be heard, valued, and acted on.

A learning organisation is one that promotes continual organisational renewal by creating a set of core processes and systems that foster a positive inclination to learn, adapt, and change (Burke & Noumair, 2015). Modern organisations have little choice but to adapt to the constant pace of change and an awareness that the world is continually changing. The need for adaptive capability therefore necessitates a fundamental reassessment of how emergency services organisations improve organisational learning to support innovation (Bearman et al., 2021).

How then does an organisation ensure leaders, particularly leaders involved in the provision of mission critical, safety and first response actions, have the capability and commitment to provide environments where it is safe for individuals to bring their concerns, perspectives, ideas, and opinions forward? This research project seeks to gain an understanding

of the ability of QFES leaders in this regard and explores any links to the ability of the organisation to be adaptive.

1.6. Research Constructs

For the purpose of this research, the following definitions are taken as constructs in relation to the research questions and within the thematic analysis of the collected data. The research constructs will be explored and discussed more fully in the literature review however, by identifying and addressing the research constructs, and articulating a definition for each, a greater level of relevant contextual information will be provided, thus reducing the risk of reader interpretation and contextual assumptions.

The research constructs provide the opportunity to clearly explain and understand each of the phenomena as distinct definitions prior to exploring and evaluating the relationship between the constructs. Identifying distinct definitions allows for the development of both the research questions and the questions for the data gathering methods. The research seeks to understand if inclusive leadership capability has an influence on adaptive capability within QFES.

1.6.1. Inclusive Leadership

Randel and colleagues (2018) propose a theoretically grounded framework to establish an understanding of the factors that contribute to inclusive leadership and provide a basis for comparative analysis of other

contemporary leadership constructs. The authors' theoretical framework identifies key behaviours of inclusive leaders which facilitate a sense of belonging by supporting individuals as group members, ensuring justice and equity within the group sharing decision-making, and valuing uniqueness by promoting individuals' diverse contributions to the group and helping individuals fully provide their unique perspectives and abilities to the work of the group.

Similarly, earlier literature from Shore et al. (2011) identified that inclusion in the workforce involves satisfying the needs of both belongingness and uniqueness and that different approaches and styles of leadership can create inclusive experiences for people. Combining these elements Booysen (2014, p. 306) defines inclusive leadership as "a respectful relational practice that enables individuals and collectives to be fully part of the whole, such that they are directed, aligned and committed toward shared outcomes, for the common good of all, while retaining a sense of authenticity and uniqueness".

The construct of inclusive leadership capability is best represented for this study by the definition of Diversity Council Australia (DCA). Their definition identifies inclusive leadership as the mindsets, knowledge, skills, and behaviours that ensure that a diversity of employee perspectives shape and improve an organisation's strategy, work, systems, values and norms for success (O'Leary, Russell & Tilly, 2015).

1.6.2.   Adaptive Organisation

In 2007, Dervitsiotis identified that the pace of change is now nonlinear; change is accelerating at such a pace that it is almost totally unpredictable and for most organisations this unfamiliar type of change has made once-successful strategies ineffective. He posited that once-popular command-and-control approaches are now obsolete in addressing today's big challenges. More recently Mwangi, Kinyua and Muchemi (2022) propose that by enhancing adaptive capabilities organisations can gain a competitive advantage while also improving performance.

The need for organisations to be increasingly more adaptive is an increasing imperative. Christiansen's (2016) work identifies the dilemma of language arguing that the words agile, adaptable and adaptive are often used as if they mean the same thing. She states that when setting out to create an adaptive organisation, the organisation needs to have a purpose-driven group of people who are able to: change itself (the organisation and the infrastructure that supports it) so that it can take opportunities that offer the greatest potential value; and recognise the opportunities, regardless of whether they are happening inside or outside the organisation.

Christiansen further points out that achieving change and taking advantage of opportunities needs to be at a pace that creates value and gives the organisation an adaptive advantage. She also makes a point of de-conflicting the terms 'adaptable' and 'adaptive', defining adaptable as

can be easily adapted (by someone or something) to accommodate change and adaptive as consistently able to change itself to accommodate change.

The construct of adaptive organisation is best represented for this study by the ability of the organisation to consistently change itself, to consistently evolve, and to learn and benefit from the opportunities and risks of change.

1.7. Research Questions

The key research question (RQ) for this study asks: What is the relationship between inclusive leadership and an adaptive organisation, and how might it affect the ability of QFES to operate as an adaptive organisation?

To explore this high-level research question, the following four sub-research questions will also be examined:

- Sub-RQ1: How is inclusive leadership understood by leaders and the workforce in QFES?

- Sub-RQ2: How is the concept of an adaptive organisation perceived by QFES leaders and the workforce?

- Sub-RQ3: How and to what extent do QFES leaders display inclusive leadership and adaptive behaviours in the workplace?

- Sub-RQ4: What are the key components of inclusive leadership required to make QFES an adaptive organisation?

1.8. Chapter Summary and thesis outline

Chapter 1 provided a summary of the focus and rationale for this body of work, and has introduced the research problem, the background, and the context of the study. Chapter 2 will provide details of the work-based project including the workplace context, the researcher, and the scope and expected outcomes of the work-based project.

The remainder of the thesis will then provide a detailed description of how the research project was designed and implemented. Chapter 3 provides the literature review, offering an overview of the research relating to the research problem and common themes, which are then summarised in a conceptual model. Chapter 4 describes the methodology adopted to address the aims of the study, details are provided outlining the methods employed including: the research paradigm and research design; the design and administration of the data collection techniques; and the participant groups including population, recruitment and participant characteristics.

Chapter 5 reports the findings of data collection processes which are then discussed in detail in Chapter 6. This chapter also includes a brief discussion of the limitations of the study. Finally, Chapter 7 summarises the research and its significance, providing recommendations for future considerations and practice. The learning outcomes associated with the MPSR program are summarised. The Appendices contain extra material referred to within the body of the work, including the approaches to

participant groups and copies of the interview questions and online question

forms used for the study.

CHAPTER 2: WORK-BASED PROJECT

2.1. Workplace Context

At the commencement of this research project, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) was the primary provider of fire, rescue services, emergency services and disaster management services to communities across Queensland. It operated under legislative responsibilities outlined in the Disaster Management Act 2003 and the Fire and Emergency Act 1990, which govern prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery (PPRR) activities across a diverse range of hazards.

Established as a standalone department in 2013, QFES adopted an "all hazards" approach to emergency management. The department's operational services included the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), the Rural Fire Service (RFS), the State Emergency Services (SES), and disaster management services, supported by corporate personnel who provided a range of essential support functions to enable the operational capabilities.

In 2015 and 2016, QFES responded to recommendations made by the Independent Review of an Incident Involving Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Employees (Allison, 2014). QFES undertook an array of activities in response to the review recommendations including identifying training and development gaps and building leadership capability. This on-going work has been the subject of several, subsequent external reviews, internal organisational self-assessments, and regular

workforce experience surveys in the form of the Working for Queensland and Volunteering for Queensland surveys.

The QFES Leadership Framework was developed and released in 2020, it highlights the importance of all QFES leaders, regardless of service or level, being competent and well-rounded across operational, technical and behavioural Skills, Knowledge and Attributes (SKA). These competencies are expected to align with the requirements as they apply to their role and level within the organisation (QFES, 2020).

In 2018 QFES published Strategy2030, the long-term strategic direction for the organisation, the strategy was the result of an extensive engagement process to ensure the future direction, sustainability, and success of QFES in responding to the needs and expectations of Queenslanders. One of the five guiding principles within Strategy2030 was "Adaptive: building adaptive capacity with the community, the organisation, and the emergency management sector will enhance our collective ability to manage the unexpected" (QFES, 2018b).

The translation of this principle to the QFES Strategic Plan 2022-2026 describes a key objective of "a strong, collaborative and sustainable QFES recognised for contemporary and adaptable fire, emergency and disaster service delivery". This being achieved through the strategies of "maintaining a commitment to ensure the health and safety of our staff and volunteers', and "deliver public value and service optimisation through contemporary and sustainable resource management". Also outlined within the plan are the QFES Shared Values, with one of the five shared values

being Respect. This value outlines a commitment to each other and the expectation that "we appreciate and value each other and our differences" (QFES, 2022).

At the start of the summer of 2023-2024, then QFES Acting Commissioner Steve Smith AFSM, stated, "It has been an unusual start to summer, with a cyclone, a heatwave warning, hail and heavy rain, and bushfires all occurring this month. As always, we must be ready to respond and adapt to any emergency" (S. Smith, personal communication, December 18, 2023). The dynamic environments agencies face points to a continued need for fire and emergency service organisations to adapt to rapidly changing environments and complex situations.

Complex and dynamic conditions are being evidenced year on year with bushfire seasons, unusual and sustained weather events, and other emergencies coinciding concurrently across multiple jurisdictions throughout Australia. During this research there have been multiple flooding events along the eastern seaboard of Australia (ESA), the emergence and ongoing implications of the COVID-19 global pandemic, drought conditions, a mouse plague, and multiple cyclone and other extreme and prolonged weather events.

In July 2021, the Queensland Government commissioned an independent review of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and its associated volunteer services. Multiple recommendations made by the review were accepted by the State Government to address function, structure, culture, efficiency, funding, and sustainability of the

organisation. It is expected that the changes will see the adoption of modern methods in the delivery of service arrangements, streamlined operational structures and better focussed resources. The reforms will be implemented by 30 June 2024.

The reform program involved several significant changes to QFES, including the transition of Marine Rescue, State Emergency Services, and Disaster Management from QFES to the Queensland Police Service (QPS). It also includes the establishment of the new Queensland Fire Department (QFD) (Queensland Government, n.d.) with amendments to legislation seeing the current Act renamed to the *Fire Services Act 1990*. On 1 July 2024 the QFD comes into effect with a clear focus on fire prevention, response and control.

For the purpose of clarity and consistency, in this thesis the organisation will be referred to as 'QFES' because, at the time of the research and writing, that was the legislated name of the organisation. However, the organisation will be referred to as 'QFD' toward the end of the thesis when looking to the future of the organisation and as it will be named post 1 July 2024.

2.1.1. *Fairness, equity and inclusion*

Whilst past approaches to diversity focused on a person's visible characteristics, or their belonging to an under-represented or historically disadvantaged group, QFES takes a broader approach to the meaning of

diversity. The QFES Fairness Equity and Inclusion Framework (2018) outlines that diversity encompasses the wide range of differences that exist within our workforce and across the community, recognising the uniqueness, differences and characteristics of the whole person (QFES, 2018c, p.4). This includes differences in thought, background, skills, expertise, experience and perspectives, and a person's social and professional identity (O'Leary et al., 2015. p9).

For QFES, diversity considers all of the elements that make each individual their unique self, it is about the way every person differs and the value that differences bring. The value of our diversity is realised when the workplace environment is inclusive: inclusion being a lever which can build positive and healthy workplaces and cultures (Queensland Public Service Commission, 2018).

2.2.   The Researcher

The researcher is a Human Capital specialist within the public safety sector, with approximately 35 years' experience, undertaking a variety of roles with a strategic human capital focus. In her current role of Principal Advisor, Workforce Development with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), she contributes to building the capability of QFES leaders through the development and facilitation of leadership programs, with an added focus on the intersection of leadership with fairness, equity and inclusion,

and the provision of advice to all levels of leadership within the organisation.

The opportunity to undertake a work-based project as the basis of the thesis for the Master of Professional Studies (Research) degree contributes to personal self-development, and the personal life-long process of managing learning, work and career transitions. This combined with the other two elements of the 'triple dividend' of professional studies (Fergusson, Allred & Dux, 2018): the contribution to professional practice through the development of new knowledge using academically sound evidence and observations; and making a measurable contribution to workplace improvement through potential innovation, problem solving, analysis, product development and strategy, provides the researcher with an extraordinary opportunity.

2.2.1. Prior Learning

The researcher has had the opportunity to undertake a diverse range of learning and development opportunities throughout her career including: informal training sessions, workshops and courses across a broad range of skills and topics; certificate and diploma level qualifications, typically related to industry specific requirements of particular roles; training and assessment, policing practice and promotional studies; and tertiary and post-graduate courses of study in leadership and applied management.

A change in career saw a transition from operational policing in New Zealand to specialist roles in QFES within human capital fields of operational

recruitment, workforce development, and inclusion and diversity. Transferable skills were easy to identify and enabled opportunities to move through supervisory and leadership levels within each organisation.

2.2.2. *Reflective Practice in Action*

Until recently a great deal of the emphasis on leadership development has been placed on achieving this through traditional and formal educational experiences within university and organisational settings. However, it is universally accepted that there is a need to combine and enhance traditional leadership develop with an engagement in self-reflective thinking by leaders.

The MPSR program presented the opportunity to employ a reflective practice tool unique to the program, the activity provided a focus on, not only what they have achieved in their career to date, but what they have learnt, and experiences gained through the various roles undertaken. The tool allowed for identification and focus on perceived strengths and learning gaps. This assisted the researcher to develop the learning objectives for the MPSR program. Achieving the learning objectives will allow for the building of capability across a broad range of learning categories.

With reference to a taxonomy of professional capabilities and associated learning areas (Appendix A) designed to enhance the identity, broaden the worldview, and allowed for reflection on several things:

- What have they learnt before?

- What are they learning now?

- What do they need to learn to: develop professionally, enhance their career, and develop self?

- What is the gap between what they already know and what they need to know?

The results provided powerful insights and enabled the development of my learning objectives for the program.

2.2.3.   Learning Objectives

The learning objectives set out to achieve through the practice-based project of the Professional Studies program include:

1. **Develop the ability to gather, analyse and utilise information** to build industry knowledge and capability by undertaking a literature review to inform the research project.

2. **Enhance communication and relationship building skills** by identifying opportunities to engage with stakeholders and establish professional contacts to share experience and expertise to broaden the context of the learning.

3. **Develop and extend reflective practice skills** through planned reinforcement with the use of a reflections journal and engaging a coach to optimise learning outcomes, gain new insights, and enhance personal growth.

4. **Develop critical judgement capabilities** by considering information and situations in different contexts to enhance the ability to evaluate and interpret data to conduct independent and innovative research which will result in an original contribution to knowledge.

5. **Enhance influencing skills and personal potential** through communicating and socialising the research and ethical data gathering methodologies utilised, and project progress, analysis and evidence-based findings with stakeholder groups, senior leaders and sector networks.

Achieving the learning objectives identified will provide benefits through building and enhancing professional, intellectual, methodological, social and personal capabilities. In addition, the outcome of this work-based research project is expected to have 'triple dividend' (Fergusson et al., 2018) outcomes in terms of:

Individual outcomes: From the outset the Professional Studies program provided the researcher with valuable learnings through the reflection activity producing a set of learning objectives which, when achieved, will enhance the author's capability in their current role and for potential future career opportunities. The researcher will use the learnings to build capability within QFES/QFD, and to contribute to a body of knowledge which will inform the organisation into the future.

Workplace outcomes: It is expected that new knowledge resulting from the practice-based research project will allow QFES, and the future QFD, to emphasise personal evolution in terms of understanding the

consequences of beliefs and actions on individual and team effectiveness; organisational culture; the adaptive capability of the organisation; and ultimately, the outcomes for the community.

The findings will inform the design and delivery of leadership development programs and benefit leaders directly through professional development. The research findings have the potential to inform the QFD Leadership Framework; People and Culture; Workplace Conduct; Knowledge; and Safety and Wellbeing strategies and plans.

New knowledge, the findings have potential to inform agencies across the Australasian fire and emergency services and broader public safety sector where traditional command-and-control leadership styles may have created barriers and challenges to the adaptive capability of individuals and organisations.

2.3. The Project

The practice-based research project focuses on inclusive leadership capability and adaptive organisation within QFES/QFD. It explores individual perspectives of the workforce to gauge their understanding of inclusive leadership capability, and its relationship to the ability of the organisation to adapt effectively and efficiently.

2.3.1. Scope

The practice-based research project received agency support through the then Assistant Commissioner, QFES People as Executive Sponsor, and a number of key stakeholders holding roles with influence over the future direction of the organisation. The scope of the project recognises the diversity of roles, services and geographical locations within the organisation, and, as such, includes a cohort of participants comprising of a diverse range of the workforce from different regions and services. The study focuses on perspectives in the then QFES but will have potential to inform the organisation as the new QFFD and agencies across the Australasian fire and emergency services sector.

2.3.2. Resourcing

Resourcing for the project included in-kind support from QFES including the time associated with the collection of data from research participants, utilisation of agency resources including information and technology systems, online meeting resources, data and printing, and the researcher's hours required to undertake the project, some of which was within their work schedule.

2.3.3. Expected Outputs

The expected outputs of the project will provide insights into potential capability gaps to inform the design and delivery of future leadership

development programs and resources to assist in building inclusive leadership capability within the future QFD.

2.4. Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 has provided a synopsis of the work-based project which has included details of the workplace context, a comprehensive description of the researcher and their learning objectives, and discussed the project in terms of the scope, resourcing and the expected outcomes of the project. Chapter 3 will provide a review of the literature pertaining to the research topic, exploring and discussing ideas and findings from the current research.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of the literature review is to provide a theoretical basis for this research project. Initial searches have discovered that, while research on the individual elements of inclusive leadership and adaptive organisations have been presented, the interconnectedness of inclusive leadership and the ability for public safety organisations to be adaptable is an area which has not been significantly focused in research within the Australasian fire and emergency services context.

The literature review will explore key themes to critically discuss ideas and findings within the current literature relevant to the research topic. Leadership (section 3.2) will be explored, including a discussion on leadership within the public safety context (section 3.2.1). The literature related to inclusive leadership (section 3.3) will be discussed, including exploration of the concepts of diversity and equity to situate inclusive leadership within the research topic, and the literature pertaining to the adaptive organisation (section 3.4) will also be explored and discussed.

Whilst there are a number of recent studies regarding leadership in the context of command-and-control agencies, including within the Australasian context, there are few evidence-based studies or published research on Australasian emergency service leadership which focus on inclusive leadership capabilities and their link to organisational adaptive

ability. This practice-based study will address this gap in the literature and knowledge on leadership discipline.

3.2. Leadership

Leadership is one of the most studied topics in the organisational setting (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2018), producing an array of evidence-based theories and models. The competition to provide organisations with the latest leadership solution and find a direct line into the development budget is a constant issue for organisations including those in the public safety sector.

The question for many organisations is how to create a leadership style which blends the skills and capabilities required to lead others in increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous times? This was explored by Johanesen (2012) who discussed the need for leaders to do more than just respond to events. He posited that leaders can create the future by being agents of positive change and motivating people through chaos. To achieve positive outcomes there is a need to identify leaders who have the capability to recognise and value differences in opinions, insights and ideas. They also need to consider that having a diversity of perspectives is an opportunity to learn together, enhancing the organisation's capability.

In other earlier research, Lawrence (2013) identified that programs which help leaders develop agility, adaptability, innovation, collaboration, communication, openness to change, and other higher-order critical

thinking skills should be a focus for human resource and talent development specialists. In the same vein, Goleman's (2000) seminal work identified the qualities of truly effective leaders in being able to utilise their emotional intelligence through high degrees of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill. Goleman discusses the ability leaders to adapt their leadership style to any given situation by having a range of leadership styles which they can deploy.

Further, Goleman (2004) suggested that the ability to achieve a balance in the deployment of leadership styles, given a particular set of circumstances, is a learned skill, not one that can be prescribed, and he posits that there are pitfalls with an over-reliance on any one of the six styles of leadership.

More recently Benmira and Agbool (2021), in their longitudinal study on the evolution of leadership theory, discuss leadership as being a dynamic phenomenon which continues to change over time. They identify the most recent shift in leadership concepts leading to the development of shared, collective, collaborative and inclusive leadership practices. They posit that newer leadership theories generally adopt a more systemic approach and consider the multifaceted and complex nature of our modern times.

3.2.1. *Leadership in the public safety context*

It is important to consider leadership within the public safety sector specifically. Leadership in the public safety sector, including police, fire,

and emergency services, is shaped by historical influences from paramilitary or quasi-military origins. These organisations have traditionally emphasised command-and-control leadership styles, which were seen as essential for effective operations and successful outcomes in critical incidents. The way leaders are trained in these agencies may have a lasting impact on the experiences of individuals within them.

Increasingly, we are facing new and emerging issues and risks, which are impacting at the local, national, and global levels, so consideration of a switch in focus is required to enhance the development of leadership capabilities to be more than a reliance on traditional command-and-control style leadership. This will require bringing forward a focus on people-orientation, supporting and valuing the ability of leaders to leverage different perspectives for an organisation to be more adaptive.

This translates to building capability to be more effective, not only responding in the moment to rapid or unexpected situations, but also being focused on how we evolve and change. How might we learn and benefit from the opportunities and risks presented in the form of change. This includes determining how we take what we learn and apply those lessons within in any organisational context in these increasingly complex and uncertain times.

In 2017, Adams et al. conducted a comprehensive review of findings from the advanced leadership professional development programs delivered at the Australian Emergency Management Institute between 2010 and 2014. They argue that hierarchy, in the context of traditional

command-and-control agencies, can have a negative effect on organisations in that it can "stifle the engagement of people, suppress their energy and innovative spark" (Adams et al., 2017, p. 5).

The review identified that whilst it was rare that leaders deliberately stifled their team members ideas within the context of the simulation exercise, they did find that leaders rarely allowed their teams to challenge or contest their decisions. From these findings they concluded that this may be the influence of an unconscious habit potentially formed from an over-reliance on command-and-control culture and practices over many years.

They further suggest that the challenge for traditional command-and-control agencies is that leaders need to recognise a fundamental equality amongst their people. This means that everyone should be considered unique, they have a voice that is equal to others, and everyone has the right to put forward their individual perspective and ideas. Further, they presented a shared conviction that leadership is most helpful when it enables others to do their best.

Earlier literature looking at organisational culture from Denison and Mishra (1995) identified a model of organisational culture which proposed four organisational traits that organisations need to master to be effective. Denison et al. (2012) refined the original model, creating an instrument for organisations to measure their organisational culture. The model proposes that the four traits of involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission are driven by the beliefs and assumptions that form an organisation's culture (Figure 2).

When examining this model in the context of leadership within public safety agencies, a number of areas are relevant. Thes include: the capacity for leaders to understand their organisation's ability to be adaptive, the competencies required for creating change, having a customer focus, and creating organisational learning. All of these elements provide an opportunity to be understood and leveraged both by leaders and organisations.
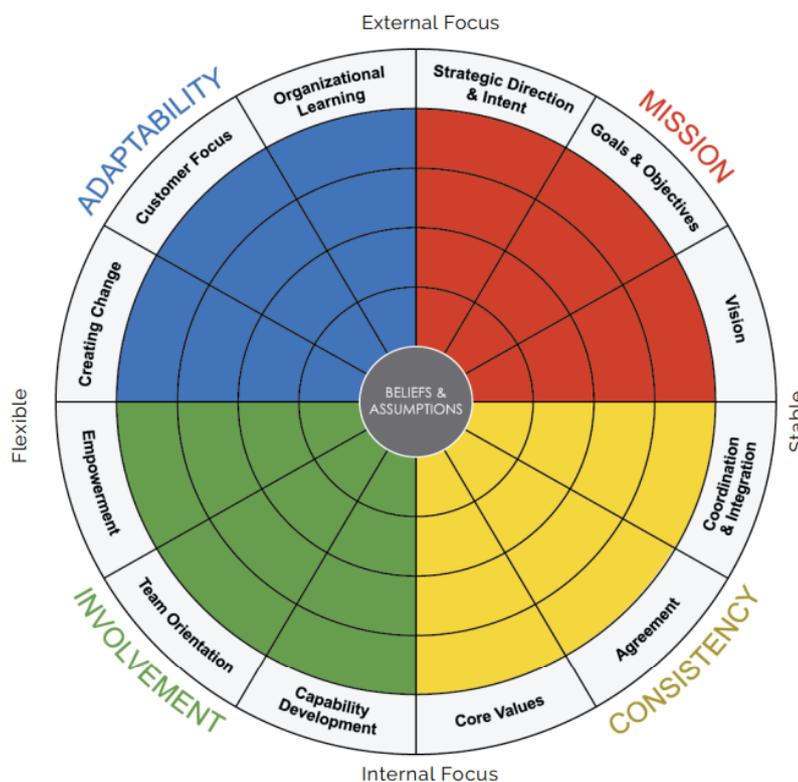
Figure 2: The Denison model (Denison et al., 2012).

Like many contemporary models of leadership and organisational effectiveness the Denison model focuses on "tensions" or "dynamic

contradictions" that need to be managed by leaders (Denison et al., 2012, p. 9). They posit that within the highlighted adaptability trait leaders need to be able to translate the demands of the environment into action. With the dynamic nature leaders at all levels of public safety organisations find themselves, this is a critical capability to possess.

In their seminal work, Bhandari, Owen and Brooks (2014) expanded the work of Denison et al. (2012) by bringing the model specifically into the context of fire and emergency management organisations. They discussed the intersection and tensions between the internal and external orientations within Denison's model and identified additional elements which fire and emergency management organisations need to manage. The additional elements include mission and direction, leadership, stakeholder communication, and adaptability.

While their commentary on the model identifies a suggested relationship between leadership and adaptability, the leadership capabilities of an inclusive leader and any relationship to organisational adaptability are not explored or discussed.

However, Bhandari et al.'s work did identify a critical challenge for fire and emergency management organisation as being able to enable both clarity of direction and purpose, along with flexibility and change. This tension was identified as a challenge at the event, strategic and organisational levels. They also found that, in general, the predictive significance of stability, adaptability and leadership for perceived success is strong in all organisational types.

Referring again to Denison's model, they found a higher predictive significance of stability (mission and direction) in fire and emergency management organisations where personnel potentially have a higher regard for the structures and reporting relationships.

A preference for stability within leadership can indicate a preference for control, stability and direction which may hinder individual or collective capability of the adaptability trait. The adaptability trait being the ability to translate the demands of the situation into adaptive action. Additionally, an over-reliance on structures and preference for control may hinder any propensity to engage with the perspectives or ideas of other, potentially missing vital information to inform decisions.

If leaders in fire and emergency management organisations rely more on organisational structures and plans, this may also result in difficulty in managing novel or unique situations. Bhandari et al. (2014) further suggested that fire and emergency leaders need to innovate, adapt and improvise because plans, regardless of how well formulated and executed, become redundant as circumstances evolve.

From the organisational perspective these authors observed that established fire and emergency management organisations may have less capacity for flexibility and change. They further posit that the need to be adaptive could become a blind spot for the organisational response in modern emergency management. Similarly, Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018) identified that one of the biggest challenges for leaders is the need to

enable the organisation and the people to be adaptive in increasingly dynamic and demanding environments.

Taken together, the literature identifies that current and emerging leadership models and literature provide an evolving framework for understanding the complexity of the role leaders play in contributing to organisational success. This research project provides an opportunity to reflect and build on contemporary leadership models as they apply within the QFES/QFD context, and more broadly within the public safety context.

3.3. Inclusive Leadership

In discussing inclusive leadership, it is significant to first consider the concept of diversity and inclusion. The origins of diversity programs were discussed by Frost (2014) in his work investigating how inclusion creates better business results.He identified that diversity programs started emerging in the 1960s civil rights era when marginalized groups such as African Americans, women, and the LGBTQ+ community began to demand equal rights and representation in society. It could be argued however that the roots of the movement go back even further to the suffrage movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which fought for women's right to vote (Faulkner, 2016).

Traditional approaches to diversity have typically focused on a person's visible characteristics. However, more recent and contemporary

approaches recognise the whole person and actively foster the less visible aspects of diversity (Queensland Public Service Commission, 2021).

Similarly, in their work focused on talent and innovation Sherbin and Rashid (2017) identified that a more mature focus on diversity and inclusion encompasses the value of diverse perspectives and the potential for organisations to benefit from leveraging diverse perspectives. Their view is supported by Ferdman (2013, 2020) who suggested that inclusion requires that all individuals feel able to fully and meaningfully contribute and to be able to do so without compromising or relinquishing any part of their identity.

Inclusion and diversity have been 'on the agenda' for private and public agencies, including fire and emergency service organisations for a significant period time. However, under-representation has generally been the focus, particularly in the role of firefighter and more broadly in leadership roles across agencies. In 2015, Mor Barak discussed the growing recognition of the need for inclusion in the workplace, especially for service organisations who need to have a diverse workforce to work effectively with diverse communities.

Comprehensive research was undertaken by Young et al. (2018) within the fire and emergency services sector, where they reported that, within the emergency service organisations studied, diversity and inclusion was primarily understood and framed as a moral imperative. They discussed the need for diversity and inclusion to be understood and framed as a business imperative which has potential to enhance the performance

of an organisation. Their organisational assessments revealed that the traditional, authoritative, predominantly masculine culture, and siloed structures which have developed from this type of culture have created barriers to greater diversity and inclusion.

The Queensland Public Sector Commission, formerly the Queensland Public Service Commission, recognises the positive outcomes for organisations when their workforce feels included. As a result of an independent review into the agency (Bridgman, 2020) the resulting *Public Sector Act 2022* (Qld) reflects the commitment to ensuring public sector agencies are providing respectful and inclusive workplaces, specifically identifying this in Chapter 2, Part 3 as being workplaces where:

- People feel safe in the workplace;

- Experiences and perspectives are invited and respected;

- A culture of belonging is fostered;

- People are supported to work together to improve performance and wellbeing; and

- People have the skills and knowledge and access to systems necessary to engage in employment matters in a respectful, appropriate and safe way.

In their early seminal work Ferdman and Davidson (2002) identified inclusion as a dynamic process interacting as a set of structures involving values, norms, group and organisational climates, and behaviours, which

combine to create experiences of inclusion in a mutually reinforcing and dynamic system. As shown in Figure 3, they posit that the experience of inclusion increases confidence resulting in a perpetual cycle where the behaviours and systems are inclusive.
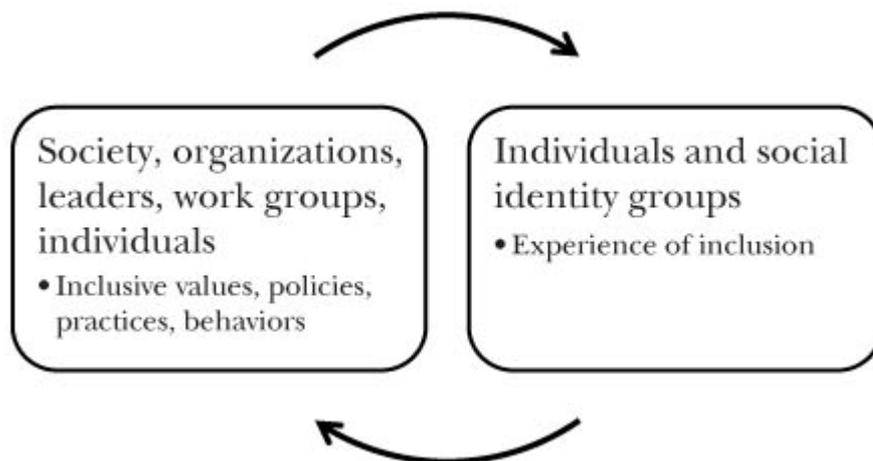
Figure 3: Inclusion as a Systemic and Dynamic Process (Ferdman & Davidson, 2002)

Ferdman and Davidson's work highlights the importance of connecting inclusion to inequality and the hierarchical nature of intergroup relations, both in society and within organisations. They argue that this connection is crucial because it links to the original goals of diversity initiatives, which aim to challenge societal inequities and systematic discrimination. Essentially, inclusion needs to be deeply intertwined with diversity within organisations, and it is through this relationship that inclusion gains its power.

. Previous published studies on inclusive leadership include the work of Nembhard and Edmondson who, in 2006, defined inclusive leadership as a relational leadership style that accepts the differences of members within

the group and further identified that, inclusive leaders encourage and include others in discussions and decisions in situations when their perspectives may otherwise have been absent. Through their study they posited that, while numerous studies support the notion that leadership plays a key role in enhancing employees innovative work behaviour, there had been limited attention paid to the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behaviour.

More recently, Javed et al. (2019) undertook a study to examine inclusive leadership as a predictor of innovative work behaviour with the mediating role of psychological safety. Their study indicated that inclusiveness is key in providing leadership support for innovative work behaviour, which in turn helps to cultivate quality relationships. Further, they found that these relationships support a sense of psychological safety which is vital in creating conditions where individuals feel safe to bring up ideas, voice opinions and to raise questions.

Similarly, Hirak et al. (2012) identified that inclusive leaders who value the inclusion of employees in work processes and discussions, give employees a chance to raise their voices for generating, promoting, and implementing new ideas and initiatives. In similar insights into leadership and inclusiveness, the previous work of Nembhard and Edmonson (2006) also found that leaders who show appreciation for others' contributions and invite group members to provide input are leadership behaviours that convey inclusion.

O'Leary et al. (2015, p.7) found in their research there is, "growing recognition that leaders have a critical role to play in achieving workplaces where a diversity of people feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve the organisation". Their research outlines an inclusive leadership model which identifies five mindsets of an inclusive leader (O'Leary et al., 2015, p.16):

- **Identity aware -** Believes diversity can significantly improve organisational performance, and so learns about their own and others' identities;
- **Relational -** Creates teams and networks in which a diversity of people feel they belong, and are valued and respected;
- **Open and curious -** Is curious about and open to new and different perspectives from a diversity of people;
- **Flexible and agile -** Is flexible about, and responsive to, a diversity of people and perspectives; and
- **Growth-focused -** Challenges accepted practices and incorporates different perspectives into how business is done.

The model was developed from research within Australian organisations and provides this research project with a baseline to compare inclusive leadership capabilities to the research results.

Along the same lines, Qi and Lui (2017) posit that inclusive leaders perceive team members as contributors, acknowledging everyone's value.

They investigated earlier studies and found that previous researchers had concluded that inclusive leadership allows individuals to have access to the decision-making process and discussions, to speak openly, to promote and implement new ideas.

Furthermore, they argue that inclusive leaders provide environments where every individual feels that they can provide their perspective, give feedback or advice and that the environment is safe for them to do so. Nembhard and Edmondson's (2006) previous research support this assertion, they found that when this inclusive type of environment exists, new ideas and processes are easier to implement, helping organisations to meet new challenges and adapt more effectively to a changing, volatile environment.

Recognising the significance of inclusive leadership within the change process, inclusive leadership is identified as one of the four principles of change within the QFES Approach to Change (QFES, n.d.). The change methodology highlights that change is supported through inclusive leadership by leaders: sharing information, including the 'why' for the change; modelling the Leadership Competencies for Queensland (Public Service Commission, n.d.); leading psychologically safe environments, through enabling contribution and collaboration; and embedding changes into business as usual. The consolidation of inclusive leadership into the organisation's approach to change is designed to ensure that the workforce is engaged, prepared and supported through change, supporting the inquiries of this current study.

Identifying tangible individual outcomes, Acquavita et al. (2009), in their seminal work found that job satisfaction is a positive impact of inclusive leadership capability. Conversely, a significant risk was identified in earlier literature by Mor Barak et al. (2006) who found that when people feel excluded, it is a predictor of an intention to leave their organisation. It is important therefore to understand when there may be potential for people to feel either included or excluded.

Through their extensive longitudinal research, Gallup identified four main types of vulnerable interactions that influence employees' sense of belonging (Herway & Smith, 2018). They refer to these vulnerable interactions as meaningful moments. The four types of meaningful moments are when you propose a new idea, when you ask for help, when you push back on something, and when you ask for a personal favour. They further describe that how the leader reacts to these moments when people are sharing their perspective or opinion is critical to inculcating a culture of belonging.

From a risk perspective, Young and Jones (2019) report on a study they undertook which included a series of six focus groups with emergency service personnel and volunteers, and a workshop conducted with D&I practitioners from emergency service organisations. They found that inclusive leadership capability is a key leadership capability which has the potential to minimise or mitigate indirect and direct risks associated with human capital, social capital and financial capital. Booysen (2014, p. 306) combines multiple elements to define inclusive leadership as "a respectful

relational practice that enables individuals and collectives to be fully part of the whole, such that they are directed, aligned and committed toward shared outcomes, for the common good of all, while retaining a sense of authenticity and uniqueness".

For the purpose of this study inclusion is defined as, "when a diversity of people feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their organisation" (O'Leary et al., 2015, p. 10).

The evidence reviewed in this section highlight the positive aspects of developing and applying inclusive leadership capability. They provide a compelling argument in of the importance of inclusive leadership capability in providing environments where people feel safe to bring their perspectives. This allows for the diversity within the workforce to be harnessed. The research reviewed assists in shaping the research design of this research project and guides the interpretation of findings relevant to this research construct.

3.4.   Adaptive Organisation

It has been observed that organisations can gain a competitive advantage by enhancing their adaptive capabilities (Mwangi et al., 2022). The adaptive capability of an organisation relies on its ability to constantly change itself, to consistently evolve, and to learn and benefit from the opportunities and risks of change (Christiansen, 2016). This view is

supported by Atanassova and Bednar (2022) who assert that organisations build adaptive capability by developing and applying learnings. Further, they posit that it is knowledge and organisational learning which are critical for organisational growth and survival during volatile times.

Whilst literature relating to adaptive organisations exists within the Australasian emergency management context, it is largely focuses on building adaptive capacities to achieve community resilience.

When discussing adaptive capacity in relation to community resilience to natural hazards, Parsons et al. (2016) identified governance, policy and leadership as organisational enablers of learning, adaptation, and transformation. Similarly, Hunt (2016) identified leadership as an adaptive capacity necessary internally, for building social capital, and externally, for building community competence. The focus of the case studies presented in the research was in the context of building adaptive capacities for disaster resilience rather that adaptive capability of the emergency service organisations. This current study seeks to address gaps in the literature by exploring perceptions of adaptive capability of QFES.

An increasing amount of literature exists regarding adaptive leadership style. In his examination of leadership capability, Obolensky (2014) explored the concept of complex adaptive leadership. He emphasised the need for organisations to evolve through adaptive leadership, advocating for a discussion model to overcome barriers to adaptive thinking. While Obolensky highlighted key aspects of adaptive

organisations, such as the importance of communication, he did not fully address inclusive leadership as a critical leadership capability.

Adaptive leadership capability is primarily about helping an organisation navigate complex change and empowering people to adjust and respond to challenges that don't have a straightforward solution. In contract, inclusive leadership capability focuses on creating an environment of belonging and respect, resulting in everyone having the opportunity to contribute to the organisation's success. It is the link between inclusive leadership and the ability of the organisation to be adaptive that this study focuses on.

Earlier studies support a strong link between developing adaptive capability and executive leaders' willingness to abandon traditional leadership patterns, particularly the idea that leadership is about providing solutions. Heifetz and Laurie (2001) further argue that in the face of adaptive challenges, the responsibility for problem-solving must shift from the executive suite to the collective intelligence of employees at all levels, reinforcing the need for more inclusive and distributed leadership.

Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that adaptive leaders contribute to the adaptive capability of an organisation. However, this study will explore inclusive leadership capability as a concept distinct from adaptive leadership.

The Queensland Public Service Commission's (2018) *Positive and Healthy Workplace Guide* recognises the critical part leaders must play in any change within their agencies. The guide identifies that leaders and the

leadership capabilities they develop, are critical to the workforces' ability to think and act in new ways to respond to change, in order to help create simple and responsive services (Queensland Public Service Commission, 2018). The guide identifies six critical attributes of the workforce and workplaces, two of which relate directly to constructs of this research:

- Inclusive: people feel empowered and supported, enabling them to speak up and contribute to their full potential; and

- Adaptable and agile: people welcome and seek to introduce change and innovation. (Queensland Public Sector Commission, 2018)

In conclusion this review has identified gaps in the literature regarding inclusive leadership capability and the effects on organisational adaptive capability. Collectively these studies indicate that it is the understanding of intersection between inclusive leadership capability and the ability of the organisation to be adaptive that is an important relationship and one which this research project explores. The aim of this research is to explore the proposition that, within all leadership contexts, leaders with inclusive leadership capabilities are better able to leverage different perspectives and use these perspectives to assist the organisation's adaptive capability.

3.6.   Conceptual framework and research questions

The conceptual framework developed by the researcher, presented in Figure 4 identifies the theoretical underpinnings of the existing research and reflects the key topics identified in the literature review. The framework maps out the variables which will be examined and the potential relationships between them which will guide the development and analysis of the research within the context of QFES. This research will explore QFES leaders' perceptions of inclusive leadership and its relationship as a lever for the organisation's adaptive capability.
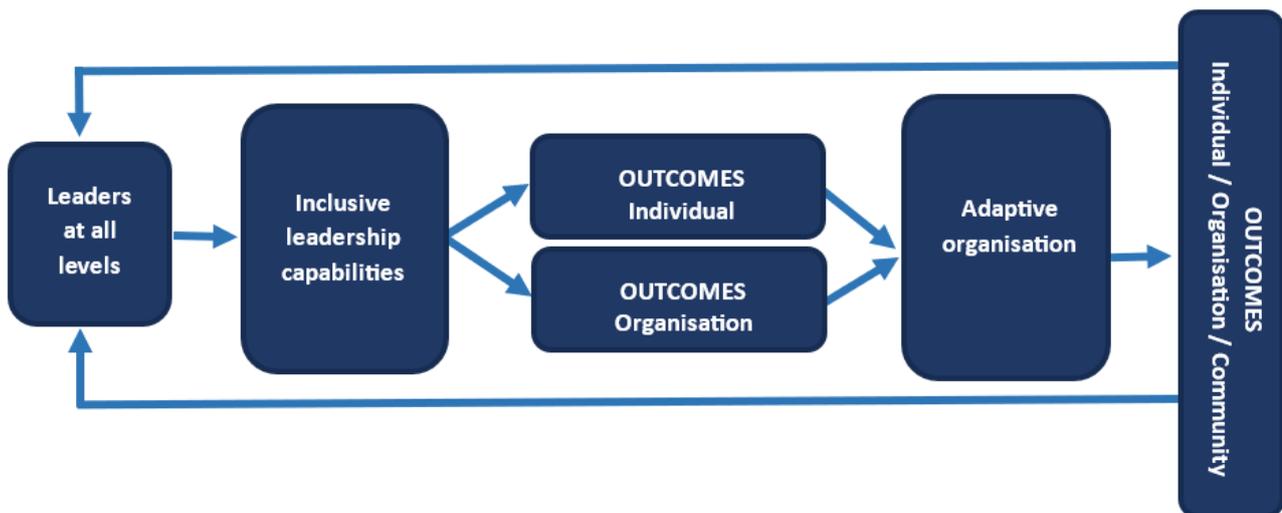
Figure 4: Conceptual framework (Source: Author's own work)

With the preceding literature and considerations outlined, the key question this study explores is:

RQ: What is the relationship between inclusive leadership and an adaptive organisation, and how might it affect the ability of QFES to operate as an adaptive organisation?

To consider the key research question fully, the following four sub-research questions will also be examined:

Sub-RQ1: How is inclusive leadership understood by leaders and the workforce in QFES?

Sub-RQ2: How is the concept of an adaptive organisation perceived by QFES leaders and the workforce?

Sub-RQ3: How and to what extent do QFES leaders display inclusive leadership and adaptive behaviours in the workplace?

Sub-RQ4: What are the key components of inclusive leadership required to make QFES an adaptive organisation?

3.7.   Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 has presented the literature across the relevant themes related to this study. The literature review has demonstrated shortcomings of current knowledge, as existing research primarily focuses on the individual elements and does not focus on inclusive leadership capabilities and any link to organisational adaptive capability. This presents the opportunity for

the current study to provide new learnings and knowledge to add to the literature on this topic.

Chapter 4 will describe the research design adopted to address the research questions, it provides an overview of the location in which the research has taken place as well as the research participants. The collection, management and analysis of data are detailed, as are ethical considerations relevant to the study.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 4 provides details of the research design and methods used to achieve the purpose of the research outlined in Chapter 1, section 1.4.. This chapter discusses the research paradigm underpinning the study design, then provides a rationale for, and description of, the research design and methods employed including: the design and administration of the data collection techniques; and the participant groups including population, recruitment, and participant characteristics. An outline of proposed data analysis is included, and ethical considerations are discussed in later sections of the chapter.

The study applies a qualitative method to examine individual perspectives of leaders on inclusive leadership and adaptive organisation across QFES. It explores the relationship between inclusive leadership and adaptive organisation, and the potential effect on the ability to be an adaptive organisation. This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted to examine this phenomenon.

4.1. Research Paradigm

The study adopts a Pragmatist paradigm because its focus is "not simply to know more, but to apply, problem solve and enhance awareness of one's interaction with the world" (King, 2022, p. 3159). Its other primary focus is on addressing real-world problems, in this case in a work-based context, a topic addressed in more detail elsewhere in the context of work-

based learning (Fergusson, Shallies, & Meijer, 2019). Pragmatism also draws on the opinions, experiences, and perspectives of the research participants, recognising that there are different ways of interpreting the world, that no single point of view can ever give the entire picture and that there may be multiple realities.

The use of a Pragmatist paradigm in this research supports the context of the research topic itself, of enabling people to put forward their perspectives. In seeking multiple perspectives there is a need to consider that even if an experience is shared, there will be varying degrees of that shared experience leading to different degrees of that shared belief, and that the extent of a shared belief for a particular situation may not automatically lead to similar outcomes given a similar situation (Morgan, 2014).

4.2.   Research Design

This work-based project adopted an applied research design. Applied research provides a practical approach to solving a problem. It is exploratory in nature with the project conducted as initial research on a newly identified issue. The research is based on primary qualitative data to identify characteristics, patterns and correlation of language used to describe individual understanding of the research concepts. In qualitative research such as this, the data collected require analysis to derive meaning and to converting large amounts of written and transcribed texts into a "concise summary of key results" (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017, p. 94).

Figure 5 illustrates the research design as a visual representation of the research study's structure and outlines the key elements of the research process.
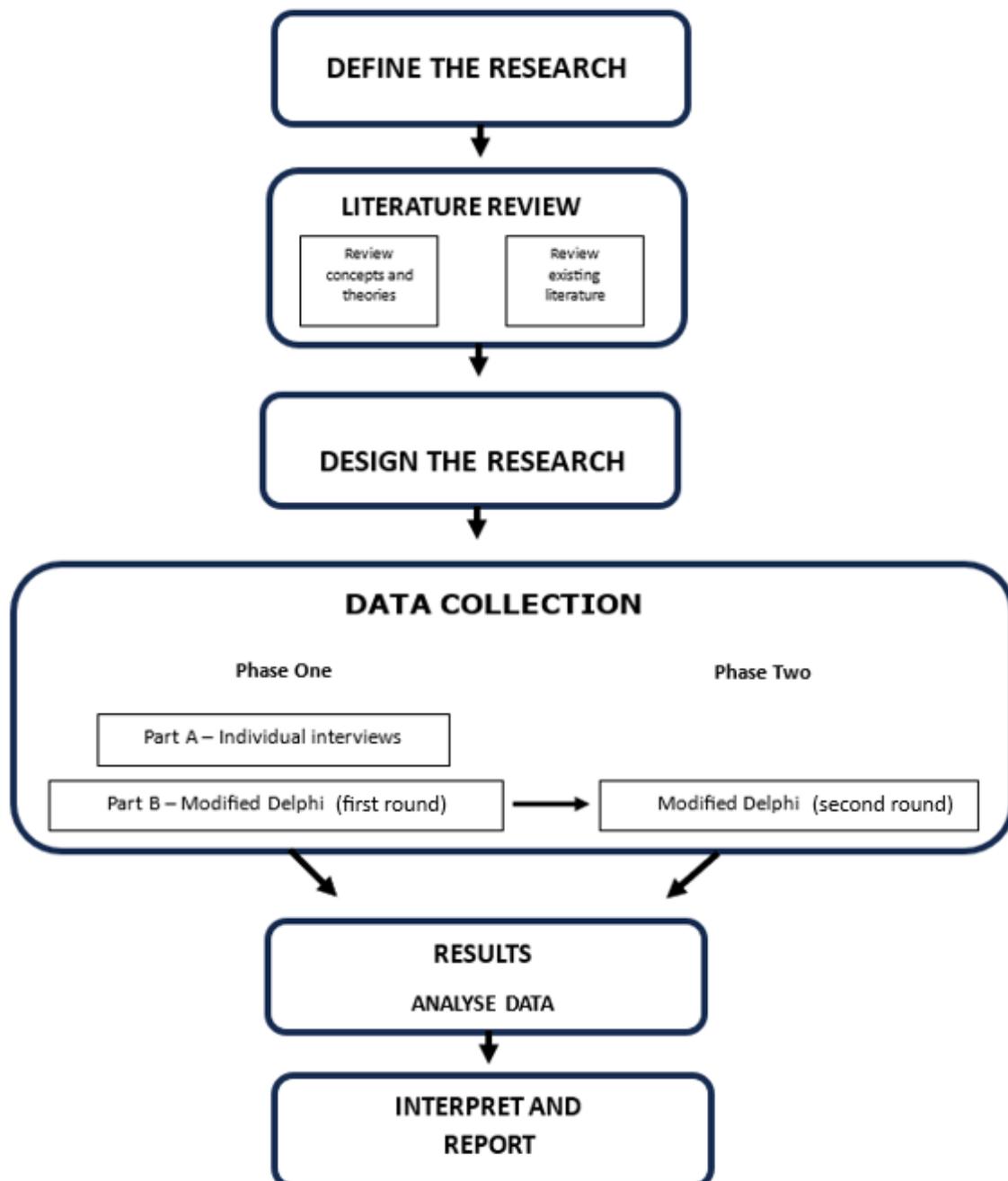
Figure 5: Research Design (Source: Author's own work)

Action research, as a type of academic research has been discussed for almost 80 years, and more recently in the context of organisational learning theory as identified by Antonellis and Berry (2017). They discuss action research as a multi-staged process which can achieve positive change and gain support from stakeholders that can lead to constructive long-term results. Further, they describe how action research allows for the researcher to play an active role in the research process and gain a deeper understanding of the issues facing the organisation while gathering participants' input regarding possible solutions for the problem.

McNiff (2009) describes action research as consideration of two things: action (what you do); and research (how you learn about and explain what you do). Leveraging this description, the author posits the action aspect of this research has the potential to improve practice, while the research aspect is about creating deeper understanding and knowledge at the individual andorganisational level about the research topic.

In their initial research into participative inquiry and practice, Reason and Bradbury (2001) identified that the primary purpose of action research was the production of practical knowledge which is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives. Building on their earlier work, the authors describe action research as "a practice of participation, engaging those who might otherwise be subjects of research or recipients of interventions to a greater or less extent as inquiring co-researchers" (Bradbury & Reason, 2018, p. 3). Action research therefore effectively engages participants as co-researchers, allowing them to learn through the process of the research.

The use of this design provides potential in terms of individual and organisational learning through the data collection phases, through the socialisation of the research findings and discussions, and finally through utilisation of the research within the design of activities, potential outputs and products.

4.3.   Data Collection

The research utilised qualitative data collection techniques comprising of two phases of data collection.

Phase One of the study engaged two cohorts of participants participating in either Part A: Individual Interviews or Part B: An online question form as the first round of the modified Delphi technique.

Phase Two of the study engaged the participant group who undertook the online question form in Phase One inviting them to participate in a second online question form, as the second round of the modified Delphi technique. Both phases allowed participants to use reflection when prompted, harnessing each participant's individual knowledge and experience of the research topic, thereby providing qualitative information from their responses to the interview questions or the online question form. The data collection techniques were chosen to allow for a dialogue on the topic and to generate knowledge through the interactions between the researcher and participants (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011), and to provide efficient methods for the collection of a diverse range of perspectives.

The questions for Phase One were developed in consultation with a key informant The key informant was the QFES Executive Sponsor for Fairness, Equity and Inclusion Framework and the Chair of the People and Culture Committee at the time, possessing over 35 years' experience in emergency services in frontline, operation, leadership and executive management roles. They have extensive experience leading and managing the coordination of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery for all hazards, as well as strategic control and coordination for major emergencies and events. The researcher met with the key informant, acknowledging their expertise, to gather more detailed information on the research topic. This process identified saliant points for the researcher, allowing them to uncover new and emerging information and understand the key informant's perspectives on the complexities within organisational governance frameworks.

The opportunity provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of the current and emerging situation within the organisation. The research topic, constructs and research questions were discussed resulting in a set of questions being identified, blending in the first-hand evidence and insights of the key informant. The questions were structured to ensure a logical flow and allow participants to reflect on their knowledge and experience with a view to leaving participants feeling empowered and listened to.

The use of key informants has been well-documented over many years as a data collection method in qualitative research (Tremblay, 1957;

Seidler, 1974; Akhter, 2022). Rather than using the key informant as a distinct source of data, the researcher engaged with the key informant's insights, knowledge, and collective experience to shape and guide the process of research inquiry. Content from the literature review was also considered along with previous research projects to co-construct the questions used for data collection. Pivotal research from Booysen (2014), an internationally recognised scholar-practitioner in the field of leadership, culture and diversity, posed pertinent questions which were suggested to be explored within the larger debate about inclusion in the workplace, including:

- How do we create organisationally sustainable inclusive leadership practices?

- In what way do historical patterns of exclusion impact the perceptions and efficacy of inclusive leadership practices?

- What do dominant groups gain from inclusive leadership?, and

- Is true inclusion even possible, or is the act of inclusion in organisations in the hands of those in power?

Equally, from their seminal research and in presenting the Diversity Council Australia - DCA's Inclusive Leadership Model, O'Leary et al. (2015) made a number of recommendations that are key for organisations when considering their model:

- Assess the current state;

- Engage the leadership team;

- Communicate expectations;

- Integrate inclusion into the leadership framework;

- Identify talent;

- Identify the learning and development needed; and

- Measure success.

The suite of questions developed as a result of these various techniques were determined to be equally applicable to both Part A and Part B of Phase One of the data collection. This consisted of ten questions presented in three sections. The first two sections focused specifically on the research constructs of inclusive leadership and adaptive organisation to elicit the participants' perspectives directly:

Questions on *Inclusive leadership* included the following:

Q1   Describe the key attributes of an inclusive leader.

Q2   How do leaders create environments where people are able to put forward their perspective, ideas and opinions?

Q3   Describe a situation when your perspective, ideas or opinions have been heard and acted on.

Q4   Describe a situation where you have heard and acted on the perspective, ideas or opinions of others.

Questions on *Adaptive organisation* included the following:

Q5   Describe what being an adaptive organisation means.

Q6   Describe how successful you think QFES is at being an adaptive organisation.

Q7   In the context of QFES, what kind of advantage can be achieved by being an organisation which is adaptive?

Q8   What part do leaders have to play in QFES being an adaptive organisation?

The third section included two researcher-driven photo-elicitation questions. The method of photo-elicitation for the final two questions was chosen to add further depth and insight by using two images to solicit thoughts on the concepts of: difference and inclusion; and how an individual's perspective is developed. This method of enquiry provides participants the opportunity for a less constrained view and articulation of the concepts, generating a greater depth of thought when the concepts to be uncoupled from the organisational context.

Whilst photo-elicitation can be used as an independent interview method to obtain data, as identified by Padget et al. (2013) in their seminal work, it works best when used in tandem with standard interview methods to provide additional depth to participant responses. Glaw et al. (2017) draws our attention to how the use of photo-elicitation can add further validity, depth, richness, and new insights to already existing verbal and written data collection methods.

On the basis of the findings that the use of photo-elicitation method can supplement verbal and written data collection methods, the researcher supplied two separate images for the final two questions.

Photo-elicitation

Q9 Use Picture #1 to discuss your understanding of difference and inclusion.
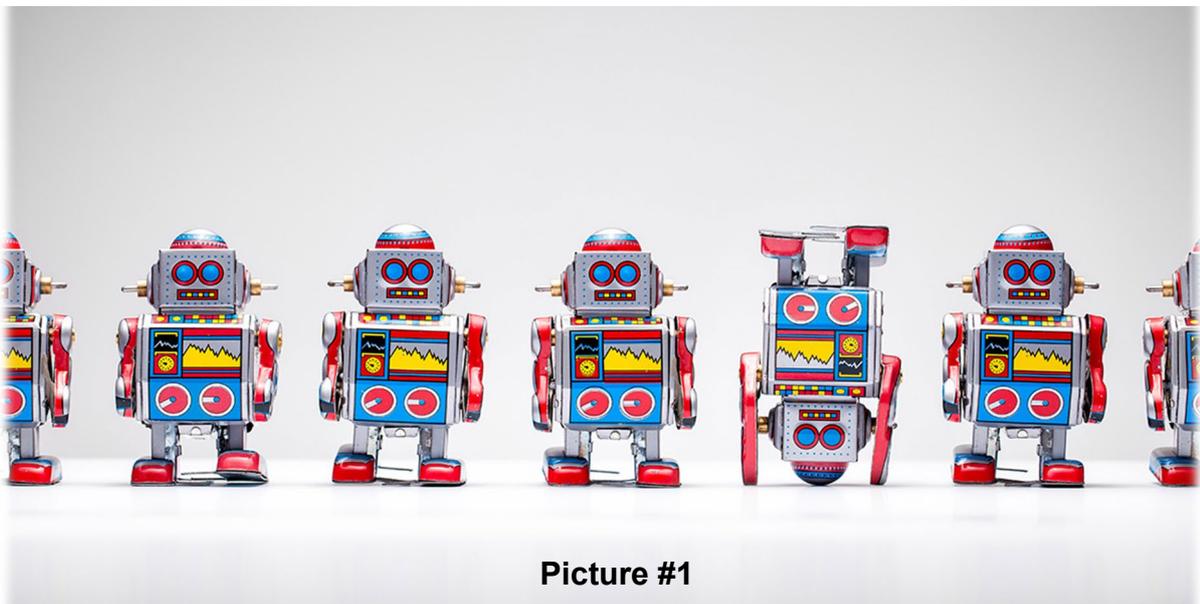
Picture #1

Q10 Using Picture #2 as an example, describe how an individual's perspective is developed.

Picture #2
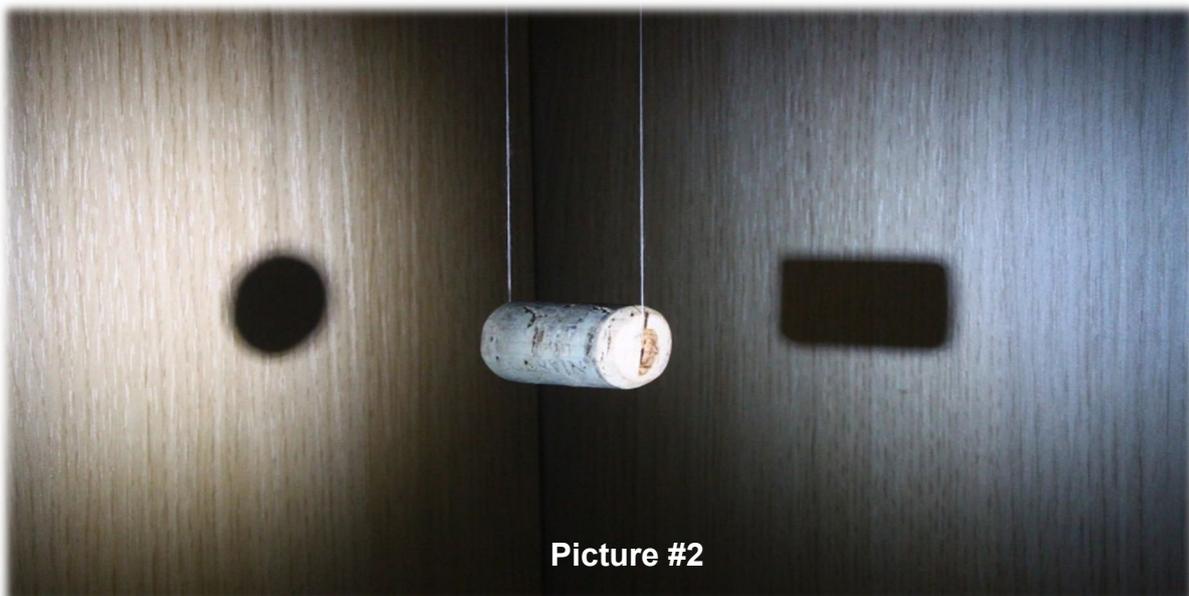
Responses were recorded and transcribed from recordings of the individual interviews or written by participants in the online question form.

4.4. Phase One - Part A: Individual Interviews

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews provided the opportunity to collect perspectives from a diverse range of participants. Executive leaders and senior leaders were invited to participate to gain an understanding of the individual and shared sense of meaning of inclusive leadership and adaptive organisation at the senior levels of leadership within the organisation. The interviews provided a framework in which the participants were able to respond in a way that accurately and thoroughly represented their points of view (Sewell, 2008).

4.4.1. Study Population

Call to action

The Assistant Commissioner - QFES People, as sponsor of the work-based project invited members of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to participate in the research via an email sent on 15 October 2021 (Appendix B). The email also invited the leaders to socialise the opportunity and share the invitation with their leadership teams. The target cohort for interview participants was executive and senior leaders. A link within the email provided a landing page (Appendix C) which outlined enough detail for

individuals to express their interest using a link to the Expression of Interest (EOI) Form.

The call to action for the senior leader and executive cohort asked for their preference in how they were willing to participate, the options included the individual interview or the online question form. To ensure optimal numbers for the individual interviews, potential participants were also able to indicate if they were willing to undertake either the individual interview or the online question form. This option allowed an inclusive approach to ensure the inclusion of interested participants and optimum numbers for the various data collection methods.

The call to action resulted in 17 individuals expressing their interest to participate in the research project: 11 of that group were at an executive or senior leadership levels. An *executive leader* describes a member of QFES Executive Leadership Team, someone at the substantive rank or classification of Assistant Commissioner, Executive Director, Deputy Commissioner or Commissioner. For this research project, a *senior leader* describes participants at the substantive rank or classification of Chief Superintendent or Director.

Each of the 11 executive and senior leaders received an email advising that they were confirmed as an interview participant and were provided with information about the next steps to arrange a meeting to conduct the interview. Due to availability conflicts during the data gathering for this phase, a total of nine executive and senior leaders participated as

subjects for the interview. The remaining five potential participants who had expressed their interest in the research project, but were not at executive or senior leader level, were invited to participate in first round of the online question form as participants in the modified Delphi group (Phase One - Part B).

Interview participant documentation

Interviewees were sent an Outlook meeting invitation for either a face-to-face meeting or online meeting to conduct the interview. The meeting invitations were sent with a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form.

Interviewees were asked to read the Participant Information Sheet prior to their scheduled meeting. The information sheet provided details regarding privacy, expected time commitment, and risks and benefits of participating in the study. Seven interviewees undertook a face-to-face meeting, and these participants were asked to bring the completed Consent Form to the interview to be signed before undertaking the interview. The remaining two interviewees each undertook an online meeting via Microsoft Teams, and they provide a scan of their completed Consent Form to the researcher prior to the interview commencing.

Interview process

The researcher commenced the interview by thanking the interviewee for engaging with the research project and some general questions to display

warmth, empathy, and attentiveness to set the scene and create an environment to support a meaningful interpersonal encounter. The survey question sheet (Appendix D) was used as a guide to keep track of the questions whilst following the lines of discussion of each interviewee.

The questions provided a natural flow to the conversation and even though each interview was recorded, the researcher employed active listening techniques to stay engaged with each interviewee. Where appropriate, follow-up questions were used to encourage interviewees to elaborate on some of their responses, and at times the researcher summarised or interpreted responses to allow for further probing questions to elicit more detail. Each interview was recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Word capability and stored on the researcher's USQ SharePoint drive.

At the completion of the questions the interviewees were asked if they had any questions. The researcher answered any questions presented and advised each interviewee that they would get an opportunity to review the transcript of the interview. The transcribed documents were checked for spelling and grammar and formatted by the researcher prior to being sent to each interviewee. Interviewees were invited to validate the accuracy of the transcription of their interview and to provide any clarification or additions as they saw fit.

Interview participant group

The interview participant group (i.e., interviewees) consisted of nine executive and senior leaders. Demographic data for the participant group provides a breakdown of the leadership levels, gender and age group information provided in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2: Phase One - Part A: Individual Interview - Leadership levels

Leadership level	Count	Percentage of total # at leadership level
Executive leader	7	33%
Senior leader	2	9%
TOTAL	**9**	

Table 3: Phase One – Part A: Individual Interview - Gender

Gender	Count
Woman	2
Man	7
TOTAL	**9**

Table 4: Phase One – Part A: Individual Interview - Age

Age group	Count
21 - 30 years	0
31 - 40 years	1
41 - 50 years	2
51 - 60 years	5
Over 60 years	1
TOTAL	**9**

A unique participant identifier was assigned to each of the interviewees in this phase. This allowed the researcher to remove all personal identifying information from the research data set for this data collection method to

protect the privacy and anonymity of the interviewees. For this phase the unique identifier is in the format: INT-P01 to identify each of the nine participants. (i.e., INT-P01 – interviewee 1, INT-P02 – interviewee 2, etc).

4.5. Phase One - Part B: Modified Delphi (First round)

The Delphi technique is often utilised to obtain a collective view from individuals about issues where there is no or little definite evidence and to explore or expose underlying assumptions (Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

In 2009, Iqbal and Pipon-Young identified that the primary function of the Delphi method was to explore an area of future thinking that goes beyond the currently known or believed ideas. Previously, Hasson, Keeney and McKeena (2000) reported that this technique can be particularly useful in areas of limited research and is well suited to explore areas where controversy, debate or a lack of clarity exists.

For these reasons, a two-round modified Delphi technique with a target of 30 participants was proposed for this study. The term 'modified' is used to indicate that the standard approach of multiple rounds of interviews with a small number of experts used in most Delphi techniques is being used here with multiple members of QFES. This recognises that each has expertise in emergency services and is an expert on leadership in the organisation by virtue of being led and, or leading others.

The call to action exceeded expectations in terms of numbers expressing their interest to participate. A total of 90 people expressed interest in participating in the research which resulted in an eventual cohort of 50 participants undertaking this phase by completing the online question form.

As much as possible, it was expected that the call to action would result in representation and perspectives from a range people across each of the demographic areas being included.

Data collected from participants provided demographic information across:

- Leadership stream;

- Workforce category;

- Gender;

- Age;

- Length of service;

- QFES division; and

- QFES region or directorate.

The modified Delphi technique allowed the researcher to draw on participants' experiential insights to help understand perspectives on inclusive leadership, adaptive organisation, and the relationship between inclusive leadership and the ability of the organisation to be adaptive.

Engaging with the perspectives of multiple members of the QFES workforce is an element deemed essential to the integrity of the research

in a study focusing on the ability to leverage different perspectives. As the research topic is concerned with the capability of leaders to leverage different perspectives, applying the modified Delphi technique provided a method of data collection which assisted in the inclusion of the diverse perspectives that exist across the organisation.

The nature of a hierarchical organisation consisting of distinct services, each having their own unique cultures, could potentially inhibit the confidence of some participants to voice their perspectives and ideas. To lessen this risk and ensure individual participant comments remained confidential, the modified Delphi rounds occurred without face-to-face meetings allowing for a virtual dialogue to take place (Fletcher & Marchildon, 2014).

The modified Delphi technique was chosen over a face-to-face technique such as a focus group to mitigate the risk and impact of powerful personalities, group pressures, and the perception of status which can manifest in hierarchical structures and potentially affect the responses of individuals (Thangaratinam & Redman, 2005). The modified Delphi technique involved online question forms which provided a format that removed the potential risk of participants feeling that they are unable to provide their individual perspectives.

Additionally, the dispersed nature of the workforce across Queensland and COVID-19 safety considerations at the time of data collection further supported the use of the modified Delphi technique in this

way. The use of an online method provided a safe and valid method of data collection.

4.5.1. Study Population

Call to Action

The call-to-action methods for *Phase One – Part B: Modified Delphi (first round)* were designed to attract participants reflective of the different roles within the organisation and include members of the workforce at all levels across the different services, and across the geographical footprint of the state.

The QFES Gateway is an enterprise intranet system which allows the organisation to centralise workforce communications, engage with the workforce, socialise critical issues by the ability to post safety alerts and bulletins, and to communicate emerging strategic, operational and workforce messages. The researcher used the QFES Gateway Noticeboard to socialise the opportunity to be involved in the research project and seek participants to volunteer to participate in the research. A noticeboard item titled *Get Involved in Research* was posted on 11 October 2021. A link within the noticeboard item provided a landing page (Appendix E) which outlined further detail for individuals to make an informed choice and express their interest using a link to the Expression of Interest (EOI) Form.

On 15 October 2021 the email call to action from the project sponsor Assistant Commissioner, QFES People was sent to ELT members including

a suggestion to socialise the opportunity by sharing the email invitation with their teams. On 22 October 2021 the QFES Gateway Noticeboard item was updated to *CLOSING SOON: Get Involved in Research.* The Expression of Interest (EOI) was an Office 365 MicrosoftForm, located on the researcher's USQ SharePoint site. The use of this online expression of interest form resulted in responses from 72 potential participants. A further 18 potential participants expressed interest independently of the form. This was either by direct contact with the researcher or identified from the call-to-action for the interviews. This process generated a total of 90 potential participants as per Table 5 on the following page.

Table 5: Expressions of Interest received (11/10/2021 – 28/10/2021)

Date range	EOIs received	Call-to-action method
11/10/2021 – 14/10/2021 MS Form	11	Gateway Noticeboard item
15/10/2021 – 21/10/2021 MS Form	38	AC QFES People email 15/10/21
22/10/2021 - 28/10/2021 MS Form	23	Gateway Noticeboard update 22/11/21
11/10/2021 – 28/10/2021 Direct contact	18	Direct enquiry with researcher or from the Interview EOI
Total	90	

Vision6 is web-based marketing, communications and client management tool utilised within the researcher's normal work role. The functionality was

used to generate email messages and provide reporting on the messages sent to participants to maximise potential participation.

Modified Delphi (first round) participant documentation

Invitations to undertake the online question form (shown in Appendix F) were sent via email on 26/11/2021 to the 90 potential participants identified in the expression of interest process. A reminder email was sent to all potential participants on 08/12/2021. The Participant Information sheet was provided as a link within the body of the invitation email, this provided information to potential participants regarding privacy, expected time commitment, and risks and benefits of participating in the study. Potential participants were further advised that their Consent to Participate would be gathered on the online question form being used to collect the research data. A link to the online question form was included in the message.

Online question form process

Questions for the first round of the modified Delphi technique were preceded by a section in the online form to provide the consent to participate in the research for each participant (shown in Appendix G). If a subject did not provide their consent to participate, they were not provided access to the rest of the online question form.

The online form contained the same ten questions in three sections as listed Section 4.3.1 and were followed by demographic questions and a

section for participants to provide their email address. The email contact information was required to allow contact with participants to undertake Phase Two: Modified Delphi (second round) and provide a final report on the outcomes of the research. All demographic and contact information was referenced and stored separately from the research data set.

Modified Delphi (first round) participant group

The online question form was completed by 50 people over a six-week period between 26/11/2021 – 06/01/2022 as outlined in Table 6.

Table 6: Round One completion (26/11/2021 – 06/01/2021)

Date range	Round One completion	Call-to-action
26/11/2021 – 07/12/2021	23	Invitation email 26/11/21
08/12/2021 – 06/01/2022	27	Reminder email 08/12/2021
Total	50	

Respondents from this phase were allocated a unique participant identifier, allowing the researcher to remove personal identifying information from the research data set to protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants. The unique identifier for the online question form (DEL) participants is in the format: DEL-P01 to DEL-P50 to identify each of the 50 participants. All identifying information was stored separately but retrievably to allow for contact to invite participants to undertake Phase Two: Modified Delphi (second round).

The participant group (participants) consisted of 50 members of the QFES workforce. Demographic data for the participant group provides information on the leadership stream, workforce category, gender, age group, length of service, QFES Division, and QFES region or directorate as outlined in Tables 7 to 13. The demographic information indicated that, while not all elements of the workforce were represented within the participant cohort, there was sufficient diversity across the demographic elements to provide a reasonable cross-section of perspectives on the research topic for the purposes of this research project.

Table 7: Phase One – Part B: Leadership stream

Leadership stream	Count
Executive (leading functions)	2
Program leader (leading teams and/or projects)	6
Team leader (leading others)	13
Individual contributor (leading self)	25
Both Team leader and Individual contributor (see note)	2
I prefer not to answer	4
TOTAL	50

It is worth noting that two people who reported as both a volunteer and paid staff member identified different leadership streams for their different roles.

Table 8: Phase One – Part B: Workforce category

Workforce category	Count
Paid staff member	40
Both a volunteer and paid staff member at QFES	6
Volunteer	4
TOTAL	50

Table 9: Phase One – Part B: Gender

Gender	Count
Woman	27
Man	20
I prefer not to answer	3
TOTAL	50

Table 10: Phase One – Part B: Age

Age	Count
21 - 30 years	1
31 - 40 years	11
41 - 50 years	19
51 - 60 years	16
Over 60 years	1
I prefer not to answer	2
TOTAL	50

Table 11: Phase One – Part B: Length of service

Length of service	Count
Less than 5 years	12
5 - 10 years	8
10 - 20 years	19
20 - 30 years	6
Greater than 30 years	3
I prefer not to answer	2
TOTAL	50

Table 12: Phase One – Part B: QFES Division

QFES Division	Count
Readiness and Response Services	24
Strategy and Corporate Services	15
Emergency Management, Volunteerism & Community Resilience Services	8
I prefer not to answer	3
TOTAL	50

Table 13: Phase One – Part B: QFES Region or Directorate

Region or Directorate	Count
Brisbane Region	14
QFES People	11
South Eastern Region	5
South Western Region	4
Fire and Rescue Service - State	3
North Coast Region	3
Northern Region	2
Emergency Management and Community Capability	1
Finance, Procurement and Levy	1
Rural Fire Service - State	1
State Emergency Service - State	1
Strategy	1
Central Region	1
I prefer not to answer	2
TOTAL	50

4.6.   Phase Two: Modified Delphi (second round)

The time between Phase One - Part A: Modified Delphi (First round) and Phase Two: Modified Delphi (Second round) was extended from the original anticipated timeframe due to the eventuation of one of the risks identified within the work-based project plan and in the limitations in this chapter. The first quarter of 2022 saw unusual, severe weather patterns which

resulted in deluge and flooding impacts across a large portion of the state. A long period of heightened operational tempo ensued, coupled with a reduction in non-essential administrative and non-operational activities to allow reallocation of staff to support the prolonged operational events. The situation was further complicated by a coinciding mandated Covid-19 lockdown period in the southeastern corner of the state.

The questions for the second round of the modified Delphi technique were determined through thematic analysis of the first round responses. The development of the questions will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.6.1.   Study Population

Call to Action

The fifty participants from Phase One - Part B: Modified Delphi (First round) were invited to undertake Phase Two: Modified Delphi (Second round) via email on 21 May 2022. (Appendix H). A reminder email was sent on 2 June 2022 thanking those who had already completed the second round of the online question form and encouraging the remaining participants to complete the question form. Several participants provided feedback to the researcher that they had found the latest emails in their Junk Mail folder. As a result, a further reminder email *Last Days for your Input* was sent directly from Outlook.

Modified Delphi (Second round) participant group

A total of 44 participants completed undertook the second round of the online question form (shown in Appendix I) as outlined in Table 14.

Table 14: Second round completions (21/05/22 – 13/06/2022).

Date range	Second round completion	Call-to-action method
21/05/2022 – 01/06/2022	22	Invitation email
02/06/2022 – 05/06/2022	10	02/06/2022 Reminder email sent to all 49 second round participants
06/06/2022 – 13/06/2022	12	06/06/2023 email Last Days for your Input email sent
Total	44	

4.7. Limitations

Limitations to the study identified were largely in consideration of the recruitment methods, which in turn were dictated by the nature of the participant population, participant availability, and impacts of Covid-19 restrictions during the data collection period. The following limitations were identified:

4.7.1. Participant recruitment

Due to challenges of contacting people in such a large and diverse organisation, there was no guarantee that a cross section of the workforce

would hear about the study, therefore recruitment of a genuinely random sample representing a cross section of the workforce could not be certain.

What transpired during the data collection period was a Covid-19 lockdown period and several sustained, unusual, severe weather patterns which resulted in ongoing impacts and workforce considerations for large portions of the state.

4.7.2.   *Participant availability*

The planned timeframe for data collection activities had potential to coincide with the bushfire and cyclone seasons. This had potential for participant availability to be affected by heightened operational tempo. As it transpired, between the first round and the second round of the modified Delphi there was a Covid-19 lockdown period and several sustained, severe weather events which resulted in ongoing impacts and workforce considerations for large portions of the state.

This meant that both operational and support staff were deployed either within the state or to support other jurisdictions in their response. Access to personal work email accounts and communication channels would have been reduced during these times.

4.7.3.   *COVID-19 risks*

As the risks of the Covid-19 pandemic materialised consideration to physical distancing restrictions informed the plans for interviews with

alternatives to face-to-face contact including MS Teams, Zoom or other technology solution to facilitate safe and effective interview processes. At this time the technology and use of MS Teams and Zoom were only just emerging capabilities which presented a limitation regarding inadequate bandwidths and lack of network connectivity in some locations and facilities.

4.8. Avoiding potential bias

Many researchers acknowledge that, in practice, bias may occur because of assumptions in the conduct of any method of research (Mackieson, Shlonsky & Connolly, 2019). Wadams and Park (2018) offer the perspective that the ethical foundation, guiding theories, and worldview of research should mitigate ideological influences on research bias. Accordingly, considering strategies to avoid potential bias within the data collection methods, responses from participants, and in the analysis of the data are integral considerations to ensure validity and viability of the research project and research outcomes.

The research topic is within the researcher's perceived subject matter expertise which potentially created a risk where participants felt they needed to give the researcher 'what they wanted to hear' rather than their true perspectives and understanding of the research concepts. The research instructions to the participants were designed to encourage honest responses to the research items. Information on how the thematic analysis

was to be conducted was intended to maintain objectivity and avoid potential bias within the qualitative data analysis.

The Information Sheet for participants provided a professional and robust set of instructions and presented information in a way to build confidence in the research process throughout the data collection, data management and data analysis phases. Ensuring integrity and faith in the process of research is not only critical for this research project but also on the perception of all research.

The individual interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants (conducted either face-to-face or via Teams). The recordings were transcribed and made available to the interviewees to check for accuracy and provide any feedback on any changes or additions required. Each participant was asked to provide their endorsement that the transcript was a true reflection of the interview, ensuring objectivity, mitigating potential or perceived impact by the researcher in relation to the data collected and recorded.

Responses from the online question forms were collected with no discussion, direct contact or personal engagement by the researcher in relation to the research project, apart from the standard correspondence to facilitate the data collection. Again, the Information Sheet made available to participants as part of the online functionality was intended to build confidence and transparency in the process of the research project.

During data analysis individual responses were deidentified and each participant was provided with a unique participant identifier as described in

sections 4.4.1 and 4.5.1. This allowed for data analysis free from any identifying information, reducing the potential of bias in the analysis of the data.

One of the strategies the researcher employed was the practice of 'reflexivity'. This entailed the researcher having a constant awareness of the influence they were having on what they were studying, and simultaneously having an awareness of how the research process was affecting them (Probst & Berenson, 2014). In terms of strengthening rigor and minimising potential bias, Probst and Berenson (2014) posit that reflexivity becomes the process for researchers to establish and communicate their claim of the rigor and trustworthiness of their study.

Being mindful of the role as a researcher and the influence potential or perceived bias could have on the study, the researcher made a conscious effort to acknowledge and challenge their assumptions, particularly when analysing the data. This was achieved through adopting a reflexive stance to ensure credibility and trust in the research project.

4.9. Data Management

Data obtained during the study, including audio recordings and transcripts, spreadsheets and other documents were stored electronically using primary and secondary password protected storage methods. Data was de-identified, demographic and contact information was referenced and stored separately from the research data set. Contact information was retrievable to allow for follow-up contact and to invite participants from Phase One –

Part B: Modified Delphi (First round) to undertake Phase Two: Modified Delphi (Second round).

4.10. Data Analysis

The purpose of qualitative data analysis is to derive meaning from the data collected and, as Bengtsson (2016, p. 10) explains, in relation to qualitative content analysis, "data are presented in words and themes, allowing for the interpretation of the results". Data from Phase One – Part A, the semi-structured interviews and Part B, the first round of the online question form, were analysed separately using thematic analysis techniques.

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) are of the view that, in the case of interviews, data analysis is not something that happens after data collection. They posit that the researcher is constantly interpreting and analysing the data as they conduct the interview, they consider this to be an integral part of the entire interview process.

To get familiar with the data, the interview transcripts were read and re-read separately by the researcher. While the initial focus was on the accuracy of the transcripts, the process provided the opportunity for the researcher to gain an understanding of with the overall content and nuances of the interview responses.

Similarly, the spreadsheet of responses from the first round of the online question form were read and re-read and initial highlighting of common words, phrases and recurring concepts undertaken.

Gibbs (2012) builds on the seminal work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) in describing grounded theory as a commonly utilised approach reflecting "the emphasis on working up from the data" (Gibbs, 2012, p. 1). This approach was used by the researcher to identify the codes that consistently emerged from the data. This was achieved using both manual coding and use of the coding tool NVivo allowing for codes to be organised efficiently.

Software programs designed to assist with data analysis are considered appropriate for qualitative data analysis because they are particularly helpful in managing large data sets, provide the ability to upload multiple data formats, and assist in organising and cataloguing data. The NVivo software was chosen by the researcher because the software and tutorials were made available to students undertaking the research degree.

The results of the thematic analysis identified the themes, consistent phrases, expressions and ideas which were common amongst research participants which were used to determine the content of the second round of the online question form. Statements were formulated summarising observations of the responses, interpretation of the data and themes identified from the results of first round on the online question form. The statements and follow-up questions were provided to participants as Phase Two, the second round of the modified Delphi.

The second round of online questions offered the opportunity of a quasi-peer review of the first-round results by seeking further insights and

perspectives. Data obtained from the second round was also analysed using thematic analysis techniques, as previously described.

The analysis of both data collection methods assisted in gaining a better understanding of the workforce perceptions of the concepts of inclusive leadership and the adaptive organisation within the representative cohort of the QFES workforce. The analysis has resulted in synthesis and interpretation of the data into a summary of themes and findings to be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.11. Ethical Considerations

The participation of a cohort from the QFES workforce for the collection of qualitative data required ethical clearance from the USQ Human Research Ethics Committee prior to undertaking any data collection with potential participants, given the personal data and perspectives being elicited by the research. Approval to undertake the research project was granted by the USQ Human Research Ethics Committee on 25 June 2021 (approval no. H21REA110).

The researcher is committed to the ethical code of conduct required by the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct of Human Research 2007 (Australian Government, 2007). Data collection methods complied with ethical research plan according to the requirements of the USQ Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

4.12.   Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 has provided a comprehensive commentary of the qualitative research methodology adopted in the study research to explore inclusive leadership and the adaptive organisation in QFES/QFD. The chapter has provided an overview and justification for the data collection method and has detailed the data analysis process. Ethical considerations have also been discussed. Chapter 5 details the findings of the research including the themes that emerge from the data.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

The study was designed to explore the relationship between inclusive leadership and an adaptive organisation and how that might affect the ability of QFES to operate as an adaptive organisation (RQ). Secondary aims were to examine how the concepts of inclusive leadership and adaptive organisation are perceived and understood by QFES leaders and the workforce (Sub-RQ1 and Sub-RQ2), how and to what extent QFES leaders display inclusive leadership and adaptive behaviours (Sub-RQ3), and the key components of inclusive leadership necessary to make QFES an adaptive organisation (Sub-RQ4).

Chapter 5 reports the findings of data collection processes shown in Figure 6, consisting of semi-structured interviews; Phase One – Part A: Individual Interviews and two rounds of online question forms Phase One – Part B: Modified Delphi (Round One) and Phase Two: Modified Delphi (Round Two) as described in Chapter 4.
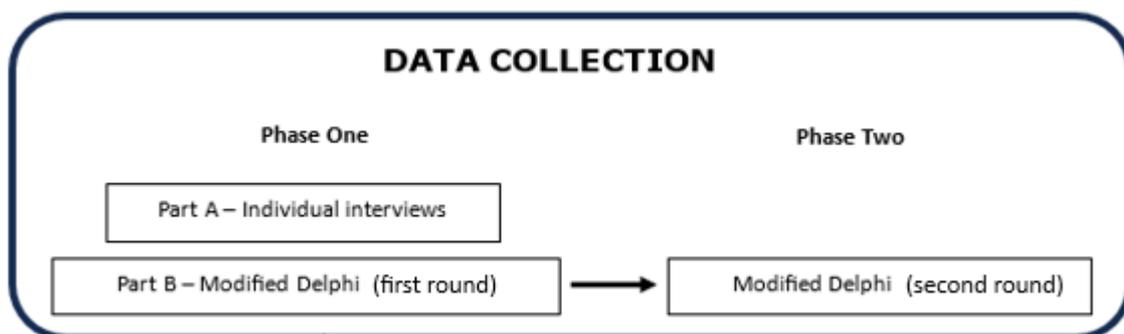
Figure 6: Data Collection Methods (Source: Author's own work)

Throughout this chapter Figure 6 will be modified for use as a tool to highlight and assist navigation through the results of each of the data collection methods. Discussion of the results will be presented in Chapter 6.

5.2.   Results of Phase One – Part A: Individual Interviews

Phase One – Part A (as shown in Figure 7) involved nine semi-structured interviews which were conducted between 4 November 2021 and 22 December 2021. The transcripts of each interview were analysed using manual thematic analysis supported by NVivo software.   This process identified themes, consistent phrases, expressions or ideas common amongst interviewees, which were then coded and categorised.
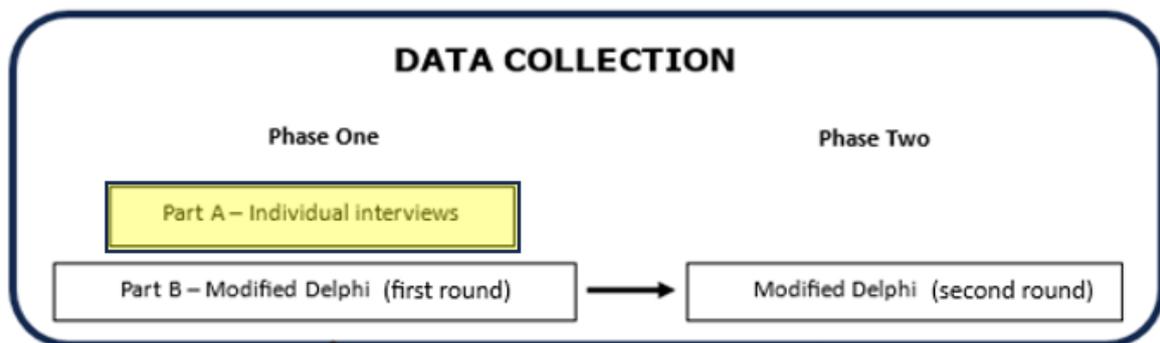
Figure 7: Data Collection Method - Individual Interviews (Source: Author's own work)

As outlined in Chapter 4, the interview questions were presented to the interviewees in three sections. The first two sections focused specifically on

the research constructs of inclusive leadership and adaptive organisation and the third section involved the photo-elicitation questions.

5.2.1.   Inclusive leadership

Questions 1 and 2 in the interview involved describing the key attributes of inclusive leaders and how leaders create environments where people can put forward their perspectives, ideas or opinions. Four clear themes emerged from thematic analysis of the interviews as shown in Table 15. The themes are supported by relevant quotes which represent the language phrases and expressions representative of the theme.

Table 15: Key attributes of an inclusive leader.

Item	Themes identified – key attributes of inclusive leaders
i.	*Authenticity*
ii.	*Diverse perspectives*
iii.	*Connections*
iv.	*Communication*

i. Authenticity

Authenticity in understanding oneself and how you and your leadership are perceived by others stood out as a key attribute of inclusive leadership:

> Self-awareness … understanding from an individual point of view… what your experiences are, what your biases are, what the influences are in your life, and how that could shape or shade how you see your experience of things… to be inclusive you've got to be transparent you've got to be consistent, you've got to just be who you are, so you have that authenticity. (INT-P04)

The organisation's historical connections to paramilitary origins and the potential effect on authenticity to leadership styles was identified:

> In our history as a paramilitary type of organisation … we go into command-and-control mode operationally, and we're trying to run the organisation in a matrixed, humanistic way … those two things clash on a daily basis. (INT-P09)

Authenticity of leaders in demonstrating inclusive leadership capabilities during times of change was also highlighted:

> From a change and risk perspective if you are trying to be more inclusive and drive some change, its understanding where the barriers might be both in yourself as a leader, but also fear in people can sometimes smother people as well. (INT-P01)

ii. Diverse perspectives

The value of providing environments where diverse views are considered was consistently reported by interviewees, such as the following examples:

> Consider the different viewpoints of people …canvas those views, listen to those views, and especially unpack some of those different views. (INT-P02)

> The fire service … it's a very male-dominated workforce …it's about making sure that that the female firefighter voice is given the opportunity to be heard. (INT-P08)

In discussing diverse perspectives, three interviewees considered how different perspectives, ideas and opinions are developed, other responses identified how to bring diverse voices to the table:

> Making sure that people have their psychological safety or the environment to suggest ideas. (INT-P02)

> All ideas are valuable just some might fit the context better … valuing what everyone contributes and being quite overt about that recognition. (INT-P01)

iii. Connections

Particularly revealing was how the interviewees reported the importance of being connected to each other and to a common cause, both at an individual and organisational level, as being of vital importance, represented in the following examples:

> Being a service delivery organisation, you deliver better quality … people understand that as a leader being able to set the vision and the objective so we have got that common goal. (INT-P01)

> It's breaking those silos down across the organisation, not just collaboration with your own unit, but also across the other functions and the regions … working together for that common goal … not just forcing collaboration but encouraging collaboration. (INT-P05)

> Part of that is about building relationships … it's about mutual respect, which creates trust and trust creates a level of influence with each other. (INT-P04)

iv.   Communication

Generally, communication skills are a necessity in leadership. Indeed, four interviewees reported communication skills are specifically related to building an inclusive environment:

> Open environment, open conversation, being a welcoming organisation and talk about inclusive leadership, actually having people be involved in decision making and have ownership of the decision. (INT-P07)

Questions 3 and 4 involved interviewees describing how it feels when their perspective, ideas or opinions have been heard and acted on, and when they have heard and acted on the perspective, ideas or opinions of others. The responses provided rich stories which highlighted three key themes.

Table 16: Experiencing inclusive leadership capability.

Item	Themes identified: Experiencing inclusive leadership capabilities
i.	*Individual impact*
ii.	*Organisational impact*
iii.	*Diverse voices*

i.   Individual impact

All interviewees stated significant impacts from experiencing their perspective, ideas or opinions being heard, and how this had shaped their leadership, examples include:

> I did things or raised things that had significant impact and you go well there's a lot of trust in even allowing me to get heard ...

you get empowerment, you get a sense of belonging, you get discretionary effort as a result of that … it gives you some latitude to operate, it was rewarded … it was that recognition and acknowledgement, it's good and makes you want to carry on with it. (INT-P04)

The powerful impact of having your perspective, ideas or opinions considered early in an individual's career came through as a strong influence:

I think look more to my junior career, I think when you're younger and you may be a bit hesitant to share ideas, I remember when I was very junior in my career … the organisation at that time was quite structured and hierarchical … … you had an avenue to share ideas … you saw tangible change which for me was really important and something that always resonated with me. (INT-P05)

I'll go right back in the filing cabinet … I think it was pivotal in my career because I was given an opportunity, I was heard, and I was empowered to influence. (INT-P08)

Three interviewees described where their inclusive leadership capability had impacted others, one individual stated that:

I'd like to think that I replicated that with the team … so whilst the opportunity was given to me, I made sure that that transitioned into the team … and the team was really productive … and some of those people have gone on to greater things. (INT-P08)

Another participant commenting:

> It was so invigorating to hand that trust over and just provide
> support as a leader, I didn't have to have all the answers and in
> fact I was learning from that … being able to set aside ego and
> really having faith and trust in that person ... one of the biggest
> things is making sure that people get the credit for the work they
> do. (INT-P02)

ii. Organisational impact

The impact of different perspectives, ideas and opinions on the organisation
were highlighted and considered in the frame of enhancing the organisation
and the organisation being able to do things differently best reflected by:

> Hopefully it's getting more common and more normal that
> everyone has a voice … whether it's your first job or you've been
> here 20 years, we don't discount anyone … we need to hear your
> voice, your ideas … so you enhance the organisation you have
> engaged with. (INT-P04)

iii. Diverse voices

Five interviewees highlighted the value in leveraging diverse voices to effect
change, including at an organisational level with a complex body of work,
leveraging the voices of stakeholders and community, summed up by the
following:

> We changed some of our ideas based on the stakeholder
> engagement … it was about allowing them to be at the table and
> actively seeking those views and being genuine about that. (INT-
> P01)

Several risks were identified by one interviewee about how leaders may view including different voices or ideas as a threat, and the risk of leaders thinking they have all the answers:

> As I got into more senior roles, a focus on not coming in with the answers … that idea that it's not a threat to you, if you're the leader or person that's leading something … you don't have to have all the answers. (INT-P04)

5.2.2. *Adaptive organisation*

To gauge understanding of the concept of an adaptive organisation, Questions 5 involved describing what being an adaptive organisation means. From these questions two main themes emerged.

Table 17: Descriptive themes - adaptive organisation.

Item	Themes identified: Adaptive organisation
i.	*Understand the environment*
ii.	*Organisational learning*

i. *Understand the environment.*

The strongest theme to emerge for this cohort was the need to have a good understanding of the environment in which the organisation is operating, as represented by the following assertions:

> Being adaptive is about understanding the pulse of the organisation, understanding the people in the organisation, understanding how the workforce operates, and being able to move that workforce. (INT-P08)

An adaptive organisation is one that will respond to different priorities … look forward and forward thinking but also be able to change priorities … having systems in place that we can prioritise work and make that clear to people in our organisation. (INT-P02)

Over half of the interviewees highlighted the importance of understanding current and future expectations from government and the community, examples include:

We need to have a wider understanding of what the government's expectations are, the challenges for government and also the wider industry, because otherwise you get so insular. (INT-P07)

You've got to have a good view of what the future is, a view of where you want to be, a good understanding of the operational and political environment as well as, in our case, the actual environment and about what that's going to mean to us. (INT-P04)

ii.   Organisational learning

Organisational learning was identified consistently as essential for the organisation to build and maintain adaptive capability, examples include:

It's not about change, change, change …it's about growing, learning, and getting better at growing and learning. (INT-P01)

What do you experience? What do you learn? What do you hear from people? … how does that change our practice … that flows into the need to be agile and adaptive. (INT-P04)

Three interviewees identified the need to ensure 'roll back' is minimised to maintain organisational learnings:

It's very easy to go back to what you know, there's always going to be that risk and unless you have leadership drivers promoting that, I believe you're always going to go back to the same old same old. (INT-P03)

Three interviewees highlighted the risk of a lack of diversity affecting adaptive capability, summed up by INT-P05:

A lot of the individuals have all come through the same system ... they all, somewhat, think the same, have been trained the same way, and it seems to be mostly in the cultural aspects that you've got this cookie cutter approach to generating leaders. (INT-P05)

Question 6 asked participants to describe how successful QFES is at being an adaptive organisation. There were mixed and contrasting responses to identifying when the organisation displayed adaptive capability, generally interviewees felt that there were parts of the organisation that were more successful at being adaptive:

In a response sense, in operations very adaptable because we can scale up, scale down to whatever the event of the day is. When it comes to policy, I think we can be quite slow particularly picking up and understanding what's going on in the national agenda. (INT-P03)

The need to duplicate our adaptive capability within response activities for a more holistic approach across PPRR activities (QFES, 2018c) was highlighted by one interviewee:

From an operational perspective, our focus seems to be response, response, response and we miss out on so much of the

preparation, prevention, and the recovery side of things. (INT-P07)

One interviewee proposed a divergent view, explaining the situation of lack of resources as a driver for the need for adaptive capability within the non-response or non-operational parts of the organisation:

I find the corporate side has been very adaptive and I think some of that has come about through absolute need, in that there's insufficient resources, insufficient staff … so whether it's through choice or being forced you had to do something different. (INT-P05)

Question 7 asked interviewees to think about and respond to the notion of what kind of advantage could QFES achieve by being adaptive. Two discrete themes emerged from this question:

    i.   Community outcomes; and

   ii.   Employer / volunteer agency of choice.

i.   Community outcomes

Interviewees described community outcomes which included improvements to the services QFES provides, a broader focus on the use of public money and the need to provide value and safety to the community:

The whole reason the organisation exists is to service the community and provide those various activities to the public … if you're not being adaptive and moving with the times and doing it in a way of contemporary approaches to service delivery, then

you're doing a disservice to the taxpayer and the community. (INT-P05)

Managing the productivity and the outcomes for public value that you've got to create as an organisation, and we've got legislative requirements about how you meet them and manage them. (INT-P04)

ii   Employer / Volunteer agency of choice

A third of interviewees identified how being adaptive can build a reputation as an employer/volunteer agency of choice, which may then attract greater diversity:

Being adaptive makes us a really positive employer … an employer where people from diverse backgrounds can come and use their skills, knowledge and experience. (INT-P08)

A different way of thinking, that's honestly the best thing, that diverse organisation has diversity of thought and that attracts more diversity. (INT-P06)

Question 8 asked interviewees to identify what part leaders have to play in QFES being an adaptive organisation. The importance of leadership influence and building capability within leadership levels was highlighted as key to building and maintaining adaptive capability of the organisation:

There's a critical role for leadership, it's absolutely important to set the tone, you've got to create space, you've got to empower people, you've got to be clear about the 'why' of things ... people

are the thing that makes a difference, you need everyone at an individual level and at a collective level operating at a high standard and with a high level of engagement in order to realize being an adaptive organisation (INT-P04)

One interviewee highlighted the risk of leaders not supporting the learning that can be achieved through adaptive capability:

If as a leader you're not supporting and demonstrating a learning culture and a learning organisation, then I think that that could dispel that innovation or discourage that innovation at the local level. (INT-P01)

5.2.3. Photo-elicitation

When provided with the images utilised for the photo-elicitation questions most interviewees started by giving a literal description of what they were seeing in the image. This may have been to provide some space and time to consider their thoughts before considering their interpretation of the image relevant to the concepts they were being asked to comment on. Some interviewees were surprised by the way the questions were presented, three commenting that they enjoyed the process. One interviewee articulated a level of uncertainty because they weren't sure of whether there was some hidden meaning in the images.

Difference and inclusion: Question 9 asked interviewees to discuss their understanding of difference and inclusion, represented by the following:

You are who you are, you bring what you bring, and there's value in that. (INT-P04)

Make sure you look at things from completely different viewpoints ... there might be different nuances, like the one that's upside down, has a different colour and his foot has a wonky wheel. (INT-P02)

Diversity in the workforce is important to operations, and thinking, and planning, and everything else because you get all those different perspectives. (INT-P05)

Diverse perspectives: Question 10 asked interviewees to describe how an individual's perspective is developed, responses to this question included:

People's life experience, work experience, your background will give you some tools and understanding, but also creates a filter for what you see and interpret. (INT-P05)

I guess how we perceive things as individuals … what you are exposed to over time and the different things you learn on the way … sometimes you do distort what you're seeing … you can think something should be circular but for some reason we see it as square, we misinterpret somethings. (INT-P01)

A third of the interviewees highlighted the risk of group think or conformity with potential mitigating strategies of questioning and enquiry, represented by the following view:

There's that level of indoctrination that you have that forces people to think, you've got to see this as a circle right … then asking them what do they think they see, or what are the alternative things from a circle? … I wonder how many of those

situations are the cause of some of the organisational challenges and certainly the cultural challenges around here. (INT-P05)

5.3. Results of Phase One – Part B: Modified Delphi (First round)

Phase One – Part B (as shown in Figure 8) involved 50 participants undertaking round one of the online question form. The results were analysed using thematic analysis utilising both manual analysis and the use of NVivo software as described in Chapter 4. The analysis identified themes, consistent phrases, expressions or ideas common amongst participants, which were then coded and categorised.
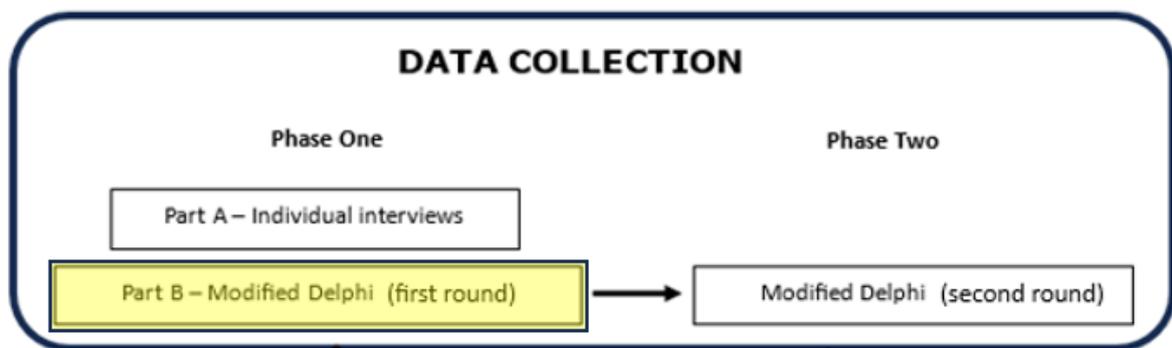
Figure 8: Data Collection Method – Modified Delphi (round one) (Source: Author's own work)

5.3.1. Inclusive leadership

Questions 1 and 2 in the online question form asked participants to describe the key attributes of inclusive leaders and how leaders create environments

where people can put forward their perspectives, ideas and opinions. In identifying the key attributes of an inclusive leader, four main themes emerged as shown in Figure 9.
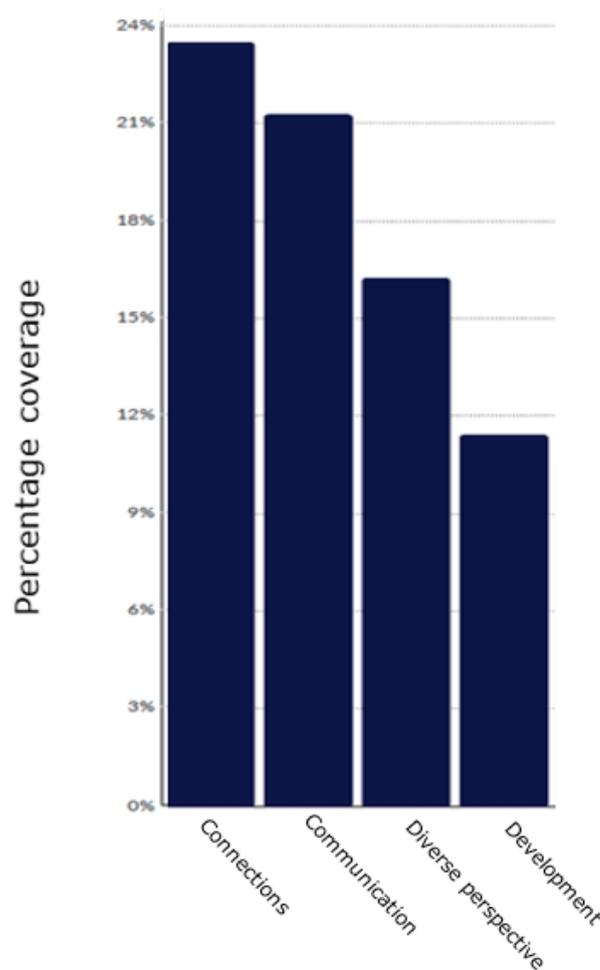
Figure 9: Key attributes of an inclusive leader.

Representative responses are provided across each of the four main themes:

i.   *Connections*

The most recurrent theme reported by participants was the importance of creating and maintain connections with others, represented in the following examples:

Self-aware, fair, open to other's perspectives, kind, and takes the time to learn about other's backgrounds and experiences. (DEL-P24)

Investing in collaboration and coordination - not command and control. (DEL-P50)

ii.   Communication

Participants highlighted the importance of leaders displaying communication skills specifically around creating an inclusive environment, representative examples include:

Fairness and respect, open communication that incorporates everyone involved, one who has cultural intelligence. (DEL-P05)

Inclusive meetings and discussions, ensure collaboration as a team and the opportunity for all to be heard and encouraged to speak. (DEL-P07)

iii.   Diverse perspectives

Consistent amongst many participants was the value of leaders demonstrating how they value diverse perspectives by providing environments where those diverse views can be heard and considered, examples include:

Ensure each idea and opinion is respected, ensure there are fair and equitable platforms to share ideas, ensure each person is given feedback on their ideas. (DEL-P02)

Someone who continuously canvass' views that may be competing yet works to understand the drivers and motivators of those

competing views … someone who respects the diverse views of our communities. (DEL-P42)

iv.   Development

The theme of leaders' commitment to develop in terms of leaders themselves learning and provide learning for others, as demonstrated with these representative examples:

Empowers staff to have a say and make mistakes, but ensures staff feel supported to learn from their mistakes. (DEL-P38)

Has the ability to put ego aside … they do not feel challenged by other's strengths … they continue to evolve and grow within their environment. (DEL-P46)

Questions 3 asked participants to describe how it feels when their perspective, ideas or opinions have been heard and acted on. The key words participants reported at a high frequency to describe their feelings are outlined in Figure 10 on the following page.

Key words - Frequency

Legend:
- Valued
- Heard
- Respected
- Motivated
- Included
- Pride

Values shown: 30 (Valued), 20 (Heard), 9 (Respected), 8 (Motivated), 7 (Included), 6 (Pride)
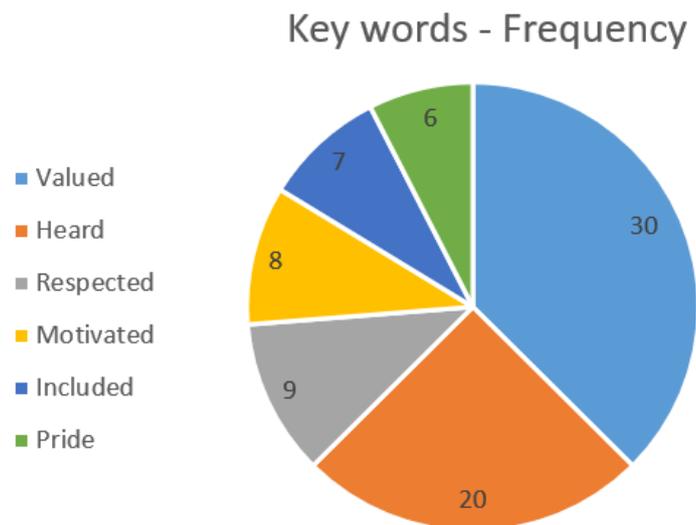
Figure 10: Frequency of key words to describe feeling when perspectives, ideas and opinions are heard and acted on.

The responses from this question indicate a strong sense of positive outcomes for people when they feel their perspectives, ideas and opinions are heard and acted on. Representative responses provide examples of these positive feeling and resulting outcomes for the individual, teams, the organisation, and the community. No negative feelings were reported:

> It feels rewarding and humbling ... it increases pride in my work and the organisation … I feel valued. (DEL-P49)

> It feels like you have a voice, you're contributing in a valuable way to the team, organisation and community. (DEL-P01)

> You feel seen and you feel like you've done something that is of benefit, not just for the team or the agency but for the people of Queensland. (DEL-P15)

Question 4 involved participants describing a situation when they have heard and acted on the perspective, ideas or opinions of others. In describing the situations, participants provided a mix of operational and non-operational examples highlighting outcomes consistent with a number of the key themes in the results from Questions 1 and 2, the descriptions often included multiple themes, the themes are outlined in Table 18 on the following page.

Table 18: Outcomes when I have heard and acted on the perspective, ideas or opinions of others (following page).

Item	Themes identified: Demonstrating inclusive leadership capability
i.	*Diverse perspectives*
ii.	*Development*
iii.	*Individual impact*
iv.	*Organisational impact*

i.   Diverse perspectives

Participants highlighted a variety of situations where the perspectives of diverse team members were leveraged:

> Having a mix of services (Rural, SES, Auxiliary) team members, I value, and act on the opinions, suggestions of my team as they have experience 'on the ground' to provide successful outcome. (DEL-P03)

ii.   Development

Participants identified different ways of learning and developing for themselves and the teams when they displayed inclusive leadership capability:

> There are so many ways to tap into other people's experience to develop new and innovative approaches that add value to the learning goals. (DEL-P20)

iii.   Individual impact

Participants identified meaningful outcomes from displaying inclusive leadership capability in a variety of situations:

> The feeling was at first a bit unsettling and cause for low nervousness, but ultimately resulted in a sense of accomplishment … I had considered options to the circumstance and had a viable plan (mine) but went with my teammate's plan … I'm still not sure who's plan was 'better' and I don't know it's even important now. (DEL-P13)

iv.   Organisational impact

Participants identified a variety of organisational outcomes from displaying inclusive leadership capability:

> We are constantly meeting, discussing, breaking down tasks to re-evaluate not only the direction of the team and everyone's individual tasks, but also the strategic direction of the service … we are constantly re-evaluating the direction of the team and being adaptive and working as a team. (DEL-P48)

5.3.2.   Adaptive Organisation

To gauge understanding of the concept of an adaptive organisation, Questions 5 involved describing what being an adaptive organisation means, three main themes emerged from the responses as shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Descriptive themes - adaptive organisation.

Item	Themes identified: Adaptive organisation
i.	*Understand the environment*
ii.	*Organisational learning*
iii	*Community expectations*

i.   Understand the environment

Participants identified the need to have a good understanding of the environment in which the organisation is operating, examples to demonstrate this theme include:

> We find emerging information and technology, research and understand the ideas and concepts then integrate them into our organisation. (DEL-P29)

> Continuous improvement and change ... adapting to meet the diverse expectations from across communities. (DEL-P42)

ii.   Organisational learning

Organisational learning was identified consistently as essential for the organisation to build and maintain adaptive capability, examples include:

> The ability to look at multiple viewpoints and reconsider methods, processes, policies and directives. The organisation is self-

reflective and identifies that improvement comes from adapting to the dynamic environment that we work in. (DEL-P09)

Accept as individuals within the organisation that in order to move forward then change needs to happen, so there needs to be a willingness to break habits and old ways of doing things. (DEL-P16)

iii.   *Community expectations.*

Participants highlighted the importance of understanding current and future community expectations, examples include:

An organisation that is able to learn from its community, external environment or internal changes and effectively adjust to make it successful. This means that the systems and processes and communication need to be in place for it to enable adaptivity. (DEL-P24)

Question 6 asked participants to describe how successful QFES is at being an adaptive organisation with a mixed response as identified in Figure 11.
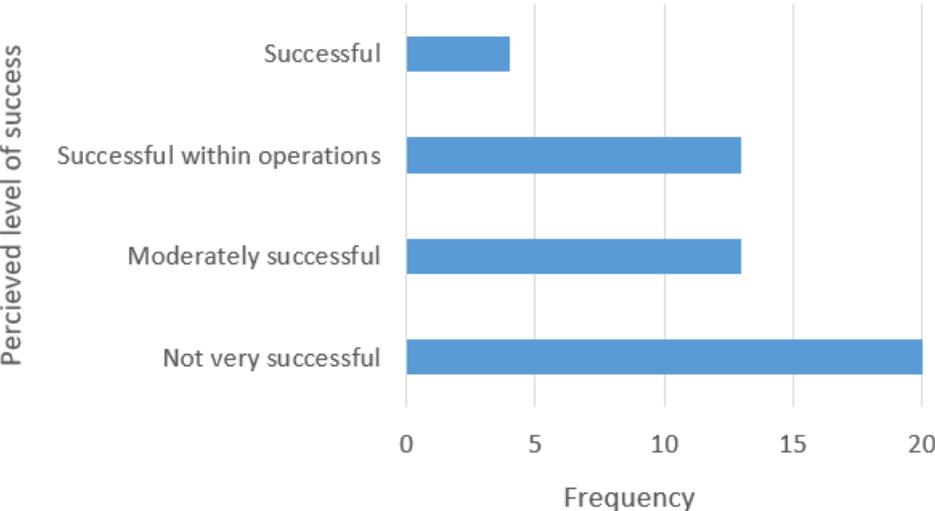
Figure 11: Perceived success level – adaptive capability

The majority of participants considered QFES was not very successful at being an adaptive organisation, representative narratives include:

> I don't believe that we do this very well at all … there are some parts of QFES that are driving this, however perceptions and poor change culture impedes this. (DEL-P42)

> Not very well - while strategic direction is clear, little connection between that and the idea of trying new ways of working … plus not working across the agency to enable solutions. (DEL-P15)

A total of 13 participants considered that QFES was moderately successful at being an adaptive organisation:

> QFES is on a journey towards being an adaptive organisation, there are pockets of positive steps taken, but maybe too many other spaces where there appears to be discomfort and fear about sharing power and privilege. (DEL-P25)

A further 13 participants identified that QFES was good at being adaptive in an operational sense but not so good in non-operational situations:

> In a lot of ways we are adaptive … our emergency response appears exceptionally adaptive ... on the flip side QFES has not yet adapted to a perceived shift in social norms regarding equity, fairness, and inclusion. (DEL-P19)

Four participants considered that QFES is successful at being an adaptive organisation, representative examples include:

QFES looks towards the future and seeks opportunity to enhance the systems and process in place in acknowledging a fast-changing world. (DEL-P07)

Question 7 asked participants to think about, in the context of QFES, what kind of advantage could the organisation achieve by being adaptive. The three strongest themes which emerged from the data are outlined in Table 20.

Table 20: Key outcomes from QFES being an adaptive organisation.

Rank	Key outcomes	Frequency
1	*Positive and safe workplaces*	78
2	*Community outcomes*	34
3	*Employer/ volunteer agency of choice*	24

An example as representative of each key theme include:

i. *Positive and safe workplaces.*

It creates a safer environment when people know or have the skillsets to react to potential change and adapt. (DEL-P01)

ii. *Community outcomes.*

We are better able to meet the needs of the community … able to promote confidence in the services provided … able to be trusted leading to the community feeling that they are receiving value in the services provided. (DEL-P50)

iii. *Employer/volunteer agency of choice.*

Considering the role that QFES staff and volunteers play within our communities … the advantage of being an adaptive organisation

is that it creates a culture that values and engages people from diverse backgrounds … that builds cultural capability, helps to build collaboration, and cultivates a positive reputation across communities which will attract more diverse representation from within our communities. (DEL-P25)

Question 8 asked interviewees to identify what part leaders have to play in QFES being an adaptive organisation. The overwhelming recurrent theme which emerged when participants described the critical role leaders in influencing adaptive capability was the leader's role-modelling adaptive capability. Examples of the comments made are particularly revealing of the importance of the leader's role in QFES being an adaptive organisation include:

> Leaders dictate acceptable behaviour, the culture, the conduct and the 'way things are done around here'. Leaders are role modelling all day every day and lead by example sometimes without even realising it. (DEL-P21)

> Being an adaptive leader in any role will promote the next generation of leadership who are engaged and committed to the same values. (DEL-P39)

> Leaders are key to ensuring that QFES is an adaptive organisation especially given the paramilitary structure of QFES. Leaders have a key role in supporting, implementing, modelling, and reinforcing diversity and inclusive practices. (DEL-P25)

Four participants identified risks and concerns regarding negative influences which may result from leaders and the resulting effect on the organisation's adaptive capability:

> Rigid and entrenched thinking from leaders, coupled with a fear of being shown to be lacking in skills or knowledge, takes the willing followers down the same path and disenfranchises the personnel otherwise motivated and eager for changes, updates, and training. (DEL-P11)

> Leaders in an adaptive organisation need to be able to put more trust in their employees to get the work done and the managers needs to collaborate more with the larger group. (DEL-P30)

5.3.3. Photo-elicitation

Question 9 asked the participants to discuss their understanding of difference and inclusion using Image #1. Interpretation of the image elicited responses from participants essentially identifying that we are all different, but we all have a part to play in the organisation. Representative examples include:

> Someone can face different challenges but is still a valuable member of the community that can offer new perspectives on issues we all face. They can teach us about their world and how we can include them to remove unnecessary barriers in the way we operate. (DEL-P21)

Diversity and inclusion involve, not only recognising the diversity that is present in your team, section or department, but also embracing, recognising, and honouring that diversity. (DEL-P18)

Diversity brings the value of different perspectives to an organisation … we need people to challenge our thinking … I need the upside-down person on my team. (DEL-P50)

Question 10 invited the participants to describe how an individual's perspective is developed using Image #2. Participants provided rich and succinct interpretations of the concept of perspective, including the following as representative of the cohorts' descriptions:

Taking time to understand how someone sees it differently makes you better at seeing the whole picture. (DEL-P15)

Perspective, in its purest sense is just the way or angle we look at something. The conflict occurs when people look at the same object, calls it something else and do not consider any variation to their point of view. (DEL-P48)

Simply learning to view matters from other perspectives. Both perceptions of the shadow in this example are true, but it would require a change of position to see the value and truth of the other perspective. It is a very important function of leadership to take time to understand why an individual might be insisting on a particular view and to take that into account. (DEL-P34)

5.4. Results Phase Two: Modified Delphi (second round)
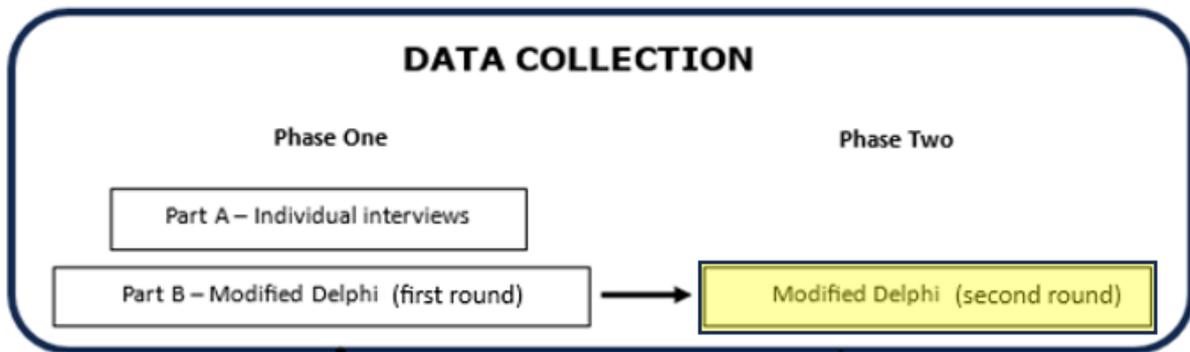
Figure 12: Data Collection Method – Phase Two: Modified Delphi (second round) (Source: Author's own work)

The Delphi technique is based on the principle of using a structured approach to harness the collective wisdom of participants (Powell, 2003). As an iterative process, questions for the second round of the modified Delphi were developed from analysis of data from the first round of the modified Delphi (as shown in Figure 12).

Statements describing the results of the first round were presented to participants as the second round of questions which provided the opportunity for participants to build on the information already gathered with their subsequent responses. This helped in narrowing down the scope of the themes, potentially identifying consensus or dissent in the process (Beiderbeck et al., 2021).

Each of the four questions below are predicated by the statement to establish relevance for each of the second-round questions.

Question 1

Participant responses indicated a clear understanding of the attributes required by leaders to provide inclusive environments where people are able to put forward their perspective, ideas and opinions:

> **What is the most effective way for leaders to build on their skills and attributes to develop and maintain their capability to be an inclusive leader?**

This question elicited responses centred around the individual skills, knowledge and capabilities which should be displayed, and also suggested ways in which leaders can enhance their inclusive leadership capabilities, as shown in Table 20 on this and the following page.

Table 21: Effective ways to build inclusive leadership capability.

Effective ways to build inclusive leadership capability.	Frequency
Practice inclusive communication skills	17
Build self-awareness	15
Develop and role model a growth mindset	15
Undertake coaching and mentoring - self and others - be a coach / coachee / mentor / mentoree / sponsor	14
Undertake a variety of leadership development - both formal and informal	13
Recognise on-the-job development opportunities - for self and others	12
Build positive workplace relationships	12
Apply the ability to read the situation and adapt your leadership style to the situation	12
Display and promote authenticity	10

Table 21: Effective ways to build inclusive leadership capability (continued).	
Seek and give feedback – both formal and informal	8
Evolve from being a technical expert	8
Understand the broader meaning of diversity	8
Build networks / participate in communities of practice, discussion groups / membership of professional organisations/networks	8

Representative quotes outlining effective ways for leaders to build their inclusive leadership capabilities:

> The first has to be their mindset, that they are continuous learners on a never-ending journey. With that mindset then opportunities are limitless. Leaders need to surround themselves with differing views to challenge their opinions and viewpoints. (DEL-P46)

> Find a mentor and investigate self-development in behavioural leadership. (DEL-P41)

> Engagement and communication with the staff that they report to. Listening to the voices of many staff rather than the loudest. (DEL-P09)

Question 2

When asked how it feels when your perspective, ideas or opinions have been heard and acted on, participants identified and described numerous positive emotions:

> **What do you see as the three most important**
>
> **benefits from the positive emotions generated**

when people feel that their perspective, ideas or

opinions have been heard?

Responses to this question were consistent with and built on the results from the first round, indicating multiple positive benefits achieved when inclusive leadership capability is displayed, as outlined in Table 22.

Table 22: Benefits from inclusive leadership capability.

Word count adjusted with similes:

Word	Count	Similar Words
positive	23	attitude, attitudes, confidence, perspective, perspectives, positive, positivity
valued	20	esteem, respect, respected, value, valued
team	19	team, teams
people	16	people
engaged	15	employer, engaged, engagement, participants, participating, participation, tak
productive	12	generation, outputs, production, productive, productivity
encourages	11	encourages, encouraging, promote, promoted, promoting, supportive
respected	11	esteem, good, reputation, respect, respected, various
work	11	employer, going, influence, process, turns, work, working
satisfaction	10	satisfaction
belonging	10	belong, belonging, going
part	10	contribute, contributing, contributions, part, share, shared
trust	10	committed, confidence, trust
ideas	9	idea, ideas, thought
good	9	effective, good, safe, well

Question 3

Participants identified two distinct capabilities as descriptions of an 'adaptive organisation' to define and provide collective understanding. The following definitions are proposed: **Adapt / Adaptable** - the ability of people, teams, and the organisation to respond to rapid or unexpected situations, to change what we do in the moment; and **Adaptive –** the ability of the organisation to change itself, to consistently evolve and change, to learn and benefit from the opportunities and risks of change.

Consider the statement below - do you agree or disagree? Please provide supporting comments for your position.

"We need to be an organisation that is not just good at responding to a situation. We need one that's good at changing itself."
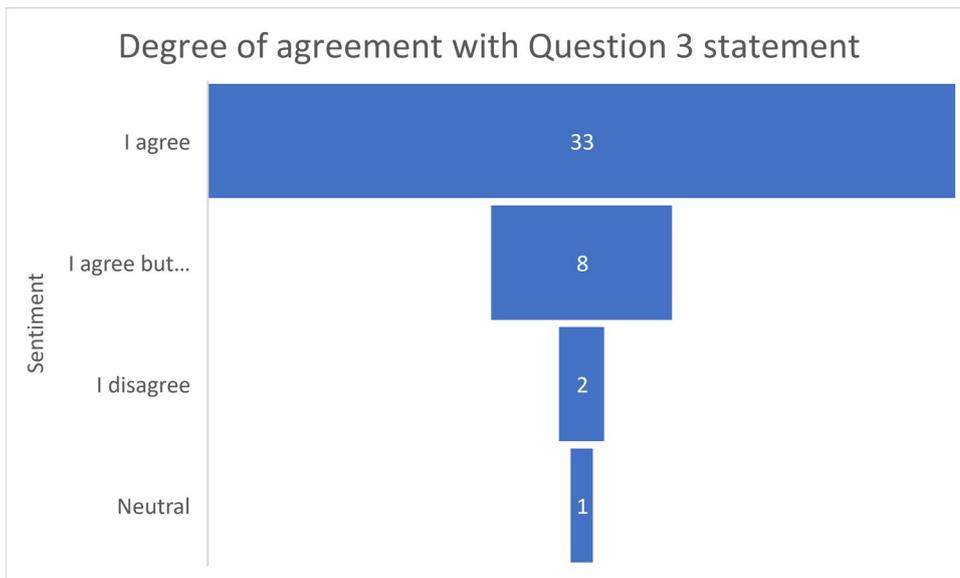
Figure 13: Degree of agreement with Question 3 statement

The definitions of adaptable and adaptive were offered to ensure greater clarity for participants in what was being asked, drawing on the work of Chritiansen (2016) as outlined in Chapter 1.

There was overwhelming agreement amongst the cohort relating the need to be adaptive as shown in Figure 13. Representative quotes from the responses include:

I agree…

If we don't build to the future and evolve from the changes around us, we fall behind, improvement and ability to change is part of the skill of listening and learning and improving. (DEL-P07)

I agree but…

I agree with this sentence ... although constant and large-scale change is fatiguing, an organisation that can be early identifiers of tweaks and make them occur with minimal effort, will be likely to succeed. (DEL-P46)

Neutral…

I think an organisation needs to know its core values and principles, so that it doesn't change these however, knows what it can change when needed, so that it can be proactive. (DEL-P24)

I disagree…

Core values and expertise does not change or should not change, it should grow deeper and form a stronger bond within the department. Yes, the department should be good at responding to situations, that is our job! Always look to improve, but not change at the core value. (DEL-P43)

Question 4

Participants identified that leaders play a key role in QFES being an adaptive organisation:

> ***Identify what you consider is the most important inclusive leadership capability for creating environments which will enable QFES to be an "adaptive organisation".***

Analysis of the 'word tree' mapping of responses identified change, organisation and people as the top tier of the map. Within the analysis of the capabilities a trend emerged which consolidated the results from both Phase One – Part A: Individual Interviews and Phase One – Part B: Modified Delphi (first round) when the attributes of an inclusive leader were investigated, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Most important leadership capabilities to enable QFES to be an adaptive organisation.

Commentary representing participant sentiments include:

I think growth-focused or the ability to detect their own fixed mindsets of self and others will enable the organisation to become an adaptive organisation. (DEL-P01)

A growth mindset that considers there is always something new to learn and something different to consider. The opposite is when

you think you know everything, and you have nothing to learn. (DEL-P21)

Leading through vision, the vision to see the potential in all the workforce regardless of their differences, the vision to look beyond the status quo, the vision to know when they could be doing better. (DEL-P43)

5.5. Research application questions

Two optional questions were included at the conclusion of Phase Two: Modified Delphi (second round) to help inform potential research application within the organisation and the broader fire and emergency sector.

RU 1: What types of activities would assist to promote and transfer these research findings into practice within QFES/QFD?

RU 2: Given that participants have said that leaders play a key role in QFES/QFD being an adaptive organisation, how might these research findings inform the broader fire and emergency sector?

The responses to these questions elicited insightful and creative ideas to enable impactful transfer of the findings, learnings, and new knowledge which will contribute to the application of the research both within the organisation and the broader sector. The ideas put forward are not analysed as part of this study, the suggestions will be referenced within the

recommendations and will likely provide guidance for the eventual products and outputs of this research.

5.6. Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 has outlined the results from the data collection methods and initial analysis from those results, identifying themes from the thematic analysis process which are consistent across the various methods. Chapter 6 will provide in-depth discussion on the results with reference to the relevant literature and the research questions.

Chapter 6: DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 presented the results and themes identified from the various data gathering methods. In Chapter 6 the results will be discussed and interpreted considering both the literature and the organisation in which the research was conducted. The discussion on the findings provides an explanation of how the results answer the research questions, discussing the resulting themes comparatively to the literature review and conceptual framework (Figure 4). Further, an observation will be made pertaining to an unexpected result from the photo-elicitation data-gathering method. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of how the limitations noted in Chapter 4 impacted the research outcomes.

6.1. Discussion - Results

The aim of the research project was to explore the proposition that, within all leadership contexts, leaders with inclusive leadership capabilities are better able to incorporate different perspectives to assist the organisation's adaptive capability. It was postulated that this will be achieved by answering the following key research question and sub-research questions:

RQ. What is the relationship between inclusive leadership and an adaptive organisation, and how might it affect the ability of QFES to operate as an adaptive organisation?

To explore this research question, the following four sub-research questions were also examined:

Sub-RQ1. How is inclusive leadership understood by leaders and the workforce in QFES?

Sub-RQ2. How is the concept of an adaptive organisation perceived by QFES leaders and the workforce?

Sub-RQ3. How and to what extent do QFES leaders display inclusive leadership and adaptive behaviours in the workplace?

Sub-RQ4. What are the key components of inclusive leadership required to make QFES an adaptive organisation?

The four sub-research questions will be discussed first, as they inform and provide the elements that pertain to the key research question.

6.1.1.   *Sub-research question One (Sub-RQ1)*

How is inclusive leadership understood by leaders and the workforce in QFES?

The first sub-research question explored QFES leaders' and the workforce's understanding of inclusive leadership.. The themes elicited suggest that both groups have an emerging understanding of inclusive leadership, with key attributes such as valuing diverse perspectives, building connections, and role modelling inclusive behaviours identified. These themes align with O'Leary et al.'s (2015) Inclusive Leadership Model, which describes five key mindsets of an inclusive leader within their: identity aware, relational, open

and curious, flexible and agile, and growth focused. The mindsets identified by their study broadly align to the themes identified in this research.

At all levels of leadership research participants highlighted the importance of feeling heard and valued, reporting that when inclusive leadership was evident, their sense of being valued was high. This accords with earlier literature which identified that inclusive leaders perceive team members as contributors, acknowledging everyone's value (Qi & Lui, 2017).

A sense of belonging was reported by research participants when inclusive leadership capability is demonstrated. This was identified as being a contributor to an enhanced workplace environment being developed, as supported by the literature (e.g., Herway & Smith, 2018; O'Leary et al., 2015). Participants clearly voiced how it felt when their ideas, opinions and perspectives were heard and acted upon (Javed et al., 2019; Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). Positive workplace outcomes identified included feeling valued, respected, and motivated.

Equally, participants who had experienced workplace environments where their ideas, opinions and perspectives were not sought, heard or included, articulated the risks and associated negative feelings from that experience. Two of these include disengaging from the conversation and not being inclined to put forward their ideas in the future as a result.

The impact of role modelling inclusive leadership capabilities improves job satisfaction (Acquavita et al., 2009; Booysen, 2014), builds inclusive leadership capability in others, and has potential to positively impact a leader's development and commitment to inclusive leadership

(Bridgman, 2020; Queensland Public Service Commission, 2018; Queensland Public Sector Commission, 2021). This is summed up by the experience of participant INT-P05:

> I look more to my junior career … when you're younger and you may be a bit hesitant to share ideas … the organisation at that time was quite structured and hierarchical … but a new leader gave us an avenue to share ideas … you saw tangible change which, for me, was really important and something that always resonated with me. (INT-P05)

The specific impact identifies the significance early career exposure to inclusive leadership capability can shape and influence their leadership approach. In relation to the development of inclusive leadership capability within the workplace context, Booysen (2014, p.305) posited that it is an "ongoing process of collective learning: knowing, being, and doing (learning with and from others), in a way that is directed, aligned, and committed toward shared outcomes". The findings demonstrate that inclusive leadership capability builds further inclusive leadership capability.

Some differences between the perspectives of the two participant groups emerged. This centred around a greater strategic focus and consideration of political and financial considerations being articulated from the individual interview participants. This 'bigger picture' view naturally being developed through their advancement to senior leadership positions, and their role in the organisation.

In contrast, the participants from the modified Delphi group which represented a broad range of leadership levels within the workforce, provided more of an operational and tactical perspective. This group highlighting concern with how decisions affect their daily work environment, especially when diverse perspectives are not considered.

Bridging this divergence in perspective requires an alignment of strategic goals with the needs and concerns of the broader workforce. This will ensure that perspectives are integrated into continuous improvement and decision-making processes (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001), and contribute to organisational effectiveness (Mwangi et al., 2022).

6.1.2. Sub-research question Two (Sub-RQ2)

How is the concept of an adaptive organisation perceived by QFES leaders and the workforce?

The second sub-research question set out to explore how QFES leaders and the workforce perceive the concept of adaptive organisation. The study found consistent themes emerging across the different levels of leadership and data collection methods. Most participants identified that to be adaptive, the organisation needs to have a good understanding of the environment (Parsons et al., 2016), and a focus on organisational learning (Obolensky, 2014). Understanding the work environment extended to understanding the physical setting, this was seen as an imperative to be

able to both predict and plan for future needs, and include new or different capabilities.

The organisational direction of the new QFD has been set by the reform process, this was initiated by a review and a realignment of a number of services and capabilities into other allied agencies. The are potential risks to the future success of the QFD in the form of contestability and future machinery of government changes. To mitigate or reduce these risks, there is a need to build organisational capability to understand the environment. This understanding is achieved through horizon scanning, anticipating emerging technologies, identifying political and environmental risks, having the tools and people capabilities to connect with communities, and understand community needs.

This will be an ongoing challenge given the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous situation and times in which we live and operate (Harding, 2007; Kinsinger & Walch, 2012). The ability of leaders and the organisation to identify and minimise the effects of potential shocks and surprises brought about by unexpected or 'black swan' events (Feduzi et al., 2022; Taleb, 2010) will be key to making sense of the risks and challenges emerging. Participants also identified understanding government and community expectations as drivers of change that require adaptive capability, summed up well by participant INT-P07:

> I think we need to have a wider understanding of what the government's expectations are, the challenges for government and also the wider industry, because otherwise you get so insular. (INT-P07)

The need for a focus on organisational learning (Booysen, 2014; Obolensky, 2014) was identified as an organisational imperative by participants. There was an acceptance that organisational learning can be driven only when individuals understand their part in the organisation building adaptive capability, as identified by participant DEL-P16:

> Accept as individuals within the organisation that in order to move forward then change needs to happen, so there needs to be a willingness to break habits and old ways of doing things. (DEL-P16)

This view is supported by the work of Parsons et al. (2016) asserting that leaders are a necessary organisational enabler of learning, adaptation, and transformation. Similarly, O'Leary et al. (2015) identify a growth-focused mindset as an inherent capability for inclusive leadership, this being the ability to challenge accepted practices and incorporate different perspectives into how we might do things in the future, reflected well by participant INT-P02.

> An adaptive organisation needs to consider doing things differently … we should be a constantly learning organisation … we need to not just respond to those different things but learn from them. (INT-P02)

When asked to describe what an adaptive organisation means many participants provided consistent high level, holistic descriptions and themes. When asked to describe how successful the organisation was at being adaptive there were mixed and contrasting responses to identifying when the organisation displayed adaptive capability.

While the research identified consistent themes across the participant groups, there may be divergence in the scope and depth of these themes depending on how they are applied at different levels of the organisation. A thorough understanding of the organisational environment and a strong focus on organisational learning are inherently context-driven, with their relevance and application varying across leadership levels.

Each level of leadership within the organisation must be interconnected through robust systems and processes that facilitate the flow of information and learning both upward and downward. This ensures that knowledge, insights, and strategies are shared effectively across the organisation, promoting alignment and fostering continuous development at all levels of leadership.

Identifying this dissonance creates an opportunity to explore how the new knowledge can be integrated into the organizational context, both through the narrative surrounding the topic and the evolution of development programs.

6.1.3.   Sub-research question Three (Sub-RQ3)

How and to what extent do QFES leaders display inclusive leadership and adaptive behaviours in the workplace?

The third sub-research question focused on the extent to which QFES leaders display inclusive leadership and adaptive behaviours in the workplace. Every participant was able to either provide an example of when

they had experienced inclusive leadership capability from QFES leaders, or articulate how it felt when they had experienced inclusive leadership capability (Hirak et al., 2012; O'Leary et al., 2015; Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). However, participants also identified that inconsistency in inclusive leadership capability presented risks to the workforce and to the organisational advantages that could be gained through adaptive capability.

Participants acknowledged the key role leaders play in enhancing the organisation's adaptive capability by demonstrating and fostering inclusive leadership capabilities, a point also noted previously by Johanesen (2012) and Nembhard and Edmondson (2006). Participants further identified that when leaders foster inclusive environments, it results in a sense of being valued, engaged, positive, and experiencing psychological safety, which aligns with findings from Javed et al. (2019).

In the context of when QFES leaders demonstrate adaptive capability, most participants identified operational and response activities as being when the organisation is most successful at being adaptive. Most participants referred to the ability to see and interpret what is in front of them in that operational environment and adapt their tactics or methods to suit that situation.

Christiansen (2016) highlighted that often the words agile, adaptable, and adaptive are used interchangeably. The researcher posits that when participants are using the word 'adaptive' to describe operations and operational response, they are meaning 'agile' or 'adaptable'. This provides an avenue for potential further enquiry and an opportunity in the

application of the research by ensuring that language is highlighted and deconflicted to create a concise understanding of adaptive organisation.

To further this point, Phase 2 of the study provided an opportunity to provide clarity through language and in the meaning of the terms *being adaptable* and *being adaptive*.

When presented with the following statement relating to the definitions, '*We need to be an organisation that is not just good at responding to a situation. We need to be one that is good at changing itself'*, most participants agreed with the statement. Several participants agreed but with the caveat that change, and the drivers of change need to be well understood and communicated by leaders through the various levels of the organisation, represented by the comment from participant DEL-P47.

> The world in which we live is constantly changing ... (as leaders) we need to be able to respond to those changes whilst still providing the community with the most effective service we can. Being open & proactive in embracing the change will enable the organisation to move forward in this fast-paced environment. (DEL-P47)

The study's qualitive nature limited the understanding of how frequently QFES leaders display inclusive leadership and adaptive behaviours in the workplace. While participants could identify instances where these behaviours were demonstrated, the study did not capture how often they occurred or how many leaders exhibited these behaviours across the organisation. This highlights an opportunity for future research to explore

additional data sources, such as the Working for Queensland and Volunteering for Queensland surveys and identify additional mechanisms to measure inclusive leadership and adaptive behaviours within QFD.

6.1.4.   Sub-research question (Sub-RQ4)

What are the key components of inclusive leadership required to make QFES an adaptive organisation?

The fourth sub-research question sought to identify the key components of inclusive leadership required to ensure QFES is an adaptive organisation. Participants described the role leaders play as critical, key, pivotal, and fundamental. The most consistent theme to emerge being leaders who value diverse voices from all levels of the organisation, articulated well by participant INT-P08:

> I really put a strong focus on the relationships within the leadership team, to achieve that I have to listen to them … I have to take on board what their experiences are, what their knowledge is … I very much rely on them because they're the connection, they're the connecting tissue with the workforce. (INT-P08)

Other key themes identified are confirmed by the published literature: providing clarity around roles and priorities, providing a safe space (Javed et al., 2019), promoting a learning organisation with a learning culture (Hunt, 2016; Lawrence, 2013, Parsons et al., 2016), and role modelling adaptive capability (Booysen, 2014). The essence of role modelling in building capability was captured well by participant DEL-P39.

> Being an adaptive leader in any role will promote the next generation of leadership who are engaged and committed to the same values. (DEL-P39)

Participants were consistent in their articulation of the importance of inclusive leadership capability to adaptive capability of the organisation. The challenge will be in how the organisation applies the research results and considers them within the context of the values, systems and processes which support the organisation including: planning, policy development, performance metrics, and leadership development.

6.1.5.   Key research question

What is the relationship between inclusive leadership and an adaptive organisation, and how might it affect the ability of QFES to operate as an adaptive organisation?

The key research question sought to explore what the effect inclusive leadership capability has on the ability of QFES to operate as an adaptive organisation. The ability for the organisation to consistently change itself, to continually evolve, to learn and benefit from the opportunities and risks presented by change is key to the sustainability of the organisation by maintaining delivery of fit-for-purpose services to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Not being adept at fostering an adaptive organisation could potentially jeopardise both community and workforce safety, as well as the organisation's relevance and autonomy.

The literature shows that inclusive environment facilitate new ideas and processes, helping organisations meet new challenges and adapt more effectively to a volatile, changing environment (Uhl-Bien and Arena, 2018). This study confirms the association between inclusive capability and the adaptive organisation. Participants comprehensively identified the critical link between the inclusive leadership capability of QFES leaders and the ability of the organisation to demonstrate adaptive capability.

Consistent with the literature, this research found there were intrinsic benefits to individuals who can positively impact the organisation's ability to operate in an adaptive way when being led by leaders displaying inclusive leadership capabilities (Herway & Smith, 2018; Hirak et al., 2018). Additionally, participant experiences echoed O'Leary et al.'s (2015, p. 10), definition of inclusion and affirmed that valuing different perspectives leads to organisational benefits, but only when leaders foster environments where those perspectives can be heard (Hirak et al., 2012; Sherbin and Rashid, 2017).

The study also highlighted that inclusive leadership and adaptive capability of the organisation are vital to providing public value. Participants noted the critical role in enhancing QFES's ability to deliver services to the community, consistent with Moore's (1997) Strategic Triangle, and asserted by participant INT-P05:

> The whole reason the organisation exists is to service the community and provide those various activities to the public … if you're not being adaptive and moving with the times and doing it in a way of contemporary approaches to service delivery, then

you're doing a disservice to the taxpayer and the community. (INT-P05)

Alongside better outcomes for the community, this study identified that when leaders use inclusive leadership capability to include diverse perspectives and build organisational adaptive capability, there is an intrinsic connection to attracting further diversity to the organisation, articulated succinctly by participant DEL-P25:

> Considering the role that QFES staff and volunteers play within our communities … the advantage of being an adaptive organisation is that it creates a culture that values and engages people from diverse backgrounds … that builds cultural capability, helps to build collaboration, and cultivates a positive reputation across communities which will attract more diverse representation from within our communities. (DEL-P25)

6.1.6.   Photo-elicitation outcomes

As described, photo-elicitation is a method which can bring further validity, depth, richness, and insights (Glaw et al., 2017), and add to the verbal and/or written data collection methods. The outcomes of the photo-elicitation method of enquiry demonstrated that the workforce has a good understanding of what diversity and inclusion means and how people's perspectives are developed. The method resulted in a creative narrative which promulgated succinct combined understanding of the concepts.

One unexpected finding became evident from the photo-elicitation data collection method. The results, particularly from the interviewee cohort indicated that the photo-elicitation method resulted in a deep provocation of thought, unlocking participants' imaginations and creativity.

Consistent with the literature (e.g., Glaw, 2017; Wellington, 2015), the process elicited complex but concise observations and insights on their perspectives when discussing the underlying concepts relative to the research constructs. The responses seemed less constrained as the interviewees articulated their understanding of the concepts, and the method appeared to generate a greater depth of thought and imagination when the concepts were uncoupled from the organisational context.

The method seemed to evoke a playfulness within the interviewee cohort and the majority appeared to like the change in method. Three interviewees directly commented that they enjoyed the process. One interview participant, INT-P07 suggested a level of discomfort with the questions as, initially they were unsure of what was being asked and the method was unexpected, although, they finished the interview connecting with the task in a playful way by stating:

The only thing missing is the wine bottle! (INT-P07)

The importance of play as a form of leadership development as crucial to enhance leaders' ability to be creative and promote ongoing innovation and organisational change has been documented (e.g., Carroll & Smolović Jones, 2018; Kark, 2011). Whilst the individual interviews allowed the researcher to observe the cohort's reaction and record their comments on

the method, the observations around playfulness were not observable with the modified Delphi (first round) cohort undertaking the online question form. However, the written responses from the online form demonstrated a similar level of conciseness, creativity, and imagination in describing the underlying concepts with the photo-elicitation method.

These findings provide potential recommendations within the broader leadership development remit by ensuring a blended approach to the development and implementation of development programs and activities to maximise leadership acumen and knowledge building to best leverage the talents and potential of the QFD workforce.

In this context, perhaps the words of Albert Einstein (1929, p. 117) extolling the merits of imagination best summarises this phase of results: "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."

6.2.   Impacts of limitations identified

As noted in Chapter 4, limitations pertaining to participant recruitment were identified. This included consideration of the recruitment methods, the nature of the participant population, participant availability, and potential impacts of Covid-19 restrictions during the data collection period.

What transpired during the data collection period was a Covid-19 lockdown period and several sustained, severe weather events which resulted in ongoing impacts and workforce considerations for large portions

of the state. This meant that both operational and support staff were deployed either within the state or to support other jurisdictions in their response. Access to personal work email accounts and communication channels would have been reduced during these times. However, participation in the different data collection phases did not seem to be affected by the operational situations which emerged.

As the risks of the Covid-19 pandemic increased during the data collection phase consideration to safety of participants was important in a quickly evolving situation. At this time the technology and use of MS Teams and Zoom were only just emerging capabilities which presented a limitation regarding inadequate bandwidths and lack of network connectivity in some locations and facilities. However, due to the changes and upgrades to information and technology systems that were quickly put in place, advancements were made to workplace practices, technology, and safety considerations. This assisted the researcher with identifying and engaging appropriate and safe data collection methods.

6.3. Chapter summary

Chapter 6 commenced with a discussion on the research findings in relation to the research questions and previous literature, the chapter concluded with an outline of the impacts of the limitations of the research which were identified in Chapter 4.

As discussed in Chapter 2, implementation of the Disaster and Emergency Services Reform will bring the new department, the Queensland Fire Department (QFD) into establishment on 1 July 2024. For the remainder of this thesis the author will refer to Queensland Fire and Emergency Service (QFES) using the new departmental name of Queensland Fire Department (QFD), reflecting the establishment and transition to the new department.

Chapter 7 follows, it will conclude this thesis by providing the research project conclusions, recommendations for future actions and practice, and finally, the learning outcomes identified by the researcher as a component of the Master of Professional Studies (Research) program will be re-visited and included in the final considerations of the 'triple dividend' outcomes (Fergusson et al., 2018) of the study.

Chapter 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this work-based research project was to explore the relationship between inclusive leadership and an adaptive organisation, specifically how inclusive leadership capability of QFD leaders affects the ability of QFD to be an adaptive organisation.

Previous research has shown that inclusive leadership capability can have a positive outcome at the individual and organisational level (Acquavita et al., 2009; Booysen, 2014; Hirak et al., 2012; Javed et al., 2019; Randel et al., 2018). Equally, previous research indicates that the sustainability and success of an organisation requires an ability for the organisation to demonstrate adaptive capability (Alomian et al., 2019; Christiansen, 2016; Paliokaite, 2012) when responding to fast-paced change and when navigating ever-increasing volatile, complex, uncertain, and ambiguous environments (Kinsinger & Walch, 2012). Research also suggests that enhanced adaptive capabilities can improve organisational performance (Mwangi et al., 2022).

Public safety agencies, including fire and emergency service organisations' traditionally hierarchical command and control style has been identified by previous literature as creating potential barriers and hinderances to cultural change (Young et al., 2018), especially if leaders rely on a response-based tactical leadership style which can create tension with a more strategic, facilitative, and inclusive leadership style. Findings

also indicate that this risk can be exacerbated by variations in the quality of leadership, a lack of diversity within leadership levels, and leaders not modelling desired behaviours. This is position is supported within the research of Adams et al. (2017, p. 5) who argue that hierarchy, in the context of traditional command and control agencies, can have a negative effect on organisations in that it can "stifle the engagement of people, suppress their energy and innovative spark".

Additionally, Young and Jones (2019) identify impacts and consequences to operational service delivery which can potentially be minimised or mitigated through inclusive leadership capability. The impacts and consequences identified include reduced engagement with the community, poor emergency response, greater recovery needs, increased injury and trauma in organisation and the community, and poor retention of the workforce. These impacts and consequences put the sustainability of an organisation at risk through not achieving accountabilities to government and the community.

This study adds to this body of research by evaluating the relationship between inclusive leadership capability and the ability of the organisation to be adaptive, leading to potential enhancement in the focus and practice of leadership development and professional learning within the QFD, the Australasian fire and emergency services sector, and the broader public safety sector.

The study took place within the new soon to be formed Queensland Fire Department (QFD), formerly the Queensland Fire and Emergency

Services (QFES), engaging with the workforce to discuss their lived experiences relevant to the research topic. The two participant groups provided perspectives from a broad range of organisational roles, levels and workplace contexts, offering sufficient diversity across organisational demographic elements. This provided a practical cross-section of perspectives to provide their perspectives on the relationship between the research constructs of inclusive leadership and adaptive organisation within QFD workplace contexts.

The study has demonstrated that QFD leaders who display inclusive leadership capability are better able to incorporate different perspectives and use those perspectives to assist the organisation's adaptive capability. The research has highlighted that the inclusive leadership capability of QFD leaders is key to building and maintaining inclusive environments where the QFD workforce feel that they are valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve the organisation (O'Leary et al., 2015).

The study has also uncovered multiple beneficial outcomes for individuals when they experience inclusive leadership capabilities from their QFD leaders, including a sense of pride and feelings of being valued, heard, respected, motivated, and included. Furthermore, the study identified a strong association between a person experiencing inclusive leadership capability through their leaders as having a positive effect of inculcating inclusive leadership to take forward into their own leadership style. Such a

finding demonstrates that inclusive leadership capability might also increase inclusive leadership capability.

The research has emphasised an intrinsic link between inclusive leadership capability of QFD leaders and the ability of QFD to be an adaptive organisation. Results highlight that building and demonstrating inclusive leadership capabilities will likely enable QFD to be more successful in the delivery of services to the community. Of interest within the results were participant assertions that the connection between inclusive leadership and the adaptive organisation is key to providing public value.

While the importance of inclusive leadership capability on the ability for QFD to be an adaptive organisation is confirmed by the findings of this research, there are several points that warrant consideration in relation to potential opportunities and mitigations of risk identified by the research. These will be presented in the recommendations of this study and are of significance, particularly during this current period of organisational reform and change. As highlighted by this research and existing literature (see Di Tecco et al., 2023), the psychosocial safety risks that occur for people during periods of large-scale change can potentially be reduced or mitigated through leadership capabilities. During times of profound change, the organisation can benefit from leaders displaying inclusive leadership capability which can benefit the work environment by encouraging effective teamwork, creative thinking, and resourceful problem-solving, succinctly put by Wheatley (2023, p.16) when describing what she terms as sane leadership:

Sane leadership is the unshakeable confidence that people can be generous, creative and kind. The leader's work is to create the conditions for those capacities to manifest into meaningful work.

Further, the research has identified that QFD demonstrates adaptive capability best during operational response, but also highlights the risk of not consolidating adaptive capability by a lack of learning from adapting 'in the moment', potentially denying the opportunity for QFD to enhance organisational learning. This finding also poses potential for further enquiry into how the organisation may more effectively embed adaptive capability and organisational learning within the full spectrum of planning, preparation, response, and recovery (PPRR) activities (QFES, 2018c), and within non-operational contexts.

7.1. Recommendations

Overall, the research project has demonstrated that building inclusive leadership capability can provide multiple individual and organisational benefits to the QFD. As a result, the researcher is in a position to offer the following recommendations for QFD:

- Build inclusive leadership capability using current and future development programs by embedding a holistic approach to inclusive leadership development, incorporating the development of competencies, knowledge and mindsets (Booysen, 2013; O'Leary et al., 2015);

- Consider the results of this research in the development of programs designed to develop and maintain inclusive leadership capability;

- Promote the value of inclusive leadership capability through Personal Achievement and Development Plan (PADP) conversations and development goals;

- Identify opportunities to systemise how the organisation can connect with diverse perspectives, at scale;

- Consider the ideas and perspectives of participants in this study related to application of the research in terms of:

  o The types of activities that would assist to promote and transfer these research findings into practice within QFD, and

  o How might the research findings be used to inform the broader fire and emergency sector.

- Leverage current and future data gathering methods to measure:

  o Inclusive leadership capability, including outcomes at the individual and organisational level, and

  o Adaptive capability of the organisation.

This study also generates opportunities for further research to build on or challenge its findings. It is recommended that any further research explores the way inclusive leadership capability can be measured to gauge the impact on sustained change and better organisational outcomes for QFD. Further research would enable validation of these findings and would build general acceptance of the value of inclusive leadership capability, as identified in this study. This would also enable wide-spread application of

the findings within leadership development programs, performance development conversations, individual development plans, and a committed focus on enhancing QFD's adaptive capability.

7.2. Triple dividend outcomes

The Professional Studies program has realised multiple beneficial outcomes and provides potential for further positive outcomes in the ongoing socialisation and application of the research. In studies related to work-based learning, Fergusson, Allred and Dux (2018) identified the 'triple dividend' as an outcome with potential to provide significant impact to the individual, the workplace, and the profession. Further, the Professional Studies program does not seek to "produce professional scholars … but scholarly professionals who can make important and relevant contributions to their profession, organization and society at large" (Fergusson, van der Laan, White & Balfour, 2019, p. 703).

7.2.1. Individual Outcomes

The researcher completed this study as a work-based research project within their role as Principal Advisor - Workforce Development. Key to this program of study is the development of research capability, knowledge, and skills as an outcome for the researcher. The learning objectives identified through the practice-based project of the Professional Studies program have been achieved. Through the process of the design and

implementation of the research project the researcher has built capability in multiple areas, enhancing professional, intellectual, methodological, social and personal capabilities, and positively impacted their day-to-day work within their role and sphere of influence. Furthermore, they have:

1. Developed the ability to gather, analyse and utilise information, building their industry knowledge by undertaking a literature review to inform the research project;

2. Enhanced their communication and relationship building skills by identifying opportunities to engage with stakeholders and establish professional contacts to share experience and expertise and broaden the context of the learning from the research project;

3. Successfully developed reflective practice skills through planned reinforcement with the use of an insights journal and they have engaged a coach to optimise learning outcomes and enhance personal growth;

4. Further developed their critical judgement capabilities, considering information and situations in different contexts to enhance their ability to evaluate and interpret data; and

5. Enhanced their influencing skills through discussing the practice-based research project, socialising the research, explaining the ethical data gathering methodologies utilised, and reporting on the progress of the project including initial findings with stakeholder groups, senior leaders, and sector networks.

The researcher will use the individual learnings to build capability within QFD through their role and with direct application of the learnings into programs and initiatives, which will inform QFD into the future.

7.2.2.   Workplace outcomes

Individuals within the workforce who participated in the work-based research project, have benefited from their involvement. Simply by the nature of the research project methodology, where participants use their knowledge and experience, participation provided them the opportunity to enhance their awareness of the way they interact with the world (King, 2022), reflection being a process of learning through everyday experiences (Wain, 2017). The data collection methods provided a structured model of reflection which provided participants the opportunity to increase self-awareness, consolidate the notion of individual identity and perspectives, and personal growth.

It is expected that new knowledge resulting from the results of this practice-based research project will allow QFD to emphasise personal evolution in terms of understanding the consequences of beliefs and actions on:

- Individual self-awareness;
- Inclusive leadership capability; and
- Team dynamics.

Additionally, the potential exists for individual evolution to positively impact:

- Safety in the workplace;

- A sense of belonging;

- Organisational culture;

- Adaptive capability of the organisation; and

- Outcomes for the community.

The findings provide new evidence-based knowledge to contribute to the validation and future design and delivery of leadership development programs within the QFD. This will positively impact QFD leaders directly through professional development and building on their key leadership capabilities. The research findings have the potential to inform and contribute evidence-based learnings to a large portion of the responsibilities of the QFD People and Culture Directorate and shape plans, programs, activities and initiatives focused on leadership development, fairness, equity, workforce experience, workplace conduct, safety and wellbeing and broader QFD strategies and organisational knowledge.

7.2.3. New knowledge

The study contributes to new knowledge within the Australasian fire and emergency services sector and has further potential to inform agencies across the broader public safety sector where traditional command-and-control leadership styles may create barriers and challenges to the adaptive

capability of individuals and organisations (Adams et al., 2017; Bhandari et al., 2014; Young & Jones, 2019). The results of this study identify the positive aspects and outcomes of inclusive leadership capability, not only on the ability of the organisation to be adaptive, but also on creating and maintaining environments where the workforce feel valued, respected and motivated, these results reflecting the work of Javed et al. (2019) and O'Leary et al. (2015).

7.3.   Conclusion

In addition to the aforementioned 'triple dividend' outcomes (Fergusson et al., 2018), this opportunity has also identified and opened the possibility of several other areas of investigation which may provide further benefits to the newly established QFD.

REFERENCES

Ackerman-Anderson, L & Anderson, D. (2010). How Command and Control as a Change Leadership Style Causes Transformational Change Efforts to Fail. *Being First Inc.*

Adams, R., Owen, C., Scott, C. & Parsons, D.P. (2017). *Beyond command and control: Leadership, culture and risk*. CRC Press.

Akhter, S. (2022). Key informants' interviews. In *Principles of Social Research Methodology* (pp. 389-403). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Aldisert, L. (2001). The value of mentoring. *Bank Marketing*, *33*(3), 40.

Allison, M. (2014). Independent review of an incident involving Queensland Fire and Emergency Services employees. *Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet*.

Alomian, N. R., Alsawalhah, A. A., & Almarshad, M. N. (2019). The impact of strategic intelligence on achieving competitive advantage: Applied Study on the pharmaceutical companies sector in Jordan. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, *10*(4), 66-74.

Atanassova, I., & Bednar, P. (2022). Managing Uncertainty: Company's Adaptive Capabilities during Covid-19. *Complex Systems Informatics and Modeling Quarterly*, (33), 14-39.

Antonellis Jr, P. J., & Berry, G. (2017). Practical steps for the utilization of action research in your organization: A qualitative approach for non-academic research. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, *7*(2), 41-59.

Acquavita, S. P., Pittman, J., Gibbons, M., & Castellanos-Brown, K. (2009). Personal and organizational diversity factors' impact on social

workers' job satisfaction: Results from a national internet-based survey. *Administration in Social Work*, *33*(2), 151-166.

Alimonti, G., & Mariani, L. (2024). Is the number of global natural disasters increasing?. *Environmental Hazards*, *23*(2), 186-202.

Asrar-ul-Haq, M. & Anwar, S. (2018). The many faces of leadership: Proposing research agenda through a review of literature. *Future Business Journal*, 4(2), 179-188.

Australian Government, (2007). *National statement on ethical conduct in human research*. NHMRC, ARC, Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee.

Balmer, J. M., Powell, S. M., & Greyser, S. A. (2011). Explicating ethical corporate marketing. Insights from the BP Deepwater Horizon catastrophe: The ethical brand that exploded and then imploded. *Journal of business ethics*, *102*, 7.

Barthélemy, J. (2023). Avoiding predictable surprises: Lessons from the fire at Notre Dame de Paris. *Organizational Dynamics*, *52*(2), 100966.

Barton, M. A., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2009). Overcoming dysfunctional momentum: Organizational safety as a social achievement. *Human Relations*, *62*(9), 1327-1356.

Bearman, C., Brooks, B., Owen, C., Curnin, S., Hayes, P., & Stuart, H. (2021). Improving decisions making, teamwork and organisational learning in emergency management. *Final Report for the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Research Centre*.

Beiderbeck, D., Frevel, N., von der Gracht, H. A., Schmidt, S. L., & Schweitzer, V. M. (2021). Preparing, conducting, and analyzing Delphi surveys: Cross-disciplinary practices, new directions, and advancements. *MethodsX*, *8*, 101401.

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. *NursingPlus open*, *2*, 8-14.

Benmira, S., & Agboola, M. (2021). Evolution of leadership theory. *BMJ Leader*, 2021;5, 3-5.

Bhandari, R.B., Owen, C. & Brooks, B. (2014). Organisational features and their effect on the perceived performance of emergency management organisations. *Disaster Prevention and Management*.23(3), 222-242.

Bloemhard, M. (2016). On Contemporary Leadership and Branded Organizations. *Dissertations & Theses*, 295.

Booysen, L. (2014). The development of inclusive leadership practice and processes. *Diversity at work: The practice of inclusion*, 296-329.

Bradbury, H. & Reason, P. (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. London, UK: SAGE Publications, 3.

Bridgman, P. (2020). A fair and responsive public service for all – Independent Review. *Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet*.

Brydon-Miller, M., Kral, M., Maguire, P., Noffke, S. & Sabhlok, A. (2011). Jazz and the banyan tree. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 387-400.

Burke, W. W., & Noumair, D. A. (2015). *Organization development: A process of learning and changing*. FT Press.

Buys, T., Casteleijn, D., Heyns, T., & Untiedt, H. (2022). A reflexive lens on preparing and conducting semi-structured interviews with academic colleagues. *Qualitative Health Research*, *32*(13), 2030-2039.

Christiansen, K. (2016). The Thrive Cycle: Unlock the Adaptive Organisation Within. *Handson Media, Melbourne*, 21-22.

Coronese, M., Lamperti, F., Keller, K., Chiaromonte, F., & Roventini, A. (2019). Evidence for sharp increase in the economic damages of extreme natural disasters. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *116*(43), 21450-21455.

Denison, D.R. & Mishra, A.K. (1995). Toward a theory of organizational culture and effectiveness. *Organization science*, 6(2), 204-223.

Denison, D., Hooijberg, R., Lane, N., & Lief, C. (2012). *Leading culture change in global organizations: Aligning culture and strategy*. John Wiley & Sons.

Dervitsiotis, K. N. (2007). On Becoming Adaptive: The New Imperative for Survival and Success in the 21st Century. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, *18*(1-2), 21-38.

Di Tecco, C., Persechino, B., & Iavicoli, S. (2023). Psychosocial Risks in the Changing World of Work: Moving from the Risk Assessment Culture to the Management of Opportunities. *La Medicina del Lavoro*, *114*(2).

Dorenbosch, L., Engen, M.L.V. and Verhagen, M. (2005). On-the-job innovation: The impact of job design and human resource management through production ownership*. Creativity and innovation management*, 14(2), 129-141.

Efron, S. E., & Ravid, R. (2019). *Action research in education: A practical guide*. Guilford Publications.

Einstein, A. (1929). What life means to Einstein: an interview by George Sylvester Viereck. *The Saturday Evening Post*, *26*, 1929.

Erlingsson, C., & Brysiewicz, P. (2017). A hands-on guide to doing content analysis. *African journal of emergency medicine*, 7(3), 94.

Faulkner, C. (2016). History, Mythology, and Power in the Women's Rights Movement.

Feduzi, A., Runde, J., & Schwarz, G. (2022). Unknowns, black swans, and bounded rationality in public organizations. *Public Administration Review*.

Ferdman, B. M. (2013). The practice of inclusion in diverse organizations. *Diversity at work: The practice of inclusion*, 3-54.

Ferdman, B. M. (2020). Inclusive leadership: The fulcrum of inclusion. In *Inclusive Leadership*, 3-24.

Ferdman, B. M., & Davidson, M. N. (2002). A matter of difference— Inclusion: What can I and my organization do about it? *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*, *39*(4), 80–85.

Fergusson, L., Allred, T., & Dux, T. (2018). Work-based learning and research for mid-career professionals: Professional studies in Australia. *Interdisciplinary Journal of e-skills and lifelong learning*, 14, 1-17.

Fergusson, L., Shallies, B., & Meijer, G. (2019). The scientific nature of work-based learning and research: An introduction to first principles. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 10(1), 171-186.

Fletcher, A.J. & Marchildon, G.P. (2014). Using the Delphi method for qualitative, participatory action research in health leadership. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 13(1), 1-18.

Frost, S. (2014). *The inclusion imperative: How real inclusion creates better business and builds better societies*. Kogan Page Publishers.46

Gibbs, G. R. (2012). Grounded theory, coding and computer-assisted analysis. Policy Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Field Theory.

Glaw, X., Inder, K., Kable, A. & Hazelton, M. (2017). Visual methodologies in qualitative research: Autophotography and photo elicitation applied to mental health research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1).

Goleman, D. (2000), "Leadership that gets results", Harvard Business Review, March/April, pp. 78-88.

Goleman, D. (2004), "What makes a leader?", Harvard Business Review, January, pp. 82-91

Halfpenny, B., McCurdy, T., Ramsay, S., Richardson, T., Tilley, B., Ward, V. and Young, D. (2016). Inquiry into the CFA training college at Fiskville. *Joint Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee (Vic),* 121.

Hasson, F., Keeney, S. & McKenna, H. (2000). Research guidelines for the Delphi survey technique. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *32*(4), 1008-1015.

Heifetz, R. A., & Laurie, D. L. (2001). The work of leadership. *Harvard business review*, 79(11), 37-47.

Herway, J., & Smith, J. (2018). How to bring out the best in your people and company. *Gallup Workplace, March*, *6*. Retrieved from https://www.gallup.com/workplace/232958/bring-best-people-company.aspx

Hirak, R., Peng, A.C., Carmeli, A. & Schaubroeck, J.M. (2012). Linking leader inclusiveness to work unit performance: The importance of psychological safety and learning from failures. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(1), 107-117.

Hsu, C. C., & Sandford, B. A. (2007). The Delphi technique: making sense of consensus. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 12(1), 10.

Hunt, S. (2016). Building adaptive capacities for disaster resilience: what role for government? *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 31(1), 31.

Iqbal, S. and Pipon-Young, L. (2009). Methods -The Delphi method - A guide from Susanne Iqbal and Laura Pipon-Young. *Psychologist*, 22(7), p.598. Retrieved from https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-22/edition-7/delphi-method

Javed, B., Naqvi, S.M.M.R., Khan, A.K., Arjoon, S. & Tayyeb, H.H. (2019). Impact of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior: The role of psychological safety. *Journal of Management and Organization*, 25(1), 117-136.

Johansen, R. (2012). *Leaders make the future: Ten new leadership skills for an uncertain world*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Joshi, A., & Roh, H. (2009). The role of context in work team diversity research: A meta-analytic review. *Academy of management journal*, *52*(3), 599-627. P 622.

Kark, R. (2011). Games managers play: Play as a form of leadership development. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *10*(3), 507-527.

King, R. (2022). The Utility of Pragmatism in Educational Research. *Creative Education*, *13*(10), 3153-3161.

Kinsinger, P., & Walch, K. (2012). Living and leading in a VUCA world. *Thunderbird University*, 1-4.

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing. *California: Sage Publications.*

Lawrence, K. (2013). Developing leaders in a VUCA environment. *UNC Executive Development*, 8.

Lempiala, T. (2010). Barriers and obstructive practices for out-of-the-box creativity in groups. *International Journal of Product Development*, *11*(3-4), 220-240.

McNiff, J. (2009). *You and your action research project*. Routledge, Part 1.

McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2011). *All you need to know about action research*. Sage publications.

Mackieson, P., Shlonsky, A., & Connolly, M. (2019). Increasing rigor and reducing bias in qualitative research: A document analysis of parliamentary debates using applied thematic analysis. *Qualitative social work*, *18*(6), 965-980.

Moore, M. H. (1997). Creating public value: *Strategic management in government.* Harvard university press.

Mor Barak, M. E., Levin, A., Nissly, J. A., & Lane, C. J. (2006). Why do they leave? Modeling child welfare workers' turnover intentions. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *28*(5), 548-577.

Mor Barak, M. E. (2015). Inclusion is the key to diversity management, but what is inclusion? *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, *39*(2), 83-88.

Morgan, D.L. (2014). Pragmatism as a paradigm for social research. *Qualitative inquiry*, *20*(8), 1045-1053.

Mwangi, L. W., Kinyua, G., & Muchemi, A. (2022). Organizational Performance as an Outcome of Adaptive Capability: A Review of Literature. *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research (IJMSR)* 10(1), 44-63.

Nembhard, I.M. & Edmondson, A.C. (2006). Making it safe: The effects of leader inclusiveness and professional status on psychological safety and

improvement efforts in health care teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 27(7), 941-966.

Obolensky, M.N. (2014). Complex adaptive leadership: Embracing paradox and uncertainty. *Gower Publishing, Ltd,* 4-41.

Ojuola, J., Mostafa, S., & Mohamed, S. (2020). Investigating the role of leadership in safety outcomes within oil and gas organisations. In *Safety and reliability* (Vol. 39, No. 2, pp. 121-133). Taylor & Francis.

O'Leary, J., Russell, G. and Tilly, J. (2015). Building Inclusion: An Evidence-Based Model of Inclusive Leadership. *Diversity Council of Australia.*

Padgett, D.K., Smith, B.T., Derejko, K.S., Henwood, B.F. & Tiderington, E. (2013). A picture is worth...? Photo elicitation interviewing with formerly homeless adults. *Qualitative Health Research*, 23(11), 1435-1444.

Paliokaite, A. (2012). The relationship between organisational foresight and product innovation in small and medium sized enterprises. *8th International Ph. D. School on National Systems of Innovation and Economic Development*.

Parameswar, N., Chaubey, A., & Dhir, S. (2021). Black swan: bibliometric analysis and development of research agenda. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, *28*(7), 2259-2279.

Parsons, M., Morley, P., Marshall, G., Hastings, P., Glavac, S., Stayner, R., McNeill, J., McGregor, J. & Reeve, I. (2016). The Australian Natural Disaster Resilience Index: Conceptual framework and indicator Approach. *Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.*

Powell, C. (2003). The Delphi technique: myths and realities. *Journal of advanced nursing*, *41*(4), 376-382.

Probst, B., & Berenson, L. (2014). The double arrow: How qualitative social work researchers use reflexivity. *Qualitative social work*, *13*(6), 813-827.

Public Sector Act 2022 (Qld)

Qi, L. and Liu, B. (2017). Effects of inclusive leadership on employee voice behavior and team performance: the mediating role of caring ethical climate. *Frontiers in Communication*, 2, p.8.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Service (2018a). Queensland Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery Disaster Management Guideline. *Queensland Government,* 2.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. (2018b). Strategy2030. *Queensland Government*, 3.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. (2018c). Fairness, Equity and Inclusion Framework. *Queensland Government,* 4.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. (2020).QFES Leadership Framework. *Queensland Government, 8*.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. (2022). Strategic Plan 2022-2026. *Queensland Government*.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (n.d.) *QFES Change Management Principles of Change.* https://qfes.sharepoint.com

Queensland Government (n.d.) Queensland disaster and emergency management. Retrieved from https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/service-delivery-and-community-support/queensland-disaster-and-emergency-management

Queensland Public Service Commission. (2018). Positive and Healthy Workplace Guide. *Queensland Government*, 2,10,12.

Queensland Public Service Commission. (2021). Queensland Public Sector Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2021 – 2025. *Queensland Government*.

Queensland Public Service Commission. (n.d.). Leadership competencies for Queensland. *Queensland Government*. Retrieved from https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/182527/leadership-competencies-for-queensland-brochure.pdf

Ramezani, J., & Camarinha-Matos, L. M. (2020). Approaches for resilience and antifragility in collaborative business ecosystems. *Technological forecasting and social change*, *151*, 119846.

Randel, A. E., Galvin, B. M., Shore, L. M., Ehrhart, K. H., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., & Kedharnath, U. (2018). Inclusive leadership: Realizing positive outcomes through belongingness and being valued for uniqueness. *Human Resource Management Review*, *28*(2), 190-203. https://core.ac.uk/reader/288817600

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. SAGE.

Reiter-Palmon, R., & Royston, R. P. (2017). Leading for creativity: How leaders manage creative teams. *Handbook of research on leadership and creativity*, 159-184.

Rimita, K. N. (2019). *Leader readiness in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) business environment*.

Rumsfeld, D. (2002). Department of Defense news briefing. *US department of defense*. Retrieved from https://www.c-span.org/video/?168646-1/defense-department-briefing, 37:53.

Seidler, J. (1974). On using informants: A technique for collecting quantitative data and controlling measurement error in organization analysis. *American sociological review*, 816-831.

Sekayi, D., & Kennedy, A. (2017). Qualitative Delphi method: A four round process with a worked example. *The Qualitative Report*, *22*(10), 2755-2763.

Sewell, M. (2008). The use of qualitative interviews in evaluation. *Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona*.

Sherbin, L & Rashid, R. (2017). Diversity doesn't stick without inclusivity, *Harvard Business Review*.

Shore, L. M., Randel, A. E., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., Holcombe Ehrhart, K., & Singh, G. (2011). Inclusion and diversity in work groups: A review and model for future research. *Journal of management*, *37*(4), 1262-1289.

Smolović Jones, O., & Carroll, B. (2018). Mapping the aesthetics of leadership development through participant perspectives. *Management Learning*, *49*(2), 187-203.

Spears, L. C., & Lawrence, M. (Eds.). (2002). *Focus on leadership: Servant-leadership for the twenty-first century*. John Wiley & Sons.

Taleb, N. N. (2007). *The Black Swan: the Impact of the Highly Improbable.* Random House.

Thangaratinam, S. & Redman, C.W. (2005). The Delphi technique. *The obstetrician & gynaecologist*, 7(2), 120-125.

Tremblay, M. A. (1957). The key informant technique: A nonethnographic application. *American anthropologist*, *59*(4), 688-701.

Uhl-Bien, M., & Arena, M. (2018). Leadership for organizational adaptability: A theoretical synthesis and integrative framework. *The leadership quarterly*, *29*(1), 89-104.

Wadams, M., & Park, T. (2018). Qualitative research in correctional settings: Researcher bias, western ideological influences, and social justice. *Journal of forensic nursing*, *14*(2), 72-79.

Wain, A. (2017). Learning through reflection. *British Journal of Midwifery*, 25(10), 662-666.

Wellington, J. (2015). *Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Wheatley, M. J. (2023). *Who do we choose to be?: Facing reality, claiming leadership, restoring sanity*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Young, C., Jones, R.N., & Kumnick. M. (2018). The Long Road: Building Effective Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management Organisations. Case Study Synthesis and Draft Framework*. Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC*, 5,105.

Young, C., & Jones, R. (2019). Risky business: why diversity and inclusion matter. Into the future: building skills and capabilities for a diverse and inclusive workforce, workshop synthesis and key research findings. *Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC*, 35-37.

MPSR Program Reflective Practice Tool

A taxonomy of professional capabilities and associated learning areas to enhance the identity, broaden the worldview and empower the professional.
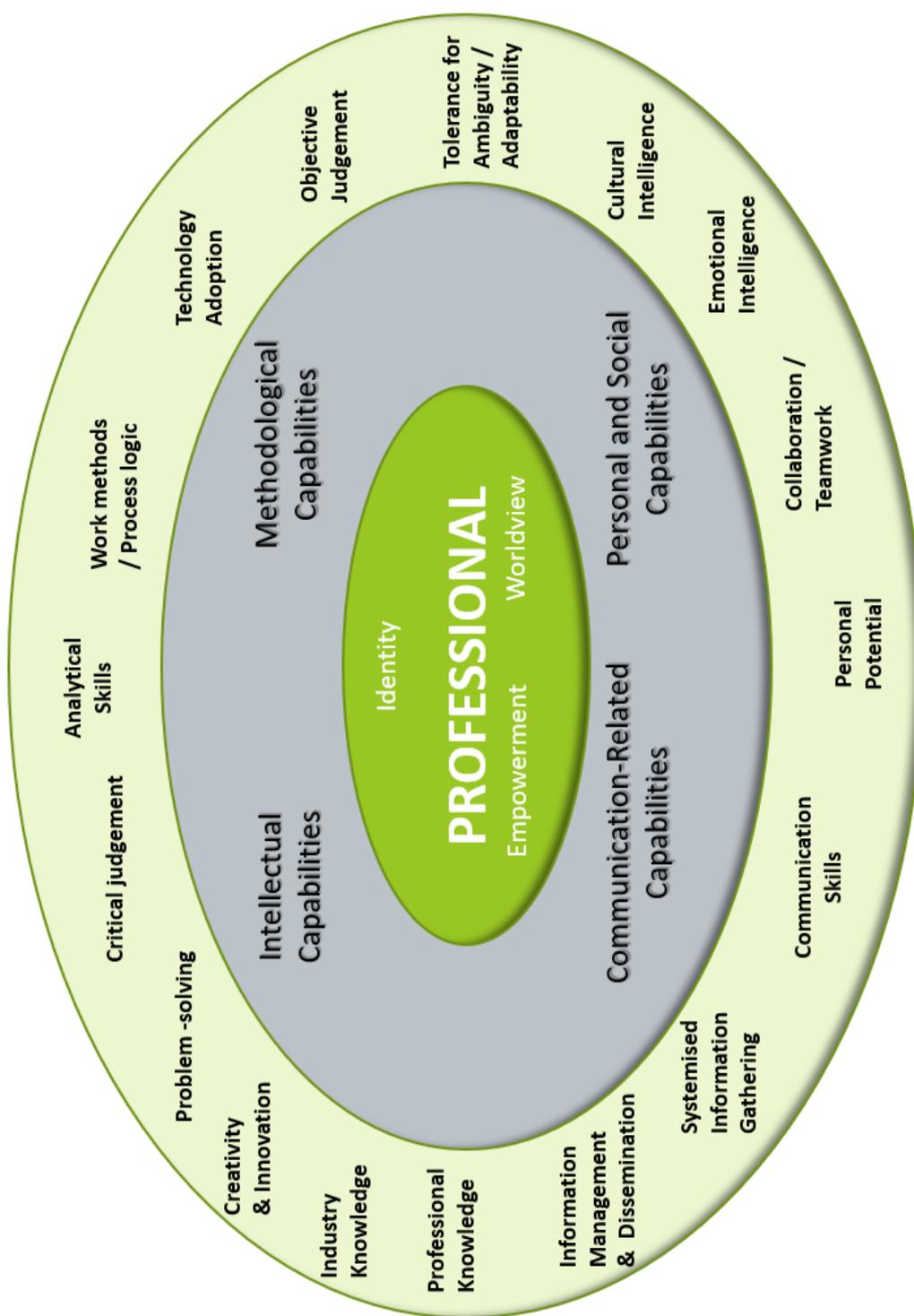
Adapted from Quebec Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport, 2013

From: **Stephen Smith (QFES Assistant Commissioner)**

Date: Fri, Oct 15, 2021 at 1:01 PM

Subject: Get Involved in Research (Master of Professional Studies – Research) – QFES student requires your assistance

To: QFES Executive Leadership Team

Cc:

Good afternoon everyone

An opportunity exists to participate in a work-based research project being conducted by a QFES officer who is currently undertaking Master of Professional Studies Research (MPSR) through the University of Southern Queensland (USQ).

Janine Taylor - Principal Advisor, Workforce Development Unit, QFES People is undertaking this research as part of her study to gain new knowledge about a specific leadership capability within QFES and how that capability might impact on the organisation being adaptive.

Can I ask that you consider assisting with the work-based research project in two ways:

1. *Being involved through an EOI to undertake an Interview or Online Questionnaire.*

To express your interest in participating please find further information and a link to complete the EOI form HERE.

2. *Encourage participation within your region or directorate to ensure a good cross-section of the workforce is included in this qualitative research.*

To encourage participation of the workforce in the Online Questionnaire they can be directed to the item on the QFES Gateway Noticeboard or go straight to the Online Questionnaire EOI form located HERE.

Regards

Steve

Stephen Smith AFSM MLshipMgt GIFireE

Assistant Commissioner, QFES People

171

APPENDIX C

Target cohort landing page – ELT / Senior leader

Get Involved in Research

Get involved in research: An opportunity exists to participate in a work-based research project being conducted by a QFES officer currently undertaking Master of Professional Studies Research (MPSR) through University of Southern Queensland (USQ). The QFES officer conducting the research is Janine Taylor, Principal Advisor, Workforce Development Unit, QFES People

Research Topic: The research will focus on a specific leadership capability within QFES and how that capability might impact on the organisation being adaptive.

Potential Participants: Any ELT member, substantive Director or Chief Superintendent.

What is required: Initially an expression of interest (EOI) to participate in the research.

There are two participant groups within the research, an interview group (face-to-face or MS Teams) or an online questionnaire group. The interview participant group is relatively small however, the researcher is hoping to cover some key senior roles within this group. The online questionnaire participant group will be a larger group.

Through the expression of interest, you can highlight your interest in either of the research participant groups, or if you are happy to participate in either research method you can indicate that on the EOI.

Anyone completing the EOI will be provided with additional information to explain more about the research topic and the interview or online questionnaire. If you decide that you want to participate you will be asked to provide your informed consent before participating in the interview or online questionnaire. You can choose not to participate by not taking any action at that point.

How much time is needed:

Interview participants: 30 – 40 minutes

Online Questionnaire participants: participants will undertake at least "one round" of questions which will take approximately 30-40 minutes. A number of participants will be invited to undertake a "second round" of questions which will take approximately and additional 30-40 minutes.

My information:

Interview participants: Your contact details will be shared with the researcher to arrange the interview.

Online Questionnaire participants: The researcher will use your contact email to provide the Information Sheet and link to the online questionnaire. If you choose to participate you will be asked some demographic questions however, providing your contact email will be optional at this point. Data analysis will be conducted using de-identified data.

Interested?: If you are interested in being part of either participant group or would like more information before deciding to participate, please complete the EOI form located **HERE**.

APPENDIX D

Phase One – Part A: Individual Interview questions

Inclusive Leadership and Adaptive Organisation Research Project Interview Questions

Inclusive Leadership

- Describe the key attributes of an inclusive leader.

- How do leaders create environments where people are able to put forward their perspective, ideas and opinions?

- Describe a situation when your perspective, ideas or opinions have been heard and acted on.

- Describe a situation where you have heard and acted on the perspective, ideas or opinions of others.

Adaptive Organisation

- Describe what being an adaptive organisation means.

- Describe how successful you think QFES is at being an adaptive organisation.

- In the context of QFES, what kind of advantage can be achieved by being an organisation which is adaptive?

- What part do leaders have to play in QFES being an adaptive organisation?

174

Photo-elicitation

Photo-elicitation is a method of interview which can prompt information that may differ from a verbal interview question. Our brains process visual cues differently from verbal communication, so your responses to the images may provide deeper insights or understanding in interpreting the research topic.

Use Picture #1 to discuss your understanding of difference and inclusion.

Picture #1

175

Using Picture #2 as an example, describe how an individual's perspective is developed.

Picture #2

176

APPENDIX E

Target cohort landing page - Workforce

Get Involved in Research

Get involved in research: An opportunity exists to participate in a work-based research project being conducted by a QFES officer currently undertaking Master of Professional Studies Research (MPSR) through University of Southern Queensland (USQ). The QFES officer conducting the research is Janine Taylor, Principal Advisor, Workforce Development Unit, QFES People

Research Topic: The research will focus on a specific leadership capability within QFES and how that capability might impact on the organisation being adaptive.

Potential Participants: any QFES member (paid or volunteer) at all levels of the organisation, across all services.

What is required: Initially an expression of interest (EOI) to participate in the research.

Anyone completing the EOI will be provided with additional information to explain more about the research topic and the questionnaire. If you decide you want to participate you will be asked to provide your informed consent before participating in the online questionnaire. You can choose not to participate by not taking any action at that point.

How much time is needed: Participants will undertake at least "one round" of questions which will take approximately 30-40 minutes. A number of participants will be invited to undertake a "second round" of questions which will take approximately and additional 30-40 minutes.

My information: The researcher will use your contact email to provide the Information Sheet and link to the online questionnaire. If you choose to participate you will be asked some demographic questions however, providing your contact email will be optional at this point. Data analysis will be conducted using de-identified data.

Interested? If you are interested in being part of the participant group or would like more information before deciding to participate, please complete the EOI form located HERE.

If you are member of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), a substantive Director or Chief Superintendent please click HERE as there is an additional option for your participantion.

Phase One – Part B: Modified Delphi participant information

and online question form link

Thanks for your Interest to Get Involved in Research

Firstly, thank you for responding to the call for participants for the research project *"Inclusive Leadership and Adaptive Organisation"*, which is the research component for the Master in Professional Studies Research (MPSR) with the University of Southern Queensland (USQ).

This email is to advise that you are invited to be part of the **Online Questionnaire** participant group.

This will be a great opportunity to be involved in creating new knowledge for QFES and I appreciate your willingness to be involved as a participant.

Please read through the Participant Information Sheet for further insights into the research project prior to undertaking the Online Questionnaire.

Once you have read through the Participant Information Sheet and are happy to proceed to the Online Questionnaire please click the button below, your Consent to Participate is included within the online form.

Please complete the questionnaire as soon as you can, it should take between 20 and 30 minutes to complete. The timing is a guide only and depends on the individual participant. Please try to put some quiet, uninterrupted time aside to complete the questionnaire.

The link to the questionnaire will remain live until midnight, Monday 13 December 2021.

Complete the Online Questionnaire

If you think others might be interested in being part of this research you can forward on this email and invite them to participate.

THANK YOU and regards,

Janine Taylor

Inclusive Leadership and Adaptive Organisation Research Project

Delphi Panel Round 1 - Consent to Participate and Online Questionnaire

Section 1	...

Consent to Participate

1

By checking the items below, you are indicating that you: *

☐ Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.

☐ Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.

☐ Understand that if you have any additional questions that you can contact the research team.

☐ Are over 18 years of age.

☐ Understand that any data collected may be used in future research activities related to this field.

2

Do you agree to participate in the project? *

○ Yes

○ No

Inclusive Leadership

3

Describe the key attributes on an inclusive leader. *

Enter your answer

4

How do leaders create environments where people are able to put forward their perspective, ideas and opinions? *

Enter your answer

5

Describe how it feels when your perspective, ideas or opinions have been heard and acted on. *

Enter your answer

6

Describe a situation where you have heard and acted on the perspective, ideas or opinions of others. *

Enter your answer

Adaptive Organisation

7

Describe what being an adaptive organisation means *

Enter your answer

8

Describe how successful you think QFES is at being an adaptive organisation. *

Enter your answer

9

In the context of QFES, what kind of advantage can be achieved by being an organisation which is adaptive? *

Enter your answer

10

What part do leaders have to play in QFES being an adaptive organisation? *

Enter your answer

Photo-elicitation

Photo-elicitation is a method of interview which can prompt information that may differ from a verbal or written interview question. Our brains process visual cues differently from verbal or written communication, so you responses to the images may provide deeper insights or understanding in interpreting the research topic.

Section 5 ···

Picture #1

11

Use Picture #1 to discuss your understanding of the concepts of diversity and inclusion. *

Enter your answer

Picture #2

12

Using Picture #2 as an example, describe how an individual's perspective might be developed. *

Enter your answer

Demographic Questions

13

QFES Division *

Select your answer   ⌄

14

QFES Region or Directorate *

Select your answer   ⌄

15

QFES Region or Directorate *

Select your answer   ⌄

16

QFES Region or Directorate *

Select your answer   ⌄

17

I am: *

☐ A volunteer

☐ A paid staff member

☐ Both a volunteer and paid staff member at QFES

☐ I prefer not to answer

184

18

My leadership stream is: *

If you have more than one role you can select more than one leadership stream and/or provide further information in the "Other" selection

- [ ] Individual contributor (leading self)

- [ ] Team leader (leading others)

- [ ] Program leader (leading teams and/or projects)

- [ ] Executive (leading functions)

- [ ] I prefer not to answer

- [ ] Other

19

My age: *

Select your answer ⌄

20

My gender: *

Select your answer ⌄

21

My length of service: *

If you are both a volunteer and paid staff member indicate the length of service based on which role ou have been in the longest

Select your answer ⌄

185

What next?

A contact email is required for the purposes of providing you with a report on the outcomes of the research and to contact participants who will undertake Delphi Panel Round Two. Analysis of the data will use non-identifiable data, your email address will only be used for the purposes as described above.

22

My email address: *

Enter your answer

Choice | Text | Rating | Date

Appendix H

Phase Two: Modified Delphi (Round Two) Invitation

Inclusive Leadership and Adaptive Organisation
Delphi Panel Round 2

Hello

Firstly, thank you for completing the the first round online questionnaire, the Delphi Panel - Round 1 for the research project *"Inclusive Leadership and Adaptive Organisation"*, which was some months ago now.

My apologies for what has been a long delay in sending out this invitation to participate in the second round of the online questionnaire.

One of the risks identified in the research proposal for this project was that the nature of our work in fire and emergency services, including the potential for various emerging hazards and heightened operational tempo, having an impact on the timing of the research activities.

So here we are, midway through the year having had a Covid19 lock down, a number of sustained, unusual,severe weather patterns, and the ensuing effects and ongoing impacts across large portions of the state. Thank you for how you may have contributed or assisted in the response and support to Queensland communities (and other states) during this time.

I was humbled and excited to receive a great response to the first online questionnaire, the Delphi Panel - Round 1. As a result there was a large amount of data to analyse and synthesise which also contributed to the, longer than planned, time frame for this follow-up activity.

Thank you for your participation in the research project thus far, I'd like to invite you to participate in the follow-up online questionnaire, the Delphi Panel - Round 2.

This is another opportunity for you to be involved in creating new knowledge for QFES, you will get to see some of the research findings from the first round of the research, and you will be able to provide further feedback and insights.

As a reminder, this is the research component of the Master in Professional Studies Research (MPSR) with the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). If you would like to refresh your memory about your participation, I invite you to read through the Participant Information Sheet for this research project.

To assist me with the extended research activity timelines, if you could undertake the questionnaire as soon as you can that would be great, it should only take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. The timing is a guide and depends on the individual participant. Please try to put some quiet, uninterrupted time aside to complete the questionnaire.

The link to the online questionnaire will remain live until midnight, Friday 10 June 2022, please click on the orange button below to start the online questionnaire. You will need to reference your Participant ID in the first question of the questionnaire.

Your Participant ID is:

Complete the Delphi Panel - Round 2

If you have any questions regarding this email or the research project, please call me on 0423 202 218 or EMAIL me.

Thanks and regards,

Janine Taylor
Student - Master of Professional Studies (Research)

Appendix I

Phase Two: Modified Delphi (Round Two) Online question form

Inclusive Leadership and Adaptive Organisation Research Project

Delphi Panel - Round 2 Online Questionnaire

The Delphi is a method for conducting a structured, group communication process to explore areas of limited research or where a lack of clarity exists. The purpose of the Delphi is to bring together a "panel" of experts (members of the QFES workforce) which will draw on your experiences and insights to help understand individual perspectives on inclusive leadership, and the relationship between inclusive leadership and the ability of the organisation to be adaptive.

Thank you for previously completing the Delphi Panel - Round 1, as part of that online questionnaire you provided your consent to participate in this research, your consent to participate also covers this online questionnaire if you choose to complete this round of the research.

The Delphi Panel - Round 2 is designed to gather further insight and interpretations into the themes that were identified during Delphi Panel - Round 1.

Section 1 ...

Participant ID

1. Please enter you Participant ID *
Your Participant ID can be found on the email you received about this Delphi Panel - Round 2

Enter your answer

Section 2 ...

Inclusive Leadership

2. Participant responses indicated a very clear understanding of the attributes required by leaders to provide inclusive environments where people are able to put forward their perspective, ideas and opinions. *

What is the most effective way for leaders to build on their skills and attributes to develop and maintain their capability to be an inclusive leader?

Enter your answer

3. When asked how it feels when your perspective, ideas or opinions have been heard and acted on, participants identified and described numerous positive emotions. *

What do you see as the three most important benefits from the positive emotions generated when people feel that their perspective, ideas or opinions have been heard?

Enter your answer

Adaptive Organisation

4. Participants identified two distinct capabilities as descriptions of "adaptive organisation", to define and provide collective understanding the following definitions are proposed:

   1. Adapt / Adaptable - the ability of people, teams, and the organisation to *respond* to *rapid or unexpected situations*. To *change* what we do in the *moment*.

   2. Adaptive - the ability of the organisation to change itself, to consistently *evolve* and *change*. To *learn* and *benefit* from the *opportunities* and *risks* of *change*. *

   Consider the statement below - do you agree or disagree?
   Please provide supporting comments for your position.

   "We need to be an organisation that is not just good at responding to a situation. We need one that's good at changing itself."

   Enter your answer

5. Participants identified that leaders play a key role in QFES being an adaptive organisation. *

   Identify what you consider is the most important *inclusive leadership capability* for creating environments which will enable QFES to be an "adaptive organisation".

   Enter your answer

Research Utilisation

Research utilisation is an important aspect of the process of action research, it literally brings the research to life. Research utilisation is the use findings from a study or a set of studies in a practical application. It is the process of synthesising, disseminating, and transferring new knowledge generated from the research to make an impact or facilitate change.

This section seeks to explore your ideas and observations on how we can best operationalise the research by making practical use of the knowledge generated from this research project.

6. **What types of activities would assist to promote and transfer these research findings into practice within QFES?** *

   Enter your answer

7. **Given that participants have said that leaders play a key role in QFES being an adaptive organisation, how might these research findings inform the broader fire and emergency sector?** *

   Enter your answer

8. **Would you like to be involved in potential research utilisation activities?** *

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

   ○ Maybe

189

Your Participant Data

Within the Participant Information Sheet for USQ Research Project - Inclusive Leadership and Adaptive Organisation (Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H21REA110) you were advised that your permission would be sought for your *non-identifiable participant data* to be made available for other potential internal QFES research purposes.

On completion of this research project, I am proposing to share *non-identifiable participant data* with the QFES Workforce Experience team and/or the QFES Planning, Research and Innovation team.

A link to the Participant Information Sheet for USQ Research Project - Inclusive Leadership and Adaptive Organisation can be found in the email you received inviting you to complete the Delphi Panel - Round 2, if you have any other questions or feedback please send an email to: U1131029@usq.edu.au

9. **Do you provide your permission for your *non-identifiable participant data* from this research project to be shared with the QFES Workforce Experience team and/or the QFES Planning, Research and Innovation team?**

○ Yes

○ No

+ Add new

190