



University of  
**Southern**  
**Queensland**

**CHILDCARE IN THE QUEENSLAND POLICE  
SERVICE: A WORK-BASED STUDY OF THE LOGAN  
POLICE DISTRICT**

A Thesis submitted by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores childcare in the Logan Police District of the Queensland Police Service (QPS). Due to the many roles they perform, police officers are required to be available to work 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week with many also attempting to manage family commitments. There is little appetite within the QPS for substitute or relief police officers to fill gaps within its workforce, which are generated by part-time employees, thereby creating a dilemma. Those remaining hours not worked by part-time employees are unable to be filled on a permanent basis, due to the possibility of the police officer's circumstances changing resulting in them wishing to return to the workforce on a full-time basis. The aim of this research is to identify whether a need for 24/7 childcare exists within the QPS, and to ascertain whether it has been successfully utilised by families in shift working professions in other parts of the world.

The research uses a pragmatist approach to capture all perspectives of the participants, relating to the real-world issue. A qualitative method which consists of interviewing case study participants enables detailed data to be obtained to provide an in-depth analysis of their experiences and perceptions. Using a case study research design, this thesis focuses on how police officers in Logan Police District manage childcare and their work commitments. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with each participant who were asked the same questions relating to their experience of work, family and childcare. These interviews were digitally recorded and handwritten notes taken, to ensure all data was captured. Six topics were analysed to obtain a greater understanding and of gender in the workplace, 24/7 childcare and parental leave in other locations, insights from 24/7 trials in Australia and outlining the legislative constraints in Australia. In this qualitative work-based study, utilising real-life situations, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted and experiences documented.

The findings from the case study identified 127 codes, which were grouped into six themes, ranking in order from most frequent theme to the least frequent theme.

Findings from the interviews identified a lack of flexibility within the QPS and uncovered the strategies used by police officers to adapt work to family commitments. The results highlight outdated management practices and organisational expectations heighten stress on shift-working families. Furthermore the interviews found that the participants experienced financial stress which was compounded by reducing their hours to work part-time so they could utilise childcare.

The participants in the case study revealed that organisational expectations to perform overtime at the conclusion of the shift was experienced, causing difficulties for the care of their child. It was deemed during the case study that the participants adapt their work to suit the hours of childcare centres. It was recommended Logan Police District management create a better work-life balance through the exploration of options to encourage full-time work and consideration by the Australian Federal Government to investigate the possibility to introduce 24/7 childcare for shift-working families.

## **CERTIFICATION OF THESIS**

I, Peta Rae Jordan declare that the Thesis entitled *Childcare in the Queensland Police Service: A Work-based Study of the Logan Police District* 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: 22 May 2023

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

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## ABBREVIATIONS

24/7 .....	24-hours, 7-days per week
ABS.....	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACECQA...	Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
OECD.....	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
QAS.....	Queensland Ambulance Service
QFES .....	Queensland Fire and Emergency Service
QNU .....	Queensland Nurses Union
QPS.....	Queensland Police Service
UK .....	United Kingdom
US .....	United States of America
USQ .....	University of Southern Queensland

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. General topic

This work-based research project will explore the topic of childcare within the Logan Police District of the Queensland Police Service (QPS) in southeast Queensland, Australia. To do so, it will identify if there is any impact on industry caused by gender. The work-based research project will explore 24/7 childcare as it operates in other countries and will examine the impact 24/7 childcare has on the workplace, whether it benefits employees, families and their organisations. It will also investigate if Australia's legislation supports a 24/7 childcare option and what other options are available to shift-working families. As police officers are shift workers, the researcher will explore the experiences of police officers within Logan Police District to identify their needs and determine if a 24/7 childcare would be utilised if available to assist with their shift-working needs and family life. The project will also explore if these police officers have experienced setbacks within their careers as they attempt to juggle childcare with shift work.

Formal childcare in Australia consists of outside school hours care, centre-based care and family day care, which are regulated by the Australian Government away from the child's home. Informal care however, is care that is conducted by friends, family or grandparents (Australian Government, 2021). The Australian Human Rights Commission defines a child to be a person under the age of 18-years (Australian Government, 2023). According to s.364A of *The Criminal Code 1899* (Qld), children who are over the age of 12-years are permitted to be at home alone. This paper will refer to those children who are under 12-years and are in childcare.

## 1.2. Research problem

The QPS is a law enforcement organisation consisting of sworn police officers and civilian staff members. The organisation requires work to be staffed on a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week (24/7) basis to prevent, disrupt, respond and to investigate crimes, and to thereby ensure Queensland is the 'Safest State' (QPS, 2020). Anecdotal evidence suggests that shift-working employees with young families need to manage the demands of shift work and make their own childcare arrangements. Owing to the nature of a police officer's role, there is no opportunity to fill full-time positions with temporary workers to account for the gaps left by full-time workers becoming part-time. Likewise, this situation creates issues for police officers

themselves, as many do not have childcare available to them which would enable them to work on a full-time basis. The issue is widely spread across the QPS and is also mirrored in other emergency services, such as fire, ambulance and nursing; other jurisdictions across the nation likely experience this same dilemma.

The topic of 24/7 childcare is a common point of discussion within the QPS. However, it is also an unexplored topic from a research perspective. This research project will therefore determine whether 24/7 childcare is a viable option for the QPS and whether it could benefit the QPS by enabling employees to return to work full-time and to balance their career with family commitments. The following literature review has determined that little information is available specifically about law enforcement professions in other national jurisdictions, with only one short trial conducted in Australia.

### **1.3. Aim of the research**

The aim of the research is to determine if a 24/7 childcare option is needed and if it would be utilised to assist shift-working police officers within Logan Police District. It will seek to identify if this type of childcare has been introduced in other locations around the world, specifically to help shift-working families, and if so to what effect?

### **1.4. Purpose of the research**

Owing to the nature of the police officer's role, flexible working arrangements, such as working from home, are not viable in the QPS. Therefore, the QPS faces a problem of shifting from full-time to part-time work as officers are unable to obtain available childcare to suit their 24/7 work requirements. Keeping this issue in perspective, the current research will examine the childcare arrangements of other policing jurisdictions nationally and internationally to determine how they manage childcare arrangements for their employees. It will also explore childcare arrangements available to shift working families. The research will determine if QPS employees would work full-time if there were childcare available to cater for their shifts. This research, therefore, aims to provide an alternative solution for employees who wish to work on a full-time basis, but cannot do so owing to the unavailability of childcare.

A good example of such a dilemma was observed during the 2018 Commonwealth Games. While planning for the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast in 2018, all QPS officers were required to perform their duties full-time and were

unable to take any leave during this period. The 2018 Commonwealth Games were run throughout a two-week period, which incorporated the Easter public holidays. At the time of the 2018 Commonwealth Games, anecdotal evidence revealed that of the approximately 530 police officers within Logan Police District, there were 71 couples employed as police officers. Of these 71 couples, only two did not have children. It was also identified that many of these couples did not have family support available to care for their children while the parents were at work. The researcher viewed firsthand that the substantial concern among these employees was that they were unable to obtain any childcare for their young children, while working long and varying hours.

Similar to the 2018 Commonwealth Games, during which special and more demanding considerations about shift work were introduced to the QPS, future considerations will likely be given to the 2032 Olympic Games, which will be held in Brisbane, Queensland. Police officers are directed to have their leave balances under a prescribed limit at a certain date, which occurs annually and where major events are taking place, such as 2002 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHoGM), and 2018 Commonwealth Games. This is done to reduce the impact of leave post the major event the leave embargo pertains to. Therefore, police officers will either take leave before the major event, or post the major event, subsequently providing large gaps within the workforce.

It is expected officers will likely be prevented from taking leave during the 2032 Olympic Games to ensure they are all working during this period. Although the 2032 Olympic Games will be similar to the 2018 Commonwealth Games, the impact to families regarding childcare may differ as the 2018 Commonwealth Games incorporated the Easter public holiday period, when childcare centres were closed. However, as the 2032 Olympic Games will be held in July-August, it is still expected to impact the workforce significantly, particularly those who have children in childcare. The actual level of impact is unknown at this point, but it is anticipated the QPS will see an increase in officers requiring part-time agreements.

As an employee of the QPS and having experienced coping with the stresses of shift work with a young family, the researcher finds this topic both professionally and personally significant.

It has been common practice in the QPS to not fill gaps resulting from part-time work or from sick or parental leave and shift this burden of extra hours from shift-working officers to other full-time workers. This increase in the working hours places pressure on the officers working full-time, as their workload increases from community

demand. It is anticipated there will be an increase in part-time employees because of the lack of suitable childcare.

The gaps caused by absences within the workforce, such as part-time employees, are not being filled are due to police officers being required to be officially sworn in as a police officer under the Police Service Administration Act 1990, which provides police officers with powers to perform their duties as a police officer (Cole & Sanderson, 2017). This situation does not afford the QPS with the opportunity to have a ready reserve pool of people who can be drawn upon to fill the gaps of a part-time employees completing the hours of a full-time employee. The QPS does not join two part-time police officers to make 'one police officer'. Each police officer is assigned a position number, and if a part-time police officer wished to increase their hours or return to a full-time capacity and another police officer is sitting within the same position number, then the police officer would be unable to do so.

Moreover, it is expected that with increasing number of part-time shift working officers, further pressure will occur throughout the organisation, owing to the unavailability of childcare facilities, subsequently placing pressure on full-time employees. This problem may also have consequences for the community, as there may be delays in response times of police due to a reduction in full-time staff. The gaps are unable to be filled due to the specific training and legislative constraints around the role of a police officer.

This issue of shift workers not being available to work full-time owing to a lack of childcare support, led the researcher to undertake this research. This area of research is also of significance as consideration needs to be given to how the expected increase in full-time shift working employees will possibly impact QPS performance if alternative solutions are not provided that stop these shift working employees from working part-time owing to family commitments such as childcare. The scope of this research will include shift-working police officers in the QPS.

## **1.5. Objectives of the research**

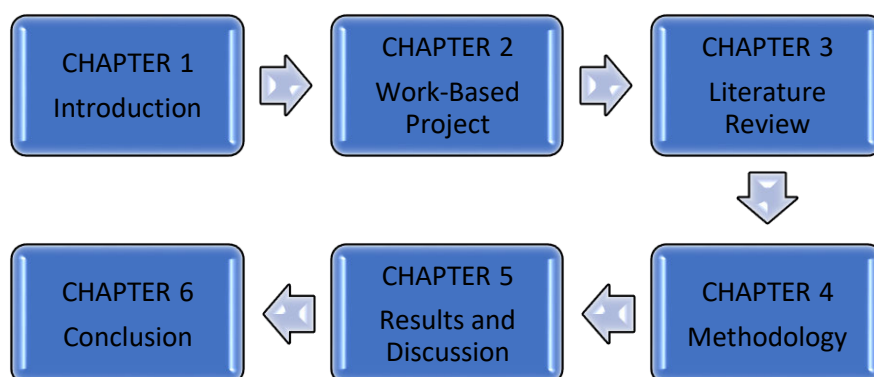
The objective of the research is to establish if there is a need for 24/7 childcare. Research will be conducted into Australia and other locations around the world to identify if gender in the workforce has any impact on industry. Furthermore, the research will identify how Australian families in shift-working professions manage childcare and a comparison will be made to other locations around the world. The objective is to determine if 24/7 childcare has been previously trialled in Australia and

if there were findings from the trial. The interviews with Logan Police District police officers will record their experiences regarding managing shift work and family commitments and will also assist in obtaining an insight of the impacts 24/7 childcare has on the workplace. At the conclusion of this research, findings will be identified.

## 1.6. Thesis map

The thesis map shown in Figure 1 outlines the structure and contents of this thesis. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of the thesis, defining the research problem, aim, purpose and objectives of the research. Chapter 2 will outline the work-based project and contains information pertaining to the researcher and the reasoning for life-long learning through this work-based project. This chapter includes the intended outcomes gained through the learning objectives. The literature review contained within Chapter 3 discusses six different topics related to work and childcare. Chapter 4 introduces the research methodology, outlining the systematic method in which the research was conducted discussing the research design and how the data will be collected and analysed. This chapter will also discuss the limitations experienced throughout the study. Chapter 5 will identify results and discuss the analysis of the data obtained from the methodology. This section will provide a deep dive into the phases performed to analyse the data, followed by an explanation of the results obtained in the semi-structured interviews, identifying codes and themes stemming from these interviews. Inferences will be drawn from the results providing a tentative conclusion while linking to the research requestion and sub-questions. Chapter 6 will contain a final conclusion of the work-based project.

**Figure 1 - Map indicating the contents of the thesis.**



### **1.7. Research questions**

Based on the experiences and perceptions of police officers and the published literature, the purpose of the research is to identify alternative solutions for shift working employees in the QPS who wish to work on a full-time basis but cannot do so owing to the unavailability of childcare services.

This research will explore the perceptions of Logan Police District police officers about the implementation of 24/7 childcare services and how useful and effective they would be for shift working families. To achieve the purpose of the research, the following main research question is proposed:

How can 24/7 childcare assist police officers in the Logan Police District of the QPS?

To answer this main research question, the following three sub-research questions are also posited.

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of the police officers related to the provision of 24/7 childcare services in the Logan Police District?
2. What effect would 24/7 childcare for shift-working families have on employees and the organisation?
3. What role can 24/7 childcare services play in improving the performance of the QPS staff?

### **1.8. Work-based research**

Work-based research involves three-dimensional learning between a university, workplace and employee. This work-based research will consist of a three-dimensional contract between the employee (the researcher), workplace (QPS) and the university (University of Southern Queensland) of a work-based issue identified by the employee, enabling research to be conducted of the issue (Johnson, 2001).

Work-based research provides a three-way benefit to those involved, allowing the employee to utilise problem-solving skills to personally and professionally develop, identifying as the most effective manner for adults to achieve their learning goals (Lester & Costley, 2010). It empowers the employee to develop their personal learning goals by researching a work-based issue, while satisfying the university's curriculum to meet the academic requirements and achieve the relevant course accreditation at the same time directly correlating with objectives of the organisation (Garnett, 2000).



The learning contract provides the employee with the ability to study at their own pace, taking ownership of and addressing the workplace issue (Garnett, 2000). The university's subject matter experts are facilitators, not teachers, who are recognised as subject matter experts in the research field and provide support to the employee in reaching their learning objectives (Lester & Costley, 2010). The university provides a contemporary learning environment using both theory and practical approach to assist the employee in applying their learnings within real-life situations within their workplace (Gregory, 1994).

Garnett (2000) described that all three dimensions of this work-based research are equally involved as partners. The employee is not recognised as a student who will obtain a Master accreditation using the conventional teaching method, but a partner in the process through the provision of identifying their learning goals. Likewise, the employer is involved throughout the process by agreement of the research to be conducted within the workplace and provides input into the learning contract. The university provides a contemporary, flexible and qualitative learning method to the employee and the employer to ensure a qualitative product is achieved at the conclusion of the research.

This thesis will be conducted as a work-based research project. Work-based research was conducted within the Logan Police District of the QPS in partnership with the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). Baxter, Hand and Sweid (2016), revealed that most childcare centres operate from approximately 6am-6pm. This hinders those police officers performing shift work. It was identified that due to the role of the police officer, they are unable to be provided with the opportunity to work from home, to assist with their family commitments. This research explored options available for shift working police officers to enable them to balance their family and career.

### **1.9. Summary of methodology**

The research topic seeks to identify how a 24/7 childcare option would assist officers in the QPS. Pragmatism, using a qualitative method, will be used to provide a practical, real-world approach to determining how a 24/7 childcare option will assist officers in the QPS.

Research has been conducted of other jurisdictions both nationally and internationally, forming six topics within the literature review. The research method involved semi-structured interviews with seven police officers from Logan Police

District. The seven police officers from Logan Police District comprised of six women and one man, as they were the only police officers who availed themselves for this research. The researcher understands this research would be better balanced if a more gender informed approach was achieved. Purposively selected, these police officers were required to have children and to be currently performing or previously performed shift work. Each police officer was interviewed individually, using semi-structured questions which were digitally recorded. The duration of the interviews was between 30-60 minutes enabling a deep understanding of the lived experiences of these officers performing shift work while managing childcare for a young family.

A type 2-case study (Yin, 2018) was conducted in the Logan Police District with the selected police officers who volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews. At the conclusion of the interviews, the researcher analysed the data through revising the audio recordings, which were coded. Themes were identified and coded according to their frequency. These themes formed the content of the results and discussion section and was ranked in order from most frequently identified theme through to the least.

## **CHAPTER 2: WORK-BASED PROJECT**

### **2.1. About the researcher**

The researcher is a Senior Sergeant in the Queensland Police Service (QPS). She is currently performing the Strategy & Performance Officer role in Logan Police District, which is situated in Logan City. She has a passion for implementing change within the workplace and is always looking to create a workplace that is flexible enough to cater for the diversity of all employees. She applied for the Master of Professional Studies (Research) program to enhance her skills in research to support the workplace and build stronger relationships with employees and external stakeholders.

The researcher's career background consists of being a sworn police officer employed by the QPS for 22 years who currently holds the rank of Senior Sergeant, performing duties as a Strategy & Performance Officer, in Logan Police District. Her expertise is in risk management, analytics, performance and project management.

The researcher is in a good position to complete this work-based project owing to where she is situated, having direct relationships with the managers of 95% of the staff within Logan Police District. She works directly with those police officers who are employed to perform front-line duties in a shift-working capacity.

This research topic is interesting to the researcher, as she is a mother of a young family. She found it extremely difficult to juggle family commitments in a shift-working family whilst also achieving her career goals. During the 2018 Commonwealth Games, the researcher faced the challenge of managing work commitments and care for her 9-year-old child. In this instance, it was necessary for the researcher to rely on support from the family network. She has therefore had a personal and professional interest in exploring the possibility of 24/7 childcare for QPS shift workers, knowing the difficulties faced.

The researcher describes values as important principles that are embedded in a person as part of her or his upbringing, compared with beliefs that are opinions formed from experiences over time, and with attitudes that are the behaviour displayed towards something or someone that have been influenced by the person's values and beliefs. The researcher holds core values, such as commitment, determination and innovation, and identified honesty and dedication, as central to her beliefs. Values, beliefs and attitudes form the foundation of her understanding. She has set her learning objectives, together with her motivation and determination, which she will

successfully achieve upon completion of her Master's study through self-led learning (Nesbit, 2012).

## **2.2. Reflective practice**

The researcher engaged in reflective practice, using the CV Tool (Fergusson, Allred & Dux, 2018), and analysed what she had achieved in her current role. This enabled her to identify the learnings of performing specific duties of this role. Using Bloom's Taxonomy Action Learning Framework, she identified these learnings included industry knowledge, creativity and innovation, collaboration and teamwork, and professional knowledge.

She identified the reasons for not retaining information, which was previously learnt. The researcher has since learnt that she learns through single-loop learning, which involves learning that takes place in the conscious mind and moves into the subconscious mind where it is stored. To improve her learning capability, it is important to adopt a continuous learning practice. This is achieved through keeping a reflective journal to keep track of her learnings, to assess and reflect on both her performance and the consequences of her actions, as well as the tasks on hand and her feelings about various events (Nilsen, Nordstrom & Ellstrom, 2012). The reflective journal also includes any learning goals resulting from the learning process and any issues that she wishes to follow-up. The reflective journal will assist the researcher in retaining information that she has learnt, linking with her experiences (Westberg & Hilliard, 2001). This will assist her to remember what she has learnt using continuous loop learning.

## **2.3. Lifelong learning**

It is important to continue to learn throughout one's lifetime as well as building on life experiences, which result in actions of occurred events. It is believed that experience relates to the past, which is one of the traditional concepts of experience. However, Dewey identified experience as relating to the future, as we are continuously forward planning. It is also believed that experience results from actions. Dewey's concept outlined experience to be both theoretical and conceptual based on a foundation for knowledge (Illeris, 2008). It has now been identified that these two concepts outlined by Dewey need to be linked, using both past and future connections of experience and related to continuous learning.

Continuous learning through a work-based project is important to an individual student, as it has been found to increase motivation and professionalism, enabling the student to develop. This results in obtaining greater responsibility within the workplace, which may lead to promotion. It was found to increase motivation and professionalism, which work towards implementing change within an organisation (Lester & Costley, 2010).

## 2.4. Learning objectives

Learning objectives have been developed to determine the intended outcomes from this Master of Professional Studies (Research) program. These learning objectives have been composed in accordance with Bloom's taxonomy, and include cognitive domain objectives, which consist of six levels (starting at the simplest behaviour and proceeding to the more complex behaviour): knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Figure 2).

These learning objectives will provide self-development to her on both an individual and a professional level. Completing the learning objectives, will enable the researcher to provide a contribution to the workplace by implementing change to improve the quality of the work-life balance for employees. These learning objectives will also benefit the university as they align with the Australian Quality Framework at a Master's level. These three factors – student, workplace, knowledge – are benefited through a Triple Dividend Framework in the form of a Learning Contract.

**Figure 2 – Learning objectives**

Learning Area	Learning Objective	Bloom's Taxonomy Level
Professional Knowledge	To identify the challenges of the organisation and the childcare industry, and to evaluate the specifics required for implementation.	Knowledge
Industry Knowledge	To compare childcare situations in other jurisdictions through the analysis of various research sources.	Comprehension
Industry Knowledge	To interpret the information / data obtained through the qualitative process and apply this to the student's workplace.	Application
Industry Knowledge	To analyse other policing and emergency services jurisdictions to determine their status regarding the childcare situation.	Analysis
Collaboration / Teamwork	To construct an interview with internal stakeholders to determine their needs to	Synthesis

	allow for the direction of the research proposal.	
Creativity and Innovation	To evaluate the findings from the research and to provide a structured, written academic thesis with recommendations.	Evaluation

Further research was conducted to obtain industry knowledge and comprehension of data and information from national and international workplaces specific to the research problem (Adams, 2015). This research is contained within Chapter 3 and informs the following literature review. It subsequently broadens and develops the researcher's knowledge which benefits all three factors of the Triple Dividend Framework.

## **CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW**

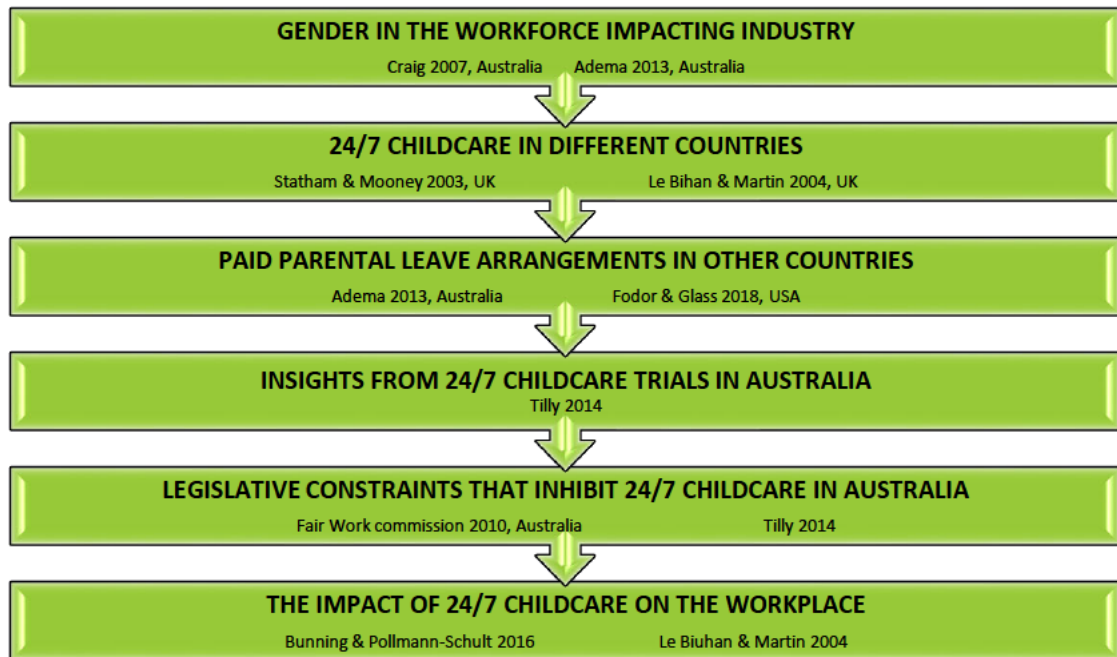
### **3.1. Introduction**

A literature review was conducted in both national and international jurisdictions regarding childcare for shift-working families. Six topics have been identified and are contained in the literature review which are outlined in Figure 3. Each topic directly relates to the research topic of this thesis 'Childcare in the Queensland Police Service: A Work-Based Case Study of the Logan Police District'.

Topic one, Gender in the Workforce Impacting Industry, discusses the gender differences experienced within the workplace and how these differences impact childcare, career aspects and family responsibilities. Topic two discusses the availability of 24/7 childcare by exploring how different countries manage the provision of childcare for shift working families. Topic three identifies the different parental leave entitlements internationally. Topic four explores the 24/7 childcare trials which were conducted and the learnings from these trials, with the legislative constraints that inhibit 24/7 childcare in Australia, covered in topic five. Topic six investigates the impact 24/7 childcare has on the workplace and whether it affects morale and productivity.

Figure 3 visually represents the topics to be considered by this literature review and lists relevant citations that are applicable and contained within each topic.

**Figure 3 - Literature map indicating the topics and citations covered in the literature review**



Australia has seen an increase in women’s employment, where 74.7% of mothers who have children under 15-years are employed and 25.4% of families with children under four-years have both parents employed (ABS, 2022b). During the 2020-21 financial year, women indicated the barrier to commence employment or work full-time was to care for their children, however men indicated it was due to prolonged illness or disability. Data from this Census indicated of those mothers seeking employment 63% of whom were unable to gain employment was due to three factors; children were too young (28.7%), childcare was too expensive (15.7%), or there was no childcare available (13.7%) (ABS, 2022a).

Those employed within emergency services professions are required to work shifts operating on a 24/7 basis to accommodate the community needs. There has been an increase in community demand and expectation for other businesses to operate outside the normal 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday business hours. Traditionally, the father would work while the mother predominately stayed home and cared for the children. Society still believes that the care of children is not an equal responsibility, with women predominantly performing the care role for their children (Andrew & Newman, 2012). The increasing cost of living is another reason that it has become common for both parents to work and to move with society’s expectations into this modern world where more and more people are employed in shift-working professions.



However, women still want to be represented within the workforce obtaining a career outside of motherhood, although there are some women who do not wish to have children and prefer to pursue a career. The important factors for both genders are to find a happy medium to manage their work life balance.

This research asks whether the QPS is unable to provide officers with the flexibility of working from home. It will be difficult for employees to perform shift working roles full-time without the availability of 24/7 childcare support. The hours left over from those full-time shift working employees who work part-time, might place more demand on those full-time employees, which may affect the QPS's performance. This research will focus on shift working police officers to examine whether 24/7 childcare will assist officers in returning to work full-time and bridging the part-time gap.

### **3.2. Gender in the workforce impacting industry**

Police officers are required to work shifts operating on a 24/7 basis in response to community needs. Progression of society has also seen an increase in demand and expectation for other businesses to operate outside the traditional business hours of 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday, subsequently requiring many families to pursue shift work 24/7. As childcare centres operate from approximately 6am-6pm, Monday to Friday, it is difficult to find an alternative to cater for shift working families.

With the limits on operating times of childcare centres and police officers required to work shift work, which falls outside the operating times of childcare centres, it is an expectation that female police officers returning to the workforce following maternity leave will return on a part-time basis. This is due to women predominantly performing the role of caring for their children, reducing their opportunity to attend to paid work (Craig, 2007). As women are committed to caring for their children, while working part-time, leaving the workforce is not an option as it may have adverse financial implications for the family (Craig, 2007).

It is often the case that both parents work. Results from the 2016 Census conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that in 2013 only half of mothers worked full-time, compared to those who worked part-time. Furthermore, in 2017, two-thirds of mothers employed worked part-time (ABS, 2017). A media release from the ABS in November 2013, revealed that 'most mothers used flexible work arrangements when they started or returned to work for the first time, with over four out of five mothers opting to work part-time' (ABS, 2013). In general terms, society has

an expectation for women to be the primary carers for their children (Cancian & Oliker, 2000).

A 2013 study was conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries which include Australia, UK, France, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Japan, USA, Mexico and Korea (Adema, 2013). This study confirmed that gender differences within the workplace directly relate to family commitments identified there was nearly 70% of women working part-time compared to 9% of men on average across the OECD countries. This gender gap has ripple effects on the presence of women within senior management positions across the workforce and is seen to have the same effect across the globe (Adema, 2013). However, the study determined that with an increase in childcare enrolments resulted in an increase in both full-time and part-time women employees within the workforce. This shows a direct correlation between the availability of childcare services and full-time and part-time employment (Adema, 2013). According to Adema:

*Considerable gender differences in employment outcomes remain, often related to women rather than men adjusting their labour market behaviour to family commitments' (Adema, 2013)*

The studies conducted by the OECD discovered that women are often considered as being less committed to investing in their career than their male counterparts, due to the fact they take lengthy amounts of leave, for family commitments (Adema, 2013). A barrier to gender equality within the workforce has been identified as whatever partner earns the less, will be the partner who will take on the childcare responsibilities and return to work on a part-time basis (Adema, 2013).

Employers in Central and Eastern European countries consider women to be unreliable and not proficient enough to deal with the demands of the workforce. This is due to women taking leave to start a family and perform motherly duties, perpetuating a bias to employ men over women, even in women-dominated roles. Research has confirmed that women predominantly select employment which suits their young families and childcare arrangements, rather than shift work or more senior employment such as CEO type roles. Although women do not always source specific job roles, they have been found to source employment which offers job-security and provides family flexibility, which is more commonly found in the public sector (Fodor & Glass, 2018).

UK police introduced part-time employment specifically to retain their female workforce, rather than a means of improving workplace productivity. These police departments found that whilst 94% of part-time officers are women, they have seen an increase in men seeking part-time employment. Similar to the current situation in the QPS, the UK police officers found it difficult 22 years ago to secure flexible work hours, however there were more flexible options available to staff members (Tuffin & Baladi, 2001). Tuffin and Baladi (2001) indicated those participants from the UK study stated that childcare was their reason for having a part-time agreement, and while they did not require a reduction in hours, they required part-time employment away from the inflexibility of shift patterns. It was found these officers required part-time arrangements to juggle their work commitments and family responsibilities, in particular childcare arrangements.

Using US Census data, research conducted in the US revealed that women's time is impacted by parenting responsibilities, resulting in a reduction of time in the workforce. This subsequently confirms an imbalance to the positions of men and women both within the workforce and family environments (Knop & Laughlin, 2018).

A Harvard University seminar conducted with attendees on the topic of childcare for employee's found due to gender inequality and childcare responsibilities of mothers, female parents were absent from the workplace on average twelve-days per year, compared to married male parents absent eight-days per year (Friedman, 1986).

For working mothers, the global pandemic of Covid-19 played a significant part in employment, revealing approximately 26% of US mothers ceased work due to childcare issues. With the US economy dramatically affected by the pandemic, the childcare industry was also affected, subsequently affecting working women who required childcare which was affordable (Modestino et al., 2021).

### **3.3. Childcare in different countries**

Shift work used to be predominantly a feature of professions such as nursing, police enforcement and textile industries, but it has become more predominant across a wide range of professions as more and more businesses open longer hours to suit a 24/7 economy (Statham & Mooney, 2003).

US statistics indicated that approximately 40% of employees were employed in some sort of shift working capacity (Presser, 2004). As was noted above, a study conducted in Chicago in 2004-2012 found that single mothers were unable to obtain

suitable childcare, resulting in an increase in the number of part-time employees. This study further identified although there was an increase in shift working mothers, it was rare for childcare centres to operate outside standard hours (7am-6pm). While many wished for affordable childcare services, they also wanted the centres to operate for longer hours to accommodate their shift requirements (Stoll, Alexander & Nicpon, 2015).

Twenty-five years ago, research conducted in Michigan revealed that of the 235 childcare centres within the city only nine were open after 6pm (Kahn & Blum, 1998). These findings indicate that, at least in the US, issues related to childcare support in the workplaces are widespread and have affected the shift working parents in engaging in full-time jobs.

In the UK, an increase in shift working professions has extended beyond the public sector employees to shops, telephone consultants, hospital workers, care homes and post offices. This underscores the demand for and significance of childcare services for shift workers who have young children. In the South Yorkshire region in the UK, for instance, there were numerous public sector employees required to perform shift work, but inadequate childcare to support them. The results showed less than half of the childcare centres operated outside the hours of 8am-6pm and were unable to meet the demand (Formby, Tang & Yeandle, 2004). The fire services shift working employees also experienced problems with accessibility to childcare services. However, in England in the UK, the West Midlands Fire Service had its own nursery and childcare centre to accommodate its staff and was operating since 1991 (Formby et al., 2004). In the UK, in particular Britain, childcare is expensive and does not cater for low-to-middle income shift working families (Alakeson, 2011). This study highlights the need for and importance of childcare for shift working families.

In the UK in 1984, employed mothers with children under five-years-old were 27% of the working population, which increased to 54% in 2000, which was a 200% increase (Statham & Mooney, 2003). As we move into a more dynamic economy, there are many professions requiring their employees to work shifts 24/7. A UK survey conducted with 7,500 employees revealed that only 35% worked traditional hours (8am-6pm) (Statham & Mooney, 2003). This study also included 114 childcare providers to determine the demand for 24/7 childcare services. The results showed that 74% of respondents said that there was some demand, 10% stated that there was significant demand and 13% said that there was little demand. These childcare organisations indicated that 70% childcare was mostly required after 6pm, 54% before

8am, 45% on weekends, and 13% overnight. A further survey conducted to identify the parents' childcare needs suggested that 85% of shift working mothers would use a formal childcare option if it were available and affordable (Statham & Mooney, 2003).

In European countries where limited childcare is available, working families with children are more likely to perform shift work. However, in European countries where childcare is readily available, most working parents avoid shift work (Bunning & Pollmann-Schult, 2016). Some parts of Germany offer limited childcare, therefore forcing mothers of young children to perform shift work, whilst other parts of Germany have a wide range of childcare; however, the take up of shift working employment is low. Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands also arrange their work commitments around the availability of childcare, or they co-parent their childcare responsibilities if childcare is unavailable (Bunning & Pollmann-Schult, 2016).

Finland has arguably the best range of childcare services for employees in the world. It has provided 24/7 childcare to its workforce for over 25 years followed by France, which has a moderate range of services but also has fewer employees performing shift work and no centres offering 24/7 childcare. Japan expanded its centre-based childcare to include evening care, due to an increase of mothers returning to work (Anme & Segal, 2007). A study performed in 2004, with no contradictory data, outlined that Portugal did not offer 24/7 childcare as the country has limited shift working employees. Childcare in Portugal is often performed by informal means, such as by friends or family members (Le Bihan & Martin, 2004). The Netherlands consists of a high percentage of double income families and part-time employees, outlining a necessity for childcare to support these families. However, with 30% of parents employed in a shift working profession, it is challenging for parents to obtain childcare outside the standard hours. Couples who have flexibility within their workplace schedule their work hours around the opening hours of the childcare facility (Verhoef, Roeters & Van der Lippe, 2015).

During the 1990s, Canada previously offered overnight childcare. However, low demand and high costs reduced the childcare services to include evening hours only. For instance, Hamilton Civic Hospital in Ontario and other childcare centres, in Richmond Hill had originally planned to provide a 24/7 childcare service, but in 1994 it reverted to operating standard hours (8am-6pm), owing to low demand. Some childcare centres in Canada, however, have opted to extend their operating hours to cater for various shifts, rather than providing a 24/7 service (Friendly, Cleveland & Willis, 1994).

In Australia, information from the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) revealed that there were approximately 130 childcare services that operated 24/7, and that the majority of these were family day care. The Early Childhood Australia survey conducted in 2014 revealed that 25% of childcare centres that offered long day care opened at 6.30am, with 68% opening between the hours of 6.30am and 7.30am, and 72% closing between the hours of 6pm and 6.30pm. While these childcare centres operated eleven to twelve-hours per day during the week, they did not cater for shift working families. Furthermore, only 9% of these childcare centres operated on the weekend (Australian Productivity Commission, 2014).

Although not police specific, this research has recognised that Australia is not unique in identifying an increase in shift working occupations and the need for childcare to support shift working families. Countries that have adopted 24/7 childcare or similar (longer hours), had to revert to the normal variety of successes or challenges owing to the fiscal challenges that come with extending trading hours, thereby making shift working roles less appealing. However, with requirements for childcare availability within a 24/7 economy becoming more prevalent, there are not many countries who offer this service (Anme et al., 2010).

### **3.4. Paid parental leave entitlements in other countries**

There exists to this day an entrenched belief regarding women and the workforce. Many countries and cultures firmly promote work as the primary responsibility of the man and the woman is responsible for running the household and raising children. This gender inequality inhibits the ability of women to enter the workforce, and governments are needed to legislate against this gender bias and to encourage women to take part in the paid workforce of a nation (Fodor & Glass, 2018). A gender-informed approach to work-related research recognises that:

*'work and family considerations contribute to women frequently working part-time.....rather than working long hours in the business sector'*  
(Adema, 2013).

In some OECD countries, fathers are provided with the same paid parental leave entitlements as the mothers. Iceland, for example, provides equal paid parental

leave entitlements to both employed parents, with fathers receiving 13-weeks of paid parental leave (Adema, 2013).

Germany pioneered a program whereby male parents were fiscally rewarded if parental leave were accessed at the time of the birth of a child. This allowed a family that normally had twelve-months paid maternal leave extended to 14-months (Adema, 2013).

Central and Eastern European countries offer paid parental leave that allows mothers to take leave from their employment to care for their young children (Fodor & Glass, 2018). However, women are often criticised for taking lengthy amounts of maternity leave, causing discrimination against mothers within the workplace (Fodor & Glass, 2018).

Central Eastern European countries including Hungary, Estonia and the Czech and Slovak Republics, all have access to three years parental leave; however, Poland's parental leave is offered only to select parents, as it is means tested (Fodor & Glass, 2018). In other Central Eastern European countries, such as Slovenia and Romania, they have access to better fiscal leave entitlements; however, it is linked to the government's benefit program (Fodor & Glass, 2018). Anecdotal evidence suggests that discrimination exists within the workforce, as employers will not hire women if they are 'of child-bearing age', leaving the employer to incur costs for hiring an employee who fills the void for the duration of the substantive employee's maternity leave (Fodor & Glass, 2018). Then the employee returns from maternity leave, often deskilled. Whilst there is no supporting evidence, it is believed that shorter breaks from the workforce is less detrimental to women who extended maternity leave (Fodor & Glass, 2018). Lithuania provides fathers up to 28-days of paternity leave for the birth of their child, whilst the Czech Republic and Estonia do not provide paternity leave; the Czech Republic and Estonia do provide the father between five and 15 rest days (unpaid) upon the birth of the child (Fodor & Glass, 2018).

The largest number of countries identified in this literature review highlight that there is availability for parents to have the opportunity to access paid paternity/maternity leave. However, while there is financial support available for families in the initial stage of commencing a family, there appears to be no support available for shift workers to return to the workforce with appropriate 24/7 childcare thereby lengthening their time away from the position and further deskilling the employee.

In summary, while practices still exist regarding women being primarily responsible for children and their families, such practices it can be argued, have a detrimental effect on their working career. In contrast, other countries have modernised their parental arrangements by providing the father with entitlements upon the birth of their child.

### **3.5. Insights from 24/7 childcare trials in Australia**

A childcare flexibility trial was conducted in Australia in 2013-14 to obtain a greater awareness of the needs of parents in shift working professions. The states of New South Wales and Victoria were participants in this trial. Whilst there was a large take up by police officers, The Police Federation of Australia stated that the response was not as great as expected (Cole & Sanderson, 2017). The Queensland Nurses Union (QNU) also trialled the concept, partnering with family day care in the south-eastern corner of Queensland, Toowoomba and Townsville. The trial was received positively by the nursing staff in these areas. The QNU contacted the federal government requesting to extend the trial period to enable more nurses to utilise the service. Goodstart Early Learning, a key childcare provider, recorded negative outcomes in that the participation rate during the trial period was low. As a result, this trial was not considered to be financially viable for their organisation. At the conclusion of the trial period, the evaluation identified that only half of the expected demand had eventuated and consequently the trial was terminated. The low participation rate was due to the nature of the trial, as parents were hesitant to disrupt their children from their usual childcare service for the duration of a 'trial' (Australian Productivity Commission, 2014).

This literature review has identified a gap in terms of inadequate information regarding childcare and police officer, emergency services and nursing occupations, as they often involve a random rotational shift rostering. Those employed in shift working occupations and the challenges faced by them in regard to childcare are somewhat consistent around the world. Furthermore, there is minimal research conducted within Australia, with the literature review identifying only one trial for 24/7 childcare. This research will fill this gap by studying the effect of 24/7 childcare on employees and the organisation and the role 24/7 childcare services can play in improving the performance of the QPS staff.



### 3.6. Legislative constraints that inhibit 24/7 childcare in Australia

The Children’s Services Award 2010 indicated that the following penalties shown in Table 1 applied in Australia during 2010 (Fair Work Commission, 2010).

**Table 1 – Children Services Award penalty rates**

Shift	Description	Penalty Rate
Early morning	Shift commences at or after 5am, but before 6am	10%
Afternoon	Shift finishes after 6.30pm, but at or before midnight	15%
Night	Shift finishes after midnight but at or before 8am OR shift commences at or before midnight but finishes before 5am	17.5%
Weekend	Saturday	Time and half for first 2 hours and double time thereafter. <b>Minimum 4 hours pay</b>
Weekend	Sunday	Double time. <b>Minimum 4 hours pay</b>
Public Holidays		Double time and a half. <b>Minimum 4 hours pay</b>

In Australia, the childcare system is extremely complex, including the specifics of childcare benefits and childcare rebate systems. To be eligible to receive the childcare benefit, a family’s income is means tested; those families who earn more, pay more in childcare, as the government assistance is targeted at lower income families. The costs of childcare for families also vary depending on the location across the nation, revealing that the costs are lower in cities and regional areas than rural and remote areas (Australian Productivity Commission, 2014). In regional areas the cost of having a fully licensed and government funded childcare centre is beyond the feasibility of the families requiring assistance (Maher & Frestedt, 2008). Recent research from Victoria University reveals there are approximately 3,600 regions, particularly in regional and remote throughout Australia, that have no childcare places available (Hurley, Matthews & Pennicuik, 2022).

As with any business model, an increase in running costs is passed on to the customer. This increases childcare fees generally but also quite significantly for nights and weekends (Fair Work Commission, 2010). Those families who use nanny services, au pairs, family day care, and long day care pay more for these services. Although the nanny service provides a more flexible option than childcare centres, especially for shift working families, it is not covered by the childcare rebate or childcare benefit subsidies. In comparison with the long day care centres, the nanny

service would have to care for three or four children of the same family to make it financially attractive for most families (Australian Productivity Commission, 2014).

This research demonstrates the fiscal constraints that hinder the provision of 24/7 childcare within Australia. It clearly depicts the impact of the cost of penalties on the service provider, which is then absorbed into the running costs of the centre. The managers of those centres then pass the increase in costs on to the parents to maintain the business model to function at their desired level of profit.

Currently the childcare costs to the consumer are means tested which involves families receiving a childcare subsidy (a percentage) based on their income.

Table 2 provides the childcare subsidy based on the family’s combined income (Australian Government, 2022b).

**Table 2 – Family income and childcare subsidy**

Family Income	Childcare Subsidy %
\$0 - \$72,466	85%
Greater than \$72,466, but less than \$177,466	Between 85% and 50%. The percentage is reduced by 1% for every \$3,000 of a family's income
Greater than \$177,466, but less than \$256,756	50%
Greater than \$256,756, but less than \$346,756	Between 50% and 20%. The percentage is reduced by 1% for every \$3,000 of a family's income
Greater than \$346,756, but less than \$356,756	20%
\$346,756 or more	0%

However, legislation was passed in November 2022 to deliver more affordable childcare to Australian families. The new childcare subsidy consists of two important points relative to this study:

- Childcare Subsidy rebates to 90% to those families earning between \$0 - \$80,000 combined income; and
- Increase in childcare subsidy rebates to those families earning less than \$530,000 combined income (Australian Government, 2022c).

### 3.7. The impact of 24/7 childcare on the workplace

Studies across 22 European countries revealed more families would perform shift work if there was childcare available to support their needs. The studies also show that 34% of part-time employees in Europe are women but only 18% are men. Moreover, since mothers often put their careers on hold, work reduced hours, or perform shift work to care for their children, the availability of childcare was seen to

affect predominantly the mother's employment status (Bunning & Pollmann-Schult, 2016). In countries where there was no flexibility within the workplace or in the operating hours of childcare centres, shift working employees were forced to find alternative solutions, which might be utilising friends or families. If they were unable to find childcare to enable them to work, then the only alternative was to take sick leave or to leave the children at home alone (Le Bihan & Martin, 2004). Consideration should be given by organisations to offer flexibility within the workplace. This may be in the form of working from home to enable the balance of work and family life (Verhoef et al., 2015).

With the implementation of 24/7 childcare, the Greater Manchester Police within the UK, enabled their employees to perform full-time work, which reduced absenteeism (Formby et al., 2004). A UK survey conducted by England's National Health Service within the workplace indicated a reduction in absences and an increase in morale owing to the availability of flexible childcare that suited shift workers. Since 1997, West Yorkshire Police in the UK, experienced improved motivation, a higher recruitment rate and increased job satisfaction, which improved morale and reduced absenteeism (Formby et al., 2004). Productivity levels also improved, enabling the organisation to become an employer of choice, and facilitating early return to work platforms for their existing employees (Formby et al., 2004).

Hospitals within the UK, namely St Helens and Knowsley Hospitals in the National Health Service Trust, identified their employees would return to work if there were most suitable childcare options available to suit their needs. These hospitals recognised the importance of providing this service for their employees as it would positively impact on the recruitment and retention of staff (Formby et al., 2004). These results reflect the significance of 24/7 childcare services in terms of their benefits to both the employees and the organisations.

The UK identified that their shift-working couples required flexibility in childcare to accommodate their working needs. However, most childcare centres failed to provide services for shift-working families, with the exception of the National Health Service, which catered for hospital staff and other public sector employees. While this service was available, employees still experienced difficulties with varying shifts and sudden shift changes. It was considered important for childcare to provide the flexibility to accommodate shift working families, to ensure that employees remained in the workforce. Low retention rates of employees, particularly mothers, could affect the economy (Alakeson, 2011). Korea and Japan have experienced numerous women

employed in shift working roles becoming deskilled owing to spending lengthy amounts of time out of the workforce, thereby finding it difficult to re-enter the employment market post maternity leave. Nearly 70% of Korea's women employees and over 60% of Japan's women employees had part-time or temporary positions, because of inadequate childcare support (Lee, 2004).

Research in the US indicated that childcare played a major part in the recruitment and retention process of women in law enforcement positions, owing to women seeking roles that offered the traditional 9am-5pm hours, rather than shift work. Similarly, women who held police officer positions were reluctant to apply for supervisory roles, as they were required to move locations or to perform shift work, adding pressures of finding suitable childcare to accommodate their shifts (Guajardo, 2016).

In the UK, Finland and the Netherlands, between 20% and 27% of women performed shift working roles. Although Finland provided 24/7 childcare to shift working families, only 62% met the criteria to enable them to utilise this service (Moilanen et al., 2016).

This research identified that those workplaces which offered 24/7 childcare had a higher retention of staff, greater performance and increased levels of morale. The ability to utilise the 24/7 childcare impacts in a positive manner upon the individual employee, the work force and the employer through gains in morale and productivity. It further provides a lesser deskilling of those entering the workforce sooner, as a result of the availability of appropriate childcare.

Overall, those organisations which adopt a 'family-friendly' workplace benefit both employees by creating a better work-life balance and the organisation through recruitment and retention (Bond & Wise, 2003).

A survey conducted in the US along with an economic analysis indicated employee's productivity within the workplace is reduced when they are unable to access childcare arrangements. More specifically, productivity was affected by the employee's available time within the workplace with 63% employees required to leave work earlier due to childcare issues. Holistically, this has a flow-on impact to the US economy as a result of loss in wages and productivity (Belfield, 2018).

The results from an Australian Workplace Industry Relations Survey showcased the difficulties experienced by shift working employees attempting to juggle their career and family responsibilities impacts the workplace in a negative manner, affecting morale and productivity. Some organisations have attempted to

provide packages that are attractive to these employees and also the organisation, to reduce absenteeism, improve retention and productivity (Brandon & Temple, 2007).

The literature review identified six topics that tie directly into the research topic of this paper 'Childcare in the Queensland Police Service: A Work-Based Case Study of the Logan Police District'. Focusing primarily on shift working professions, these topics revealed the impact that 24/7 childcare has on the workforce and how it was managed in other countries. It discussed the leave options available to parents overseas and identified the results from the Australian childcare trials. This also uncovered the legislative constraints that inhibit 24/7 childcare in Australia.

As a result of the literature review, this research asks the following three research questions:

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of the police officers related to the provision of 24/7 childcare services in the Logan Police District?
2. What effect would 24/7 childcare for shift-working families have on employees and the organisation?
3. What role can 24/7 childcare services play in improving the performance of the QPS staff?

## **CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted in this research to answer the research questions. This research will use a qualitative approach to identify the experiences and perceptions of Queensland Police Service (QPS) employees related to the provision of childcare services. The paradigm used in this research will be Pragmatism.

### **4.2. Paradigm**

Pragmatism can be defined as the viewpoint adopted to finding a solution to a real-world problem, in this case a work-based problem, regardless of any moral or political biases (Illeris, 2008). This research has identified a work-based problem which needs to be explored. The study is, therefore, pragmatic in nature and places the problem at the centre of the research whereby the researcher will select a method to provide reliable results to address the problem without being unduly influenced by bias (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The research will be exploratory and will consist of exploring the perspectives of the people concerning the real-world issue being explored.

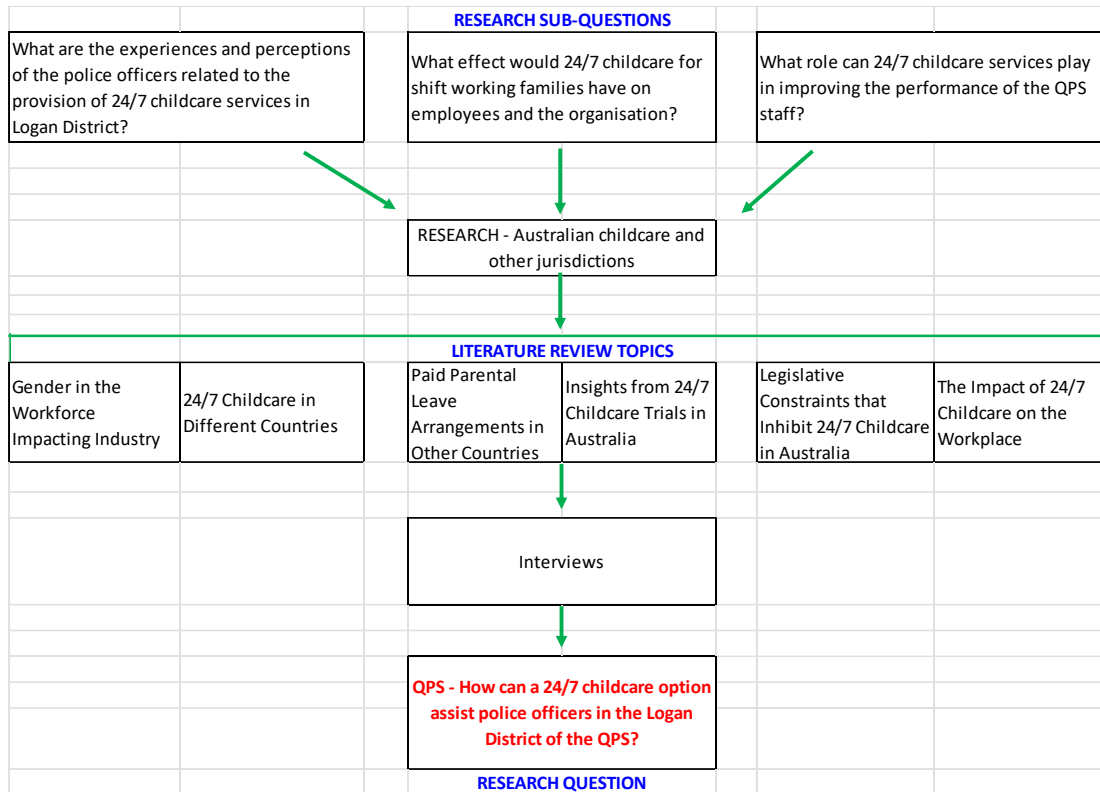
Pragmatism uses real-life situations within a work-based learning (WBL) environment enabling the student to apply these learnings within a practical space. With a face-to-face approach, a student can be more motivated and gain a better understanding through the use of Pragmatism (Pawlina & Drake, 2016). A Pragmatist paradigm allows for qualitative research to be conducted using face-to-face interviews to gather information on experiences producing hypotheses, questions, or recommendations (Cersosimo, 2022), although in this context no hypotheses were produced nor propositions made; the project only asks research questions.

### **4.3. Method**

The researcher will adopt a qualitative exploratory approach to capture the experiences of seven police officers (six women and one man) from Logan Police District. This qualitative method will enable the researcher to obtain detailed data from the participants to address the research questions. It is important to use a qualitative method in this context as the researcher requires in-depth information to address the

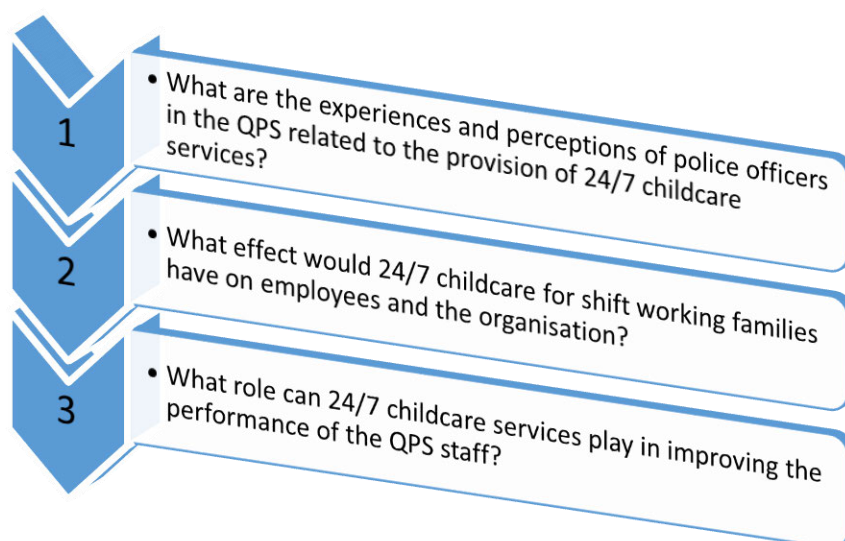
research questions, and to explore in-depth the participants' experiences and perceptions. Figure 4 represents the research design that will be applied to the study.

**Figure 4 – Research design process**



This research will determine ‘How a 24/7 childcare option will assist police officers in Logan Police District of the QPS?’ to enable thorough research to be conducted, three sub-questions will be answered.

**Figure 5 - Sub questions**



#### **4.4. Research design**

This Type-2 case study focuses on the Logan Police District which covers approximately 3,173 square km and is situated within the South-Eastern Region of the QPS. The district contains twelve police divisions (Beenleigh, Browns Plains, Crestmead, Jimboomba, Logan Central, Loganholme, Logan Village Yarrabilba and Springwood) spread throughout the Logan City Council area and includes a portion of the Scenic Rim Council (Beaudesert, North Tamborine, Canungra and Rathdowney). Logan Police District operates with approximately 720 police officers and 75 staff members (QPS, 2022). Logan City is situated approximately a twenty-minute drive from the Brisbane Central Business District and approximately a thirty-minute drive to the Gold Coast where it contains 70 suburbs of rural and semi-rural properties across 959 square kilometres. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2021), the population of Logan City was 345,098 on 30 June 2021. Logan City is home to approximately 217 different cultures and due to this information, policing within Logan Police District, is extremely dynamic.

The Logan Police District was selected to conduct a Type-2 case study (Yin, 2018) due to its diverse nature and mutual respect between researcher and staff. A Type-2 case study consists of three main elements: research context, case and embedded units of analysis. This Type-2 case study will thus consist of conducting interviews with the participants (i.e., the 'embedded units of analysis') who all work within Logan Police District (i.e., the 'case'). Whilst Logan Police District is one of 15



Districts within the QPS (i.e., the 'research context'), it has been the focus of this study, which Robert Yin (2018) describes as the 'case'. In this example, the case study includes a study of a single organisation, but includes systematic data gathered from 'embedded units of analysis within this organisation', in this case data has been obtained from semi-structured interviews of participants, all of whom work in Logan Police District. This design is therefore also called an embedded case study design (Yin, 2018). Thus, while the focus of the study has been Logan Police District, it is important to remember the holistic focus is on the QPS, a feature of the Type-2 design as explained by Yin.

The research design includes a literature review that is based around the research question and sub-questions. It consists of research of other jurisdictions and childcare within Australia. A qualitative research process using interview technique will be applied to identify themes which will be matched against each theme discussed in the literature review. The results from these interviews will be collated and compared to the literature review to determine how a 24/7 childcare option would assist officers in the QPS.

#### **4.5. Participants**

The study initially sought participation of six to ten police officers, who are performing or have performed shift work as a parent of young children. This demographic sub-group has been targeted to ensure that they are able to provide input that directly corresponds to the research questions. Thus, participants have been purposively sampled. The target group of participants was contacted via email to gauge their willingness to participate in this research. Upon acceptance, the participants were provided with information regarding the research. The researcher will use Logan Police District as the target location (i.e., the case), owing to the researcher being embedded within this workforce and having the rapport to interview this group of people. The location of the interviews was determined by each participant, taking place in a private room within their respective place of work. The initial interview questions identified the demographic and background data of each participant to create a participant profile. There were only seven participants interviewed due to Covid-19 restrictions and the increase in workload on police officers. All participants were Caucasian; however, ethnicity and race were not considered when selecting participants for this research.

Participant 1 - A female Constable performing full-time general duties with a partner who is an apprentice electrician. Participant 1 has 19-month-old twins, and currently uses centre-based childcare. This participant is currently pregnant and has been working for the QPS for five years and resides in Flagstone.

Participant 2 - A female Senior Constable performing part-time duties in a specialised unit, with a partner who works as a fitter and turner. Participant 2 has one six-year-old child to an ex-husband who is also a police officer. Her new partner has two teenage children and utilised centre-based childcare at the time when her six-year-old child was younger. This Senior Constable resides in Greenbank and has been a police officer in the QPS for 15 years.

Participant 3 – A police officer for 12 years, who is a female Acting Sergeant performing full-time duties as a frontline police officer. Participant 3 has a flexible working agreement allowing her to work nine-hour shifts. This participant has one seven-year-old child with her husband who is also a shift working police officer and they reside in Ormeau. Although their child is now seven-years-old, participant 3 utilised centre-based childcare.

Participant 4 - A female Sergeant who resides in Jimboomba has been employed in the QPS for 20 years. She currently performs full-time duties in a non-shift role with two children (currently ten and 13-years-old). When her children were younger, participant 4 used family day care. Participant 4 is married to a non-shift working police officer.

Participant 5 – A female Detective Sergeant who is employed full-time in an investigative role. This Detective Sergeant has been a police officer for 15 years. This participant has a flexible working agreement allowing her to work nine-hour shifts which assists their family unit, as her husband is employed in the mining industry as 'FIFO' (fly-in, fly-out). Participant 5 resides at Regents Park and selected centre-based childcare as the preferred childcare option for her two children, who are now seven and nine-years-old.

Participant 6 – A male Sergeant who resides in Shailer Park. This participant has been employed in the QPS for 24 years and currently performs duty in a non-shift role in a specialist unit, where he works eight-hour day shifts. Participant 6 now has an eight-year-old daughter, however when his daughter was younger, he utilised centre-based childcare. This participant's wife is a partner for a law firm, requiring her to work 12-hour days.

Participant 7 - A female Senior Constable is currently working nine-hour shifts as per her flexible working agreement in a non-shift working specialist role. This participant resides in Helensvale and has been employed as a police officer for nine years. Participant 7 currently uses centre-based childcare for her one-year-old daughter as her partner is a school teacher.

#### **4.6. Data collection**

The research will use semi-structured interviews for the collection of data as this technique has been determined to be one of the best method for situating, gathering and contextualising data of this type (Creswell, 2009). The researcher will develop semi-structured interview questions, tailored specifically to address the research questions; interviews are expected to last between 30 and 60 minutes. Interviewing has been selected as the preferred technique in data collection for this research as it is likely to provide an in-depth perspective about the lived experiences of the officers related to satisfy the research topic. An advantage of using interviews as a data gathering technique is that the responses will be detailed and contextualised, but a disadvantage with this technique is that the opinions provided by the interviewees may be biased (Creswell, 2009).

The researcher will conduct the individual interviews face-to-face or virtually via Microsoft Teams. Upon the commencement of the interview, the researcher will provide an explanation of the process and the expectations of the participant. The researcher will digitally record the interviews and will also take notes to delve more deeply into the topic (Creswell, 2009).

All participants will be provided with an identifier number to de-identify them throughout the process. Participants will be required to provide initial demographic information consisting of rank, gender, location of work, role of work and employment status. Following on from these demographical questions, each participant will be asked 26 interview questions relating to their individual experience of work, family and childcare.

The interview questions will be focused on establishing what experiences and perceptions police officers have regarding the provision of 24/7 childcare services. Furthermore, the interview questions are aimed to determine what effect 24/7 childcare would have on shift working police officers and the organisation and examine whether it will improve the performance across the QPS, providing a broad spectrum regarding the challenges of shift work and parenting. In order to increase reliability,

the same set of questions will be asked of each participant in the same order, as recommended by Fergusson, Cabrejos and Bonshek (2021). The aim of these interview questions is to assist in providing a sample of the lived experiences and perspectives of participants to answer the research questions and address the topic.

Interview questions will consist of open questions. Sample interview questions include:

- What is your employment status? Full-time, part-time?
- Does the lack of childcare services outside of standard hours prevent you from working shift work?
- What type of childcare do you currently use? Centre-based care, family day care, au pair, relatives / friends, school / outside hours school care, in-home care, care by partner.
- Most childcare centres operate from 6am-6pm. If a long childcare facility was established, what operating hours would benefit you?
- Would you prefer to use a service with other QPS members and emergency service providers (i.e., Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), Queensland Fire and Emergency Service (QFES), nurses) if available?
- If you currently work part-time, if you were able to access suitable childcare outside of standard hours, would you increase your work hours?

#### **4.7. Data analysis**

The researcher will review transcriptions and actual audio recordings for each interview to ensure that all information has been captured. The audio recordings will be transcribed and then coded. The researcher will use open coding and will breakdown this information into various smaller topics, using the techniques described by Braun and Clark (2006).

Braun and Clark (2006) have identified six phases of thematic analysis. This approach will be used to analyse the data obtained from the interviews. Each phase will be explained below outlining the steps that were performed.

##### ***4.7.1. Phase 1 - Familiarising yourself with your data***

Phase one is important as it provides the foundation for the data analysis process as outlined in Braun and Clark (2006).

Phase one consists of becoming familiar with the data. Interviews were conducted with seven participants and were electronically recorded. In the first instance, this phase consisted of transcribing the verbal data into written form to enable a thorough analytic approach to be conducted (Braun & Clark, 2006). To ensure accuracy, the verbal data was replayed and compared against the written data. Once the verbal data were in written form, each transcript was read through once to enable familiarity with the data contents. There was a large amount of data readily available, however, Braun and Clark (2006) suggest that reading each transcript over and over enables a more in-depth familiarisation of the data. Continuous reading of the transcripts enabled a deeper insight into the data through actively locating ideas and themes, which would not have been identified during the initial read. During this phase notes were taken of the latent themes identified throughout the data. Six themes were identified and colour coded in preparation for the coding process in phase 2.

#### **4.7.2. Phase 2 – Generating initial codes**

Braun and Clark (2006) indicate this phase consists of identifying initial codes contained within the data. Phase 1 involved the process of familiarisation of the data through continuously reading the data over and over to develop themes and ideas. This phase consists of a thematic analysis involves developing initial codes from the themes / ideas identified from phase 1 (Braun & Clark, 2006).

There are two types of themes – semantic/explicit level or latent/interpretative level. The semantic theme consists of exploring the data on a surface level, whilst the latent theme digs deeper to find underlying thoughts contained within forming the data (Braun & Clark, 2006).

Phase 2 continues with analysing the data and organising into themes. This process is called coding and will be influenced by whether the themes are data or theory driven. The coding process can be conducted either manually or by using a software program (Braun & Clark, 2006). As themes / ideas were identified during phase 1, the coding process was commenced in phase two which involved organising the data into more specific groups, according to their theme. The themes have been recognised as data-driven where the themes are purely dependant on the information contained within the data, as opposed to coding to data relating from specific questions (theory-driven). This phase

involved a manual coding process where the whole data was methodically worked through using coloured text to highlight the identified themes. This colour coded text was then collated together according to their particular code (Braun & Clark, 2006). Specific quotations from the participants that were coloured coded were extracted from the data and placed into a spreadsheet.

Braun and Clark (2006) recommend coding as many themes as possible and extracting the specific data relating to the theme. The data identified six different themes and specific data was extracted relating to each theme. It was important to ensure relevant information was also attached to the extracted data to guarantee the context was not lost (Braun & Clark, 2006). It was identified that some of the data was able to be coded into several different themes. In this instance, the best fit theme was selected.

#### **4.7.3. Phase 3 – Searching for themes**

Upon coding and collation of the data into themes as identified in phases 1 and 2, phase 3 is able to be commenced.

Focusing on the themes rather than the codes is the primary emphasis in phase 2. This process consists of collating the data extracts from the themes identified in phase 2 to determine if certain codes which contain similarities are able to be collated (Braun & Clark, 2006).

As recommended by Braun and Clark (2006), the data was colour coded into themes and codes and placed into a table. This table contained participant quotations and the code which it relates to (see Figure 6). By placing into a table, assisted to link the codes and themes.

#### **4.7.4. Phase 4 – Reviewing themes**

Phase 4 consists of conducting a revision of the themes identified in phase 2 and involves a two-step process. The first step involves identifying if the themes form a logical pattern. If the themes do not form into a logical pattern, then there may be more work required on the theme, or a new theme may need to be created or the theme may be required to be removed completely. However, step two consists of the themes forming a logical pattern using the whole data which will involve of re-reading the entire data set. Re-reading the entire data set is important to determine if the themes selected match the data and to ensure there has been no data missed. If there are

instances that data has been missed this re-reading provides a second chance for it to be included (Braun & Clark, 2006).

As outlined in Braun and Clark (2006), themes were identified during phase 2 that formed a logical pattern. The data set was re-read in its entirety to ensure the data matched the themes they were placed into which determined no subsequent data was missed during this process. This process identified there to be no data excluded from the themes and that there were no new themes to add to the current themes. As there was no additional information identified from re-reading through the data, it was deemed this phase was complete.

#### ***4.7.5. Phase 5 – Defining and naming themes***

Braun and Clark (2006) refer to phase 5 as ‘defining and refining’ the themes to identify what each theme is about. The content within each theme is to be organised into a logical manner accompanied by a narrative outlining the importance of the theme and reasoning. In line with Braun and Clark (2006), each individual theme was defined and a narrative was written outlining the context of the theme, ensuring it linked to the overarching research question. During this analysis, each theme was refined to ascertain if there was a theme within the theme, however it identified that this was not the case. Phase 5 includes providing the themes with a naming convention, ensuring they provide an insight to what each theme means (Braun & Clark, 2006).

#### ***4.7.6. Phase 6 – Producing the report***

Braun and Clark (2006) identify this phase as the final analysis in preparation to write the ‘report’, in this case a thesis. Consideration needs to be given to provide the reader with a convincing story which is supported by examples. It is important this narrative provides a deep dive into the data that it provides an argument regarding the overarching research question (Braun & Clark, 2006). Phase 6 consisted of preparing to write the report in a logical and concise manner, using the detailed themes to analyse the data and provide examples to support the argument. This report and examples will be linked directly back to the research question.

Any information relating to the same topic will be provided with the same code. The topics extracted from the open coding will be categorised using axial

coding. Axial coding will be formed by connecting the various codes identified. The categories will be collated into themes (selective coding) and one code (theme) will be selected, which will inform the analysis. Any information that contains limited information will be removed. During the analysis phase, the researcher will identify learnings, which may result from comparing the responses provided by the interviewees (Creswell, 2009).

#### **4.8. Limitations**

A limitation of this research is the small group of interviewees. There were limitations to this research as only one method was used to obtain the data, which was caused by time restraints of the researcher. A limitation occurred from applying only one methodology where the researcher selected qualitative research using only one tool namely, interviews to obtain the data. This was due to limitations caused by the time constraints in a masters-by-research thesis. Limitations were experienced regarding the literature review, as there was minimal research published on this topic. The researcher also experienced a limitation to obtaining ethical approval from the QPS, as the QPS Research and Evaluation section which approve the application, was closed and had suspended all ethics applications during the Covid-19 pandemic. As the researcher was using participants who were police officers, this affected the progress of the research, due to police officers requiring to perform priority frontline duties relating to the pandemic and assisting the community of Queensland. Furthermore, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, the increase in workload for police officers caused time delays in conducting the interviews in the given timeframe.

#### **4.9. Ethical issues**

The Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research dictates that all researchers must abide by the statement of ethics when conducting any human research in Australia. This research will be bound by this National Statement owing to interviews being conducted (Australian Research Council, 2007). The USQ human ethics review process applies to all research. The researcher applied to the USQ Human Research Ethics Committee to obtain approval to conduct this research.

This application required detailed information including the application type, participant group, proposed procedures and operational requirements. Details of the application included the title and summary of the research project. The research aim



and research questions were outlined. The research investigators were named and included the principal researcher and the research supervisors from USQ. A risk assessment was carried out to identify any risks that would have the potential to harm the participants physically, psychologically and socially or cause economic or legal implications. If risks were identified, then the level of impact was required to be included (Desai & Von Der Embse, 2008). To ensure risks were mitigated, a participant Information Sheet was completed and included in the ethics application (Appendix A). This information sheet provided a comprehensive outline of the research and included information regarding privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, advising the participants what data would be collected and how this data would be collected. Participation in the research was voluntary and all participants were provided with a consent form to participate (Appendix B). To ensure an ethical approach to this research is important as it will affect the credibility of the researcher and the organisations involved, QPS and USQ (Desai & Von Der Embse, 2008).

For research to be conducted within the QPS the researcher was required to also apply to the QPS Research Committee. The ethics application to QPS required the same detail of information as USQ. USQ reviewed the ethics application and considered it met the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, providing reference H21REA206. The QPS Research Committee approved the research project and provided the reference number QPSRC-0122-3.06, requiring the researcher to complete and sign a Formal Deed of Agreement (Appendix C).

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

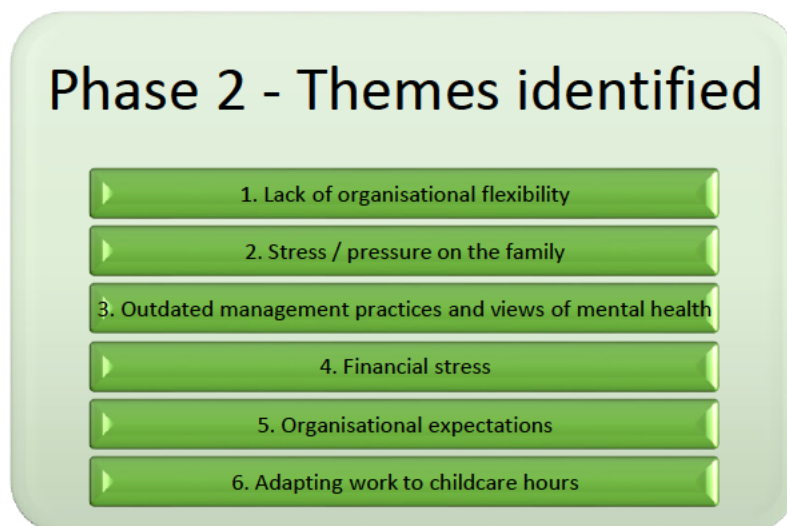
### 5.1. Introduction

At the conclusion of the interviews, audio recordings were transcribed and coded using open coding according to the six phases of thematic analysis as explained by Braun and Clark (2006).

As discussed in the methodology chapter, phase 1 involved transcribing the audio recordings into written form to grasp the data. To ensure an accurate transcription, the audio recording was replayed and compared against the transcription. Each transcript was read once through and then re-read a number of times, to become more familiar with the data, to identify themes.

After becoming familiar with the data, six themes emerged during phase 2 of the research design. The six themes identified in this phase are shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6 – Themes identified in phase 2**



Themes were identified by manually reading through each transcript. The data were then organised into their respective theme and were colour coded for ease of separation and placed into a table. When organising these themes, care was taken to ensure the context of the data was not mistakenly removed.

Phase 3 from Braun and Clark (2006) included grouping the themes together according to their colour and quotations were then extracted from the data and placed into the matching theme in the spreadsheet. The identified themes are listed below with a narrative description of each theme. Each theme details the number of codes attributed to the theme, totalling 127 codes.

### **5.1.1. Theme 1 – Lack of organisational flexibility**

This theme identified there was a lack of flexibility within the organisation to accommodate alternate working arrangements due to the rigidity of the organisational structure. Theme one was derived from 36 codes.

### **5.1.2. Theme 2 – Stress / pressure on the family**

This theme identified the participants' experiences with stress on their family unit due to parents working opposite shifts, due to the reliance on their family or friend network to look after children. There were 30 codes loaded to theme two.

### **5.1.3. Theme 3 – Outdated management practices and views of mental health**

Theme three identified outdated management practices were occurring within the organisation. This theme recognised the current management practices adopted have failed to adapt to the employees' current needs, causing these employees to feel disadvantaged within the workplace. Theme three consisted of 18 codes.

### **5.1.4. Theme 4 – Financial stress**

Financial stress caused as a result of both the cost of childcare and reduction in salary due to loss of hours and or penalties was identified as theme four and contained 16 codes.

### **5.1.5. Theme 5 – Organisational expectations**

Organisational expectations demand parents to work hours and shifts outside of the childcare industry operational hours became theme five. There were 16 codes loaded to make theme five.

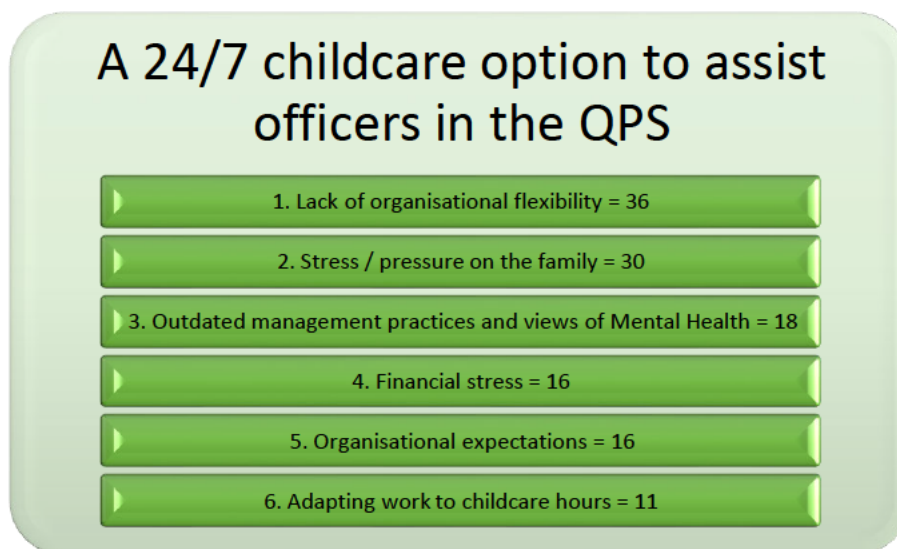
### **5.1.6. Theme 6 – Adapting work to childcare hours**

Theme six became evident from the participants as they used Flexible Work Agreements to have fixed shifts to meet the childcare industry hours of operation. Theme six consisted of 11 codes.

Following thematic analysis, phase 4 involved using a thematic map of the analysis to determine if the coded extracts matched the data set. This phase involved a two-step process which involved re-reading the whole data set to determine if the themes formed a logical pattern, ensuring no data had been overlooked. During this process, it was identified there was no data missed and the data matched the themes they were placed in. It also identified there were no new data to be added to the themes, confirming phase 4 had been completed.

Figure 7 shows a snapshot of each of the six themes and the number of codes identified with each theme.

**Figure 7 – Initial codes generated**



These six themes were ranked in order from most frequent (Theme one, 36 codes) to least frequent (Theme six, 11 codes) according to their codes (Figure 7). The researcher determined that any emerging themes with ten or less codes would not be considered robust enough to generate a theme for this research.

## **5.2. Themes and discussion**

### **5.2.1. Theme 1 – Lack of organisational flexibility**

The predominant theme identified from the interviews revealed that due to the rigidity of the organisational structure, there is lack of flexibility for alternate working arrangements. As the participants were police officers, their role requires them to provide a physical response to the community, providing no flexibility for alternate working arrangements such as working from home.

This theme identified strongly for those police officers who were working part-time and were unable to be considered for development opportunities. Participant 2 stated *'I wanted to do relieving, but I remember a couple of years ago, I was told no, because I was part-time'*.

'Relieving' relates to being provided with the opportunity to perform alternative duty in another work area for a period of time and then returning to the officer's substantive position at the conclusion of the relieving period. A relieving opportunity normally occurs when the position is vacant and is often used to assist the officer in obtaining the relevant skills required to apply for the position, should it be advertised.

The current relieving practice revealed there was limited or no flexibility for police officers who are on alternate working arrangements, such as part-time. The participants identified they felt this to have had a negative impact on their career development. The participants' experience is that they felt if they were part-time, they were not permitted to work in a different area unless they resumed full-time hours. Likewise, while the officers worked part-time, it was difficult for them to attend professional development courses. Whilst not specifically indicated in their response, it could be inferred that these courses were offered on days and times outside the scope of their part-time agreement. This was evident in the statement made by participant 4:

*'It took me a lot longer to get my Detective's appointment because I could only work part-time because there just wasn't suitable childcare arrangements out there. So, whereas other people [in my work unit] it took them maybe three or four years to get their [Detective] appointment, it took me twice as long'.*

Participant 5 had a similar experience where she was employed part-time and expressed concerns of not being able to attend training, due to lack of flexibility. *'It stopped me from attending training because I couldn't do the hours'*. Participant 2 advised *'I wanted to do relieving, but I remember a couple years ago, I was told no, because I was part-time'*.

Participant 4 stated:

*'They [QPS management] give the illusion of a flexible workplace. I think true flexibility is providing that flexibility without it having to negatively impact on your career and that's not the case at the moment'.*

Alternatively, participant 3 was able to obtain a flexible working agreement permitting them to work nine-hour shifts, instead of the normal eight-hour shifts. This flexibility provided participant 3 with the opportunity to work full-time, but with compressed hours.

*'I had to lock in permanent days and therefore I had to have a flexible workplace agreement in order to suit that otherwise, I'd be working shifts where I couldn't get him [child] into childcare, or I've had days off when he [child] was in childcare, so it wasn't really matching up. That's why I had to go on a flexible workplace agreement to stipulate these are the days I can work and those are the days I've got him [child] in childcare, otherwise there was no benefit to me. The proposal for the nine-hour shifts, working that extra hour each day, that enabled me to come back to work full-time. So that really did help' (Participant 3).*

Research conducted 22 years ago in UK police forces, revealed those employees who are part-time carry a stigma of being inflexible by not willing to work shifts or perform last minute shift changes (Tuffin & Baladi, 2001). Reflecting on the findings in the study conducted by Tuffin and Baladi (2001), there are commonalities between UK police and the participants from Logan Police District. These employees who had part-time agreements also experienced a negative impact on their career, subsequently becoming less motivated in the workplace.

Similar to the participants from Logan Police District who experienced having a part-time agreement hindered their opportunity for career progression, the study conducted in 2001, about the UK police found supporting evidence from part-time officers who chose to remove themselves from the promotion process (Tuffin & Baladi, 2001). This was evident particularly by the comment made by participant 6 that childcare has affected their career *'I gave up the*

*prospects of being promoted and that is when I became the primary carer' [for my child].*

As identified by the results from the interviews, theme one showed there was a lack of flexibility within the QPS to provide police officers with alternative working arrangements, such as the ability to work from home. As discussed in the literature review, the role of the police officer is to attend to the needs of the community, subsequently dictating the shifts which are required to be 24/7 with no flexibility to work from home. Although the research identified some inconsistencies regarding gender in the workforce, the experiences from the participants proved consistency across both genders. Similarly, the participants raised their concerns for lack of organisational flexibility as the demographics of all participants revealed that both parents were working parents, predominantly due to the financial cost of living as revealed by the Census conducted by the ABS (ABS, 2017).

Although the QPS provides the flexibility for police officers to work part-time, theme one identified that due to the lack of organisational flexibility and the hours of childcare, many of the participants, particularly women, were required to return to work part-time. This choice assisted them to successfully manage their work commitments and their family balance. The literature review acknowledged that it is an expectation of society that women are predominantly the carers for their children, which was experienced by the participants in Logan Police District.

The research also found that as the predominant child carers, they had higher rates of absenteeism, reducing their ability to deal with workforce demands. Although not gender specific, this bias of police officers with a young family was evident in theme one as participants were being overlooked for opportunities to further their career due to their part-time status. Due to the duties of a police officer, the QPS provides limited flexibility for parents to return to the workforce post-maternity leave. This subsequently creates issues regarding opportunities for career advancement. The research also revealed that due to the parent's absenteeism from the workforce it often resulted in deskilling the employee, which was experienced by Logan Police District police officers. Absence from the workforce may consist of illness of the police officer or illness of a child.

Despite it being 22 years ago, this earlier research by Tuffin and Baladi (2001) indicated women were more likely to retain their employment within the police service if they were provided with the option to work part-time. It also identified that flexibility for police officers was challenging due to the 24/7 commitments which acknowledged the results from the participants from Logan Police District. A further commonality was found between the Tuffin and Baladi (2001) research and Logan Police District police, involved a sergeant did not have the ability to work part-time due to his rank, which was identified as a barrier to part-time police officers, particularly as they progress through the ranks.

Theme one identified that while Logan Police District officers had the flexibility to work part-time hours, they were unable to dictate their shifts, enabling to coincide with the operating hours of childcare centres. Employees who were interviewed in the research conducted 22 years ago by Tuffin and Baladi (2001) agreed they wanted more flexibility in the times of their shifts to cater for childcare responsibilities. Logan Police District police officers wanted the flexibility to enable a better work-life balance. This is consistent with the key findings from the Australian Institute of Family Studies around the childcare flexibility trials. Those parents who identified they were attempting to juggle their childcare and employment responsibilities indicated they required flexibility within their workplace to create a better work-life balance (Baxter & Hand, 2016). This complimented the conclusions of research conducted by Verhoef et al. (2015), indicating that flexibility within employees' work, created a better work-life balance.

As discussed in the literature review, some countries where employees performed shift work and were unable to find childcare outside of business hours, were therefore forced to utilise friends or families. Shift working police officers within the QPS, particularly those within the Logan Police District, identified using friends or families may be an option. However, research suggests that utilising friends or families to assist with childcare may be subject to time limits, as these informal networks may have their own family or work responsibilities (Verhoef et al., 2015).

The participants identified that although working part-time was an option in Logan Police District, they felt it negatively impacted their career development and progression. This was evident when the participants were



unable to attend courses, training days, compulsory training or be afforded the opportunity for relieving/development. Further research discovered the same connection was occurring 22 years ago, with police officers working part-time where they were not provided with the same opportunities as those working full-time and not supported by management (Tuffin & Baladi, 2001). Just over 50% of those surveyed by The Police Federation of Australia stated those officers on flexible work agreements were not afforded the same opportunity to be included in training/courses, as those full-time officers. Similarly, 63% stated they were not considered for promotional opportunities due to having a flexible work agreement (Cole & Sanderson, 2017).

The issue of 24/7 childcare for shift working parents appears to be consistent throughout Australia and the international countries explored in the literature review. While there was limited research conducted on shift working police officers and how they manage childcare, the literature review found the same issues experienced across a variety of shift working professions. These professions were not dissimilar to the QPS in that due to the nature of the role they performed, for example nurses, there was no option for these employees to have the flexibility to work from home. Furthermore, these professions were similar with their inconsistent rostering, providing further challenges for these Logan Police District police officers.

Theme one forms a direct correlation with the research question posing that due to a lack of organisational flexibility, a 24/7 childcare would assist these shift working police officers within the Logan Police District. It would enable them to perform their various shifts that occur outside of normal business hours (9am-5pm) and include afternoon shifts, evening shifts, weekends and public holidays. A 24/7 childcare option would benefit Logan Police District police officers to have the flexibility to attend courses and relieving opportunities, providing the opportunity to obtain skills for career advancement.

With the lack of flexibility within the organisation, it is inferred that a 24/7 childcare option would be beneficial in assisting police officers within Logan Police District. It is expected that 24/7 childcare would allow police officers to perform the various shifts required to fulfill their duties.

### **5.2.2. Theme 2 – Stress / pressure on the family**

The participants indicated that their role as a police officer, which offered no alternate working arrangements, coinciding with the lack of flexibility of childcare operating hours, caused a significant amount of stress and pressure within their family unit. This was the next most predominant theme identified from the interviews. The participants experienced stress within their family unit, as they were often required to work opposite shifts or relied heavily on their family/friend network to assist with child minding.

Participant 6 revealed the struggle to be a shift working police officer with no family support was so great that they were contemplating resignation. *'I was going to resign because of the fact that I couldn't do what I needed to do was to look after my family'* (participant 6).

From the results of the interviews conducted with the Logan Police District police, it was evident they adopted a variety of measures just to make it work.

Participant 4 stated:

*'I've had to do baby changeover in the carpark with my husband. I've been opposite shifts to [husband's name] and I think that you know if childcare was available that's ok'.*

Participant 5 said *'we [participant 5 and her partner] tag team, we were relying on family'.*

Participant 7 discussed the stress caused and effects on work performance when the child is sick *'if your child is sick, they can't go to childcare, there's no other option, you have to take the day off, that affects your sick leave'.*

It was also determined that not all families have family members or parents who are available to assist with childcare. This was evident in participant 3 who stated:

*'I didn't live with family members. I didn't have grandparents or other family members that I could rely on all the time because my family still works. [The husband's] family was still working or they were off travelling'.*

Contrary to participant 3, participant 2 has the ability to utilise her parent to assist with childcare responsibilities *'my mum occasionally helps me out, but I don't want to have to rely on the family'*.

Likewise, participant 6 stated: *'you can't always rely upon family, friends, neighbours ...., because where I live my neighbours are elderly. They're not going to be able to look after an eight-year-old'*.

Stress on the family unit was identified by participant 7:

*'So, if childcare is not an option due to the hours and its relying on my partner, changing shift or being available to work or family or friends helping to look after your child'*.

Changes in shift, particularly with limited notice, were found to increase stress with participant 3 who stated:

*'So, they [QPS] give me notice right up until the day before that's kind of whether I determined whether one of us [husband or I] takes a rec [recreational] leave day or my mum finishes work early or we get the other grandparents. It's stressful'*.

Research conducted in the US indicated that the role of a police officer is particularly stressful but has found stress to be intensified by other factors that include fatigue, health, or family problems including childcare where a parent (or both parents) work shift work (McCanlies et al., 2019). This research found that organisations offering a family friendly and supportive workplace saw high levels of dedication and engagement from their employees and a reduction in stress levels. This study also revealed that a lack of organisational support combined with childcare related issues meant that these shift working parents experienced both stress and anxiety. Furthermore, it was suggested to reduce this stress and anxiety among the shift working parents, the organisation could provide support, communication and fairness (McCanlies et al., 2019).

Outcomes from a Welsh Government assessment similarly revealed that parents survived working the non-traditional hours whilst juggling childcare arrangements by working opposite shifts (Government of Social Research, 2014). Likewise, it is common in the US where both working parents work

opposite shifts to enable them to care for their children rather than using a formalised childcare option (Knop & Laughlin, 2018). Working opposite shifts was identified as a measure to juggle children and shift work commitments, by participants 4 and 5 from Logan Police District.

Childcare places are booked dependant on the vacancies within the childcare centre at the time. Parents are often required to book in certain days. This makes it extremely difficult for police officers to change their childcare days to accommodate sudden shift changes, subsequently causing stress of who will take care of their child/ren so they can work. Workers in the US experience similar struggles with the competing demands of family and work commitments (Golden & Kim, 2017). Due to a variety of reasons, it often occurs that the QPS management has to change shifts of police officers, at short notice. The police officers from Logan Police District found it difficult to change their shifts at short notice as they did not have childcare booked. Shift changes and issues regarding childcare arrangements were found to be common. However, based on both the earlier research conducted by Tuffin and Baladi (2001) and the Logan Police District police officers, it was not that employees refused to be flexible; rather, the issue was whether they were able to accommodate the required shift change, due to their family commitments.

The Police Federation of Australia surveyed police on work-life balance and found that police officers were stressed due to changes in their rosters and roster requests for days off that were not accommodated by the organisation. These stress causal factors were displayed amongst the participants. While these sudden changes in rosters causes stress among individual police officers, it has a larger impact to the organisation. It was found that unpredictable changes to shifts increased absenteeism, which was a direct result of illness or stress. This then places an impost on the commitment to the community and other police officers who are required to fulfil these roster changes or take on more workloads, due to shifts not able to be filled (Cole & Sanderson, 2017). This research compares with that of the Logan Police District. Recommendations from a study in the US revealed that the stress for shift working parents could be reduced if the organisation provided them with sufficient times for their work rosters, or any changes to shifts (Stoll et al., 2015).

Whilst the participants experienced stress and pressure on families, especially to those seeking childcare, no consideration was given to the

employees in the childcare industry. If 24/7 childcare became available, these childcare employees would be required to work shift work, to cater for the societal childcare demand. These childcare employees would subsequently be taken away from their families, causing stress to their wellbeing and family units (Sandstrom et al., 2018). Sosinsky (2020) identified from research conducted in the US that the main cause of parent's stress was from shift work or unpredictable rosters.

Friedman (1986) revealed results from a seminar conducted by Harvard University nearly 40 years ago that stress levels on families attempting to balance their career and family responsibilities can cause depression which could be reduced with the availability of appropriate childcare. The participants in that survey identified the stressors they experienced caused by shift changes to their rosters at short notice and unplanned overtime occurring at the end of their shift. Due to the operating hours of childcare centres, this made it difficult to collect their children on time, subsequently causing stress within their family unit. Research revealed that those employees in occupations that offer less flexibility to their working hours and incur overtime, have significant stress relating to collecting their children within the operating hours of the childcare centre (Baxter & Hand, 2016).

As identified in theme 2, the stress caused to many families when juggling shift work and childcare is in fact quite common for those employees who work outside of business hours in other occupations. These workplaces are identified as 'unsociable work', placing stress on families as they are unable to socialise with their children, friends or other activities (Enchautegui, Johnson & Gelatt, 2015).

This theme was clearly important to the participants to be ranked as the second most dominant theme. The participants did not feel they should encroach on their family nor friend network to look after their child to maintain employment. An inherent part of policing is performing the function across a 24/7 roster and the reliance upon social networks to maintain the care of the participant's child/ren results in undue pressure within the social network for people to take on the responsibility of another person's child/ren. This same stress then has a flow-on affect into the family unit whereby parents are having very limited interaction with each other or the social network outside of the reliance upon childcare.

In these circumstances, it was noted participants were working opposite shifts to make it work. The research identified in some European countries it is common to co-parent their childcare duties (Bunning & Pollmann-Schult, 2016). While this may be a good solution in the short term, it could place pressure on their relationships which may suffer in the end, resulting in separation and divorce. This causes unnecessary stress to families who are already working in a profession which is already recognised as being a high stress occupation both physically and mentally.

This theme directly relates to the research question and sub-research questions, where the availability of a 24/7 childcare option for shift working police officers in Logan Police District would assist in reducing the stress of trying to manage the conflicting need for meeting family responsibilities and performing shift work, providing the officers with a more positive workplace as they balance work and life, which would potentially benefit both workplace productivity and officer morale.

### ***5.2.3. Theme 3 – Outdated management practices and views of mental health***

Theme three identified outdated management practices within the Logan Police District. Theme three connected with themes one and two as the outdated management practices and the inability to provide flexibility to shift hours or remote working, subsequently placed significant pressure, causing stress on families who attempt to manage their demanding shift working career and family responsibilities. This links directly into the study performed across the Australian and New Zealand police forces where it identified lack of management support was found to increase stress amongst police officers. It also found those officers who had flexible working arrangements had reduced stress levels (Cole & Sanderson, 2017).

The participants strongly vocalised their experiences of feeling disadvantaged due to organisational management practices being outdated within the workplace. Similarly, Bond and Wise (2003) stated that managers often have limited experience regarding family-friendly policies, and it is their attitudes that create barriers and biases during the decision-making process.

As participant 4 indicated:

*'They [QPS management] say that you could be part-time as a Sergeant, but you can't because every time you look to go for a job and you're part-time they [QPS management] say you have got to be willing to come back full-time'.*

Participant 6 had a similar experience: *'I was told to take a demotion and then I was requested to take a demotion by an Inspector'.*

Effects on participants' mental health was raised, due to attempting to have work-life balance, while experiencing pressures from work and attempting to meet their family responsibilities as a parent.

Participant 4 stated:

*'Because it took me twice as long to get my Detective's appointment, then I had to stay in the unit for twice as long, impacted on my mental health. I ended up getting Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and I couldn't move out of my work unit, because I still had to get my [Detective] appointment before I left there. You just have to do opposite shifts to look after the kids and then you [husband and wife] are ships in the night. Where does your marriage go then?'*

Participant 4 also stated:

*'You still got dinosaurs [managers] in positions of power and their attitudes are the same when they first came in [to the QPS]. They [managers] haven't really evolved or become contemporary thinkers. Neither has the organisation [QPS] as a whole'.*

*'I put in a part-time agreement which was knocked back [i.e., not accepted]. The part-time agreement was knocked back because they were unable to have a non-operational Sergeant in the general duties shift supervisor role, we can't afford that because you only have four Sergeants', participant 6.*

*'Because like me, and for them [managers] to be fairly compassionate if I don't accommodate their [roster] requests or*

*look after them [other police at the station], then they're [other police at the station] going to choose family first and they [other police at the station] just won't turn up to work, which I understand', participant 3.*

Participant 2 stated '*Also just having middle aged male bosses that understand what it's like to be a single working mother, as some have no fricken idea'.*

It is an important factor the differences experienced with the participants involving middle aged male bosses. These middle-aged male bosses would predominantly be older managers, with different priorities within the workforce and are no longer burdened by childcare issues as their children are older. However, when these middle-aged male bosses were younger and had younger children, it would be assumed that their wives cared for their children, therefore making childcare not affecting them.

While the experiences felt by the participants about The research conducted into UK police revealed two types of opinions from managers. This was based on their positive or negative experiences regarding flexible working arrangements. Due to the nature of policing requiring officers to perform shift work, the negative aspect described part-time employment as being difficult to manage. There appeared to be a divide within management between positive and negative, in that the lower ranking managers expressed flexibility in the workplace as negative, whilst higher ranking managers including human resource managers positively supported the flexibility (Tuffin & Baladi, 2001). Those managers displaying the negative attitude of part-time employees were believed to not have a full understanding of the hours performed by these part-time employees (Tuffin & Baladi, 2001).

Managers still provide out-of-date views on workplace flexibility even though there are an array of options within the workplace. This is evident in Logan Police District, as indicated by this theme and comments made by the participants which is contrary to Government organisations being encouraged by the Diversity Council of Australia, to provide a contemporary workplace that provides flexibility to all staff (Tilly, 2014).

Participant 4 experienced the pressures of work along with the negative impact:



*'I was still getting enough work for a full-timer [full-time employee], but I was having to do it in part-time hours. They [QPS management] will give you some flexibility, but it does have a negative impact'.*

Research conducted in 2001 into UK police identified, those staff performing flexible working arrangements believed they were more productive and saw a reduction in sick leave when compared to those full-time employees. These part-time employees also had the same experience as participant 4, in that even though they were physically at work for less hours, they were still performing the same amount of work as a full-time officer (Tuffin & Baladi, 2001).

This has identified that while these out-of-date organisational management practices continue, they will negatively affect the performance of the QPS staff, also impacting the recruitment and retention of police officers. However, if a 24/7 childcare option was available, the police officers immediately affected by being parents, would have care for their children, making them a less of an impact of the performance of the QPS.

In some European countries, research identified that some organisations provided a contemporary workplace offering flexibility to their employees as they were able to work their hours around their childcare facility. In other European countries, women were discriminated against, due to the amount of absence from the workplace for maternity leave or refusing to hire women of childbearing age (Fodor & Glass, 2018). As the research suggests, these management practices are out-of-date and are not isolated to the QPS, further recommending the organisations offering a more family-oriented practice will reap the rewards through recruitment and retention of their employees.

Blake-Beard, O'Neill, Ingols and Shapiro (2010) concur with this theme in that those employees who utilise flexible work agreements, such as working from home or telecommuting, have tarnished their career prospects, as they are not considered to be 'ideal' employees.

Cole and Sanderson (2017) conducted research into flexible working arrangements of police officers across Australia and New Zealand, finding consistencies with the Logan Police District participants, where managers devalue those employees with flexible working arrangements and include

behaviours such as increasing pressure to those part-time employees in an attempt for them to increase their hours to full-time. Similarly, it was determined that flexible work agreements were crucial within this contemporary environment to provide employees with a better balance of family and career. Negative attitudes displayed by management is not unique to Logan Police District police officers, as it was predominant during the studies of policing organisations across Australia and New Zealand, labelling it as a 'police culture'. Although in the minority, some managers have harnessed the modern management practices by embracing flexible work agreements (Cole & Sanderson, 2017). The commitment and support of work-life balance for employees needs to be communicated from the head of the organisation through the various layers of management (Managing Work Life Balance, 2004). This analogy is not dissimilar in Logan Police District as the senior leadership team provide encouragement, however the lower-level managers are not necessarily as supportive with flexibility in the workforce. Nearly 50% of police who participated in the survey conducted by The Police Federation of Australia stated that the stress within the workplace is caused by lack of management support (Cole & Sanderson, 2017).

A study conducted within US police forces identified policewomen, in particular, are not in a position to apply for promotional positions due to their family and childcare responsibilities, forgoing their 24/7 shift positions to gain day shift only positions, to satisfy childcare requirements (Guajardo, 2016). Likewise, a study which encompassed 22 countries within the OECD, found organisational arrangements regarding parental employees engaged within maternity leave were actively discriminated against by employers (Hegewisch & Gornick, 2011). The roles performed within policing are disadvantaging the officer who wishes to engage in part-time roles as identified by Leschke (2009).

The Diversity Council Australia submitted an issues paper regarding the Australian Productivity Commission's childcare and early childhood learning, where they identified that flexibility within the workforce is still not readily accepted and utilised, thus disadvantaging workforces to obtain higher morale and improved productivity, bringing the workplace into the modern era (Tilly 2014).

Contemporary policing and different generations within the workforce have identified out-of-date management practices are utilised by senior

members of the QPS. This has highlighted that management practices within the QPS needs to transform to suit different generations of employees. The employees have detailed their belief that the QPS is part of the future, although with management practices being outdated it will languish in its appeal to people with children who require care. The lack of modern leadership and flexibility within the workforce highlights a need for change in the expectations of employers with respect to the shifts worked to maintain an inclusive and productive workplace. The age-old adage of, 'this is how it has always been done' needs to change to encompass modern management practices, to ensure QPS police officer parents feel and are productive members of the organisation.

#### **5.2.4. Theme 4 – Financial stress**

A fourth common theme was identified during the interviews, revealing that the participants experienced financial stress due to the cost of childcare. The participants had to apply for a part-time agreement to enable them to manage their work with the childcare operating hours. To permit this to work, some participants had to either work part-time or apply for a non-shift working position, which came at a detriment to their finances, causing stress to their family unit, which was evident throughout their interviews.

Participant 1 stated:

*'I'm paying \$860 a fortnight for my two [children] at the moment. Centrelink just gives you 100 hours for childcare subsidy, so anything outside of that you're paying full rate for. I'm thankful we've got [childcare] subsidy, otherwise I would be a stay-at-home parent.'*

Participant 6 stated:

*'I would take a position up at the [QPS] Academy and I would have to do it part-time. If I was going to do that, [it] would mean that I would have to work say 9.30am-2pm, five-days a week to obviously drop off and pick up and that is not really financially viable.'*

This statement from participant 6 indicated they would take a non-shift work position at the QPS Academy; however, they would still have to reduce their hours to ensure they were available to collect their child from school, not incurring childcare costs contained within before or after-hours school care. With the high cost of childcare, participant 3 stated:

*'it's just expensive, so you might as well just go part-time. If you are going to be dishing out money to an external person to look after your child, you might as well just cut back your hours, because you're gonna lose that money anyway and spend time with your child'.*

Participant 2 indicated that the financial stress was so high, she returned to work part-time after having her child. Once the child started school, she returned to full-time hours.

*'I came back 0.5 [five-shifts per fortnight] then I went 0.6 [six-shifts per fortnight] then I didn't go to 0.8 [eight-shifts per fortnight] until she [my daughter] was at school'.*

*'I actually took a reduction in hours and a reduction in pay in order to get that [flexible work agreement]. This is just ridiculous to have someone just sit at your own home looking after your child, so the best option for us was for me to cut back my hours and go into flexible workplace agreements',* participant 3.

Participant 5 also found the cost of childcare to be expensive, stating *'our childcare was really great, except the cost was phenomenal, because they [the children] were in full time'.*

A survey conducted in the District of Columbia regarding non-traditional hours childcare, identified 70% of childcare providers stated the childcare subsidy rebates were insufficient (Sandstrom et al., 2018). This concurs with the financial stress felt by the participants regarding the cost of childcare in Australia.

In the environment where costs continue to rise above that of the wage increase, the penalties and wages paid to staff are more important than ever. The family unit now often requires both parents to work to have the household necessities. The participants from Logan Police District identified they are financially penalised for being parents in an industry where childcare norms do not satisfy the requirements for their 24/7 employment. These staff often need to work part-time to maintain employment and lose penalties as a consequence. As specified by participant 3 *'I had a set shift structure, but I took a loss [of income] for that. I took a loss of income. I lost my OSA [Operational Shift Allowance]'*. Those who do manage to have some childcare support receive little assistance from the Australian Government and costs can be exorbitant. These high costs of childcare were felt by the participants.

Participant 7 stated:

*'I used to work in childcare, so I know it's also very expensive. The average baby's room is \$115 a day, depending on what you earn, you get [childcare] subsidy. We get about 50% back, but it is still really expensive'*.

The employees struggle financially due to part-time employment, causing a reduction in their combined gross income. They then have to factor in the costs of childcare. Currently, the childcare costs exceed the costs of private school fees, even after the Australian Government childcare subsidy rebates are applied. This burden then manifests itself into financial stress. There is a need to reduce the costs of childcare and to ensure working parents are not penalised by the employer. A reduction in financial penalties would reduce financial stress within these families. However, with new legislation being passed in the Federal Government in November 2022, Australian parents will have access to a more affordable childcare system, post July 2023, subsequently providing a financial reprieve to many Australian families.

While the research outlined many countries, including Australia, provide financial support to parents while on maternity or paternity leave, it is evident this support is dramatically reduced when the parents return to the workplace, especially in shift working professions. This experience is not positive for Logan Police District police officers as the longer they are absent from the workplace

the more deskilled they become, thus linking their concerns and this theme to theme one.

The research revealed that many families have become reliant on dual incomes in recent decades. This theme identified Logan Police District officers were not alone when it comes to the financial implications of childcare. Many parents, particularly women were required to return to work part-time resulting in taking a reduction in pay. As announced from the Australian 24/7 childcare trials, it was the childcare centres who stated it was not financially sustainable for their centres to provide a 24/7 service, due to low demand.

As cited in the literature review, penalty rates would be applicable to those employed within the childcare industry where their shifts would fall outside the normal Monday–Friday 6am-6pm. With the cost of childcare already considered to be high in Australia, these penalty rates would be passed onto the consumer, if longer childcare hours were adopted. As Queensland consists of metropolitan, regional and rural areas, those living in rural areas would be subject to higher childcare costs (Australian Productivity Commission, 2014). This places financial stress onto parents, particularly those employed in shift working occupations. A 24/7 childcare would assist police officers in Logan Police District, but it would also come with an increase in costs which would be incurred for wages of childcare staff, to include penalty payments for afternoon and night shifts, weekends and public holidays. As indicated in the research, these higher costs could be detrimental for shift workers and may have a negative effect on recruitment into shift working professions, including police officers.

A centre-based childcare option was the preferred method for the participants in Logan Police District, as it provided them with a childcare rebate. Other options, such as in-home care, often referred to as a nanny, did not provide in the childcare rebate. Childcare costs were raised during the Australian childcare trials. Parents outlined that formal childcare was a financial burden on their families where many discussed whether they financially benefited from returning to work and placing their child/ren into formal childcare. The cost of childcare was also affected by change of shifts or the requirement to work when childcare centres were not operating, such as public holidays. Formal childcare is a significant financial stress to families, as experienced by the participants in Logan Police District and also the Australian trial, where

families reduced their time at work in an attempt to minimise the cost of childcare (Baxter & Hand, 2016).

A review was conducted by the Diversity Council Australia into the Australian Productivity Commission's childcare and early childhood learning, producing a submission which revealed that 90% of parents indicated they had experienced difficulties in obtaining childcare which was suitable to their needs and the times they required (Tilly, 2014).

Consistent with the officers from Logan Police District and those officers on flexible work agreements, who participated in the survey conducted by The Police Federation of Australia, revealed that 42% would consider returning to full-time duties if there was 24/7 childcare available (Cole & Sanderson, 2017).

#### **5.2.5. Theme 5 – Organisational expectations**

All participants experienced organisational pressure placed on parents to work extended hours beyond the scope of their childcare operating hours. This theme was strong across all participants throughout the interviews. It is often the case police officers are required to unexpectedly work overtime after the conclusion of their shift, dependant on the community's needs. Shift work is a consequence of being a police officer and it involves working days, afternoons, nights, weekends and public holidays. The results of the interviews determined the participants used childcare facilities which operated during the hours of approximately 6am-6pm. Whilst participant 2 stated they currently had a flexible working agreement allowing them to work eight shifts per fortnight.

Participant 2 also stated:

*'One boss in particular was trying to tell me that I had to work afternoons and weekends when I was a single mum, and I said that it just actually wasn't possible.'*

Participant 1 experienced organisational expectations:

*'I mean at the end of the shift if we have overtime for something and I'm meant to be picking the kids up, I'll be stressing that I might not get there in time or you feel like I'm letting the team down by saying sorry, I got to go, can't deal with this.'*

*'I do remember when I was getting pressure at one point from the higher beings [managers] that they wanted me to do shift work'. I guess like even on as a shift, you know you're limited to the number of hours on your shift, you know that you're not available to do overtime. So, if you've got certain tasks for the day, you've got to get them done early, or if it gets too late in the day, you can't even start them because you can't go overtime. So, it affects your planning for the day, your priorities. What you can get done in your 8-hour shift', participant 2.*

Participant 3 stated:

*'Obviously that has a flow on affect to work, if you're worried about who is going to be looking after your child or how they are going to get picked up from school or dropped to school or even if you are meant to be finishing on time and you can get to school on time, and then you get overtime where you need to explain to the boss that I have to go and pick him [my child] up there is no one else there. They are like but you need to finish the job. It is really stressful'.*

Participant 4 felt the expectations around performing overtime at the end of their shift *stating 'the more shift work you work, the more you're subject to overtime and that's outside of childcare hours'.*

Participant 3 explains they experienced negative workplace behaviour regarding childcare in the workplace, *'but they were having a dig at me because I was essentially part-time and I was here doing half the work that everyone [in the work unit] else is'.* Participant 7 experienced negative workplace behaviour *'also from people I guess within the job [QPS], commenting on other people that have gone part-time, because of child needs in a negative way',* participant 5 stated:

*'I couldn't perform my job properly because I needed to go, you know, therefore I was letting my team down, because I was going to look after the kids and then they [colleagues] were picking up my slack'.*



A similar situation was experienced by participant 4:

*'Thinking back then, it was stressful, because I would always be stressing you know, in our job. Back when I was on the floor [general duties], if a job got called in, I was like, oh, I can't do overtime, I've got to pick the kids up or because otherwise I'd be getting charged through the roof.'*

This concurs with experiences from participant 6,

*'That was my biggest thing was the fact that I couldn't afford overtime. So, I can't afford overtime because I've got to pick my daughter up. Overtime comes up and if I am at a job, I'm looking at an outlet or a way out, because my wife's working.'*

Similar experiences regarding shift work and childcare unavailability, were found with single parents employed within the Welsh Government (Government of Social Research, 2014). The literature review supports the expectations participant 2 believes were placed upon them with respect to being required to work all shifts. This is emphasised with emergency services professions being required to meet community expectations on a 24/7 basis.

When Harvard University conducted a seminar and surveyed attendees around the topic of childcare for employees, a common theme emerged regarding the loss of productivity and an increase in workplace accidents occurring around the 3pm timeslot, due to employee's minds wandering coinciding with the end of school (Friedman, 1986).

The research identified there is a direct requirement for police officers to perform their functions within their work units at the location the work unit is based. There is a distinct lack of flexibility to allow police officers to complete their work away from the workplace.

Whilst not identified by all participants, the majority stated they experienced stigmatisation associated with being less effective within the organisation, due to their hours worked, which appeared to cause a reduction in the complexity of investigative duties. This negative stigmatisation resulted by either not working full-time or applying for a flexible work agreement. In the modern workforce flexibility is an expectation, however as raised by the participants of Logan Police District, there appears to be little to no flexibility for

those police officers accessing part-time agreements. A cultural change is required to move the organisation into the modern management world with a flexible ethos.

Research indicates peer pressure is placed upon police officers to work longer hours in line with their peers. This results in the participants feeling they have to modify their employment to suit their young families and in order to obtain suitable childcare. Participant 7 stated they experienced *'negative workplace behaviour also from people I guess within the job, commenting on other people that have gone part-time, because of child needs in a negative way'*.

Although the participants from Logan Police District identified how they experienced negativity from their colleagues and QPS management due to having a flexible work agreement, the survey conducted by The Police Federation of Australia revealed there was a self-expected culture associated by those officers on flexible work agreements, where they needed to prove themselves to their full-time colleagues by working harder to achieve better results (Cole & Sanderson, 2017).

In a survey conducted by The Police Federation of Australia, 30% of police officers declared that they had experienced negative workplace behaviour due to having a flexible work agreement (Cole & Sanderson, 2017). A study conducted of US employees found that those employees who had flexible work agreements experienced negativity within the workplace through isolation, missed promotional opportunities and a negative stigma from their colleagues (Blake-Beard et al., 2010).

The literature review identified that many women have pressure placed upon them from the lack of flexibility and 24/7 childcare which results in those police officers needing to take leave from the workplace to satisfy family commitments. In the US, 2,500 working parents participated in a national survey which identified the sacrifices they made, whereby 20% of these participants experienced an imbalance between their careers and family responsibilities due to inflexible childcare, requiring them to either resign from their jobs or take a reduction in hours (Modestino et al., 2021). The organisation places unrealistic expectations on working families to provide the employer with working hours outside of the scope of existing childcare. The employee feels compelled to work outside of the childcare scope due to peer pressure and

pressure from management, so that the employee is actively contributing to the work unit's output. The only options for many of these employees is to enter a part-time agreement which also impacts on their income. However, there is an identified stigmatism with the part-time employee not contributing enough to the organisation. It was deemed that some parents, particularly women may also be subject to stigmatism by others or experience inner feelings of guilt, if they returned to work full-time, placing their child into childcare (Craig, 2007). The pressures placed organisationally either directly or indirectly on working parents is having a major impact on their work life, balance. Much of this pressure could be reduced if 24/7 childcare was an option for those working in the 24/7 space.

A survey conducted on Queensland government employees identified the work-life balance of most employees was negatively affected because of their inability to control workloads or attracting overtime (Skinner & Chapman, 2013). It was deemed that an imbalance between work and family created levels of stress to working parents was caused by parents having to work overtime generating difficulties in the management of childcare (Golden, 2015). This finding concurs with the quotes from the participants and this theme.

Contrary to the workplace providing flexibility for their staff to assist in juggling career with family responsibilities, consideration has been given to the flexibility of childcare, which would assist in managing the unexpected overtime.

Research conducted throughout various countries around the world revealed additional fees are incurred when parents collect their child/ren from childcare centres outside the centre's operating hours. There is often no flexibility to this rule (Hein & Cassirer, 2010).

#### **5.2.6. Theme 6 – Adapting work to childcare hours**

Participants identified they had the ability to apply for flexible work agreements, which meant they were able to work part-time or alternatively work nine-hour shifts (compressed hours), allowing for extra days off. The consensus from the interviews appeared to offer some reprieve to the participants in providing them with flexibility to work around the childcare operating times. Participant 7 stated *'so nine-hour shifts, which means four days most weeks, therefore I can arrange childcare around my shifts and you can apply for part-time'*. Whilst participant 4 did not have the ability to work nine-hour shifts, they were able to work part-time stating: *'I had to work part-time or I couldn't do it*

[work]'. Participant 2 stated *'I've been really fortunate to be able to have one [flexible work agreement]. That's been my main saving grace, because my ex-partner isn't really flexible'*. Likewise, participant 3 stated:

*'You do have the option to do a flexible workplace agreement, but there's a bit of a process I guess, a red tape involved with that and it can also just come down to a compromise [between my boss and I]. I went on a flexible workplace agreement, so that I had a set matrix for shifts'*.

Participant 5 stated:

*'Back when the kids were in day care, you either came back part-time and you worked certain shifts or you came back full-time and you were requested to work initially. Because I think the flexible working arrangements really only just come about within the last few years'*.

Participant 2 stated *'my flexible work arrangement has allowed me to work more'*.

Participant 3 revealed:

*'I had to lock in permanent days and therefore I had to have a flexible workplace agreement in order to suit that otherwise, I'd be working shifts where I couldn't get him [child] into childcare'*.

An analysis conducted on full-time and part-time employees in the US, found a reduction in stress of those trying to juggle work and family commitments when working part-time than those who were employed full-time (Golden & Kim, 2017). The results of the study conducted of UK police in 2001, indicated childcare to be the main factor to those employees working on a part-time basis, further indicating that was the only way they could continue to work whilst juggling their family responsibilities (Tuffin & Baladi, 2001).

Contrary to employees adjusting their working hours to suit the operating hours of childcare centres, Japan has extended the hours of childcare centres

to accommodate the increase of working mothers and their employment requirements (Anme et al., 2010).

Childcare is provided daily using allotted hours. The employees identify the need to have consistency in rostering to be able to utilise the childcare system. However, the QPS does not provide set rostering to cater for the employee needs; instead, it provides rostering to cater for community demand. This again pushes the employee to become part-time as the only option to have the rostering requirements to utilise any childcare while maintaining employment. The employee is again financially penalised through the loss of income and the QPS demonstrates lack of flexibility and out-of-date management practices. Without a cultural change and the incorporation of modern management practices within the QPS, police officers who are parents will continue to be financially penalised and stigmatised.

The survey conducted by The Police Federation of Australia involving police officers from Australia and New Zealand, identified there to be over 6,000 officers on flexible work agreements (9% of the total workforce of Australian police jurisdictions), with 80% being women and over 50% of the reasoning for the flexible work agreements requests was for parenting. Interestingly, this was the main reason for men to apply for a flexible work agreement. There was only 3% of police officers within this cohort to have a part-time agreement stating they work Monday to Friday officer hours. It was identified that only 8% of police officers across all Australian police jurisdictions, worked part-time (Cole & Sanderson, 2017).

Flexible work arrangements are considered to provide positive outcomes within the workplace, achieving a harmonious work-life balance, improved staff retention and improved stress levels (Cole & Sanderson, 2017). This will provide the workplace with high morale and better productivity. A study conducted in the US identified that to develop and sustain their workforce, organisations were required to support employees reach work-life balance, through the provision of flexible working agreements. This resulted in a happier more productive workforce who saw less absenteeism and stress amongst their employees. This study also found that employees had to work their work schedule around childcare hours of operations, which often resulted in these employees arriving at work late (Blake-Beard et al., 2010).

The childcare study conducted in Australia revealed police and nurses required flexibility within their respective workplaces through having input regarding the rostering of their shifts. However, in some workplaces, it was essential for some police/nurses to work part-time to enable stability by having set childcare days (Baxter et al., 2016).

Those surveyed by The Police Federation of Australia revealed that two factors need to exist for flexible work agreements to be successful: (1) support from management and (2) flexibility from the officer (Cole & Sanderson, 2017). Although 40% of officers surveyed stated their manager was not supportive of flexible work agreements (Cole & Sanderson, 2017).

A study conducted in the US was focused on the 24/7 workforce and how they juggle their careers and family responsibilities, identified that organisational support is critical for these employees. Through supporting employees in these professions, will reduce absenteeism, attrition, subsequently providing a better balanced and productive employee (Barcenas-Frausto, 2009).

The research identified gender still plays a part in the work patterns of parents, with women predominantly returning to work part-time post maternity leave. As the duties of a police officer do not have the flexibility, this confirms the necessity and importance of flexible work agreements. It can be inferred that without flexible work agreements in Logan Police District, these police officers with young families would not be able to return to work upon the birth of their child.

#### **5.2.7. Theme 7 – Unique insights**

Participant 4 has an extensive background in investigating incidents involving offences against children. Due to the nature of her speciality within the QPS, participant 4 has developed a fear which prevented her from allowing her children to be in the care of another. It is the belief of the researcher that due to participant 4's continued exposure to the actions of paedophiles in her policing work, it has created an obstacle within the childcare realm. Participant 4's choice, however, concurs with the Australian studies that most parents prefer to use informal care, that involves grandparents, or friends especially at times outside the childcare centres operating hours. Parents actively seek out

childcare service providers where they can establish a trusting relationship (Baxter, Hand & Sweid, 2016).

Cancian and Oliker (2000) revealed that over time, mothers are expected to be the primary carers within their family dynamic and therefore reducing their work duties to part-time. This was identified in OECD countries revealing nearly 70% of women worked part-time, compared to only 9% of men (Adema, 2013). The traditional roles where a woman would normally forego their career to maintain the family unit, has been reversed within participant 6 family dynamics. Participant 6 clearly articulates that he is satisfied and has accepted to sacrifice his career progression, to provide greater integrity within the family unit. Participant 6 contradicts the 'norm' as the OECD studies identified, which revealed women were less committed to their careers compared to men (Adema, 2013). The Australian research conducted in 2013, recognised that some fathers have chosen to reduce their employment hours to care for their children (Baxter & Renda, 2015). This research aligns with the decision participant 6 has made.

Although research indicates that women in Central and Eastern European countries are considered unreliable, participant 6 has disclosed he has placed his career on hold while he performs the role of predominant carer for his daughter (Fodor & Glass, 2018).

Research conducted in the US concurred with the family situation of participant 6, revealing that women are becoming more predominant in the workforce as they accept economic opportunities to subsequently become the 'bread winner' for their family (Boushey, 2009).

These two participants have provided findings which are unique to their situation and family scenario, but do not fit within the six themes. It is important they are discussed in this research, as these findings relate with the research question in how a 24/7 childcare option could assist police officers in the Logan Police District.

It was identified that flexibility is difficult to provide in the workplace for police officers in Logan Police District, due to the requirement for police officers to provide a physical response to the community. With no option to work from home, police officers were faced with further challenges resulting in them applying for flexible work agreements in the form of part-time agreements to assist with their family responsibilities. While this option exists as a flexibility

alternative, police officers working part-time encountered further challenges to their career development opportunities. It was identified that while flexibility was lacked within the workplace, there was no flexibility within the childcare industry. Centre-based childcare throughout Australia operated from 6am-6pm or thereabouts, offering no flexibility for any parents who did not work the traditional business hours.

The lack of flexibility caused stress, placing pressure on the family unit. As identified with the participants from Logan Police District, the majority of families require both parents to work and juggle their children. The Logan Police District police officers revealed the pressures they faced in attempting to juggle their career and family and had coping mechanisms in place to 'make it work'. These strategies include working opposite shifts, children change overs with the other parent in the carpark and utilising their parents if possible. These stressors combined with the stress factors that come with the role of being a police officer were exacerbated and included fatigue, health issues and issues within the family dynamic.

The Logan Police District police officers identified that childcare places are booked in advance and parents were often unable to change their allocated day as a result of a shift change. This also added extra stress to the family unit and also the work unit, as it was often the case the police officers are trying to make it work but were hamstrung because of availability. The stressors experienced by Logan Police District police officers were confirmed from the study conducted by The Police Federation of Australia which resulted in an increase in absenteeism compounded by stress.

A study performed in Australia and New Zealand police forces identified that outdated support from managers caused stress among the workforce. Furthermore, this study identified those police officers with flexible working arrangements, had lower stress levels. The police officers in Logan Police District identified that ranks and duties played a considerable part in whether a part-time agreement was approved. It was determined that not all managers displayed outdated management practices, it was perceived that the minority were from the within the lower management, as senior managers supported flexibility within the workplace.

The negative experiences from the police officers in Logan Police District regarding flexibility within the workplace was found to contradict that of the



Diversity Council of Australia who encouraged government departments to provide a contemporary workplace with flexible options available to all staff. Although the QPS is a government department, the role of the police officer makes it difficult to have the same level of flexibility as other office government roles.

It was identified in some European countries that women were discriminated against due to their family responsibilities and absences from the workplace, making the hiring of women unattractive. This did not appear to be the case with the participants from Logan Police District.

The US saw a shift in female police officer movements who relinquished their 24/7 positions to seek day shift only positions, to enable their ability to fulfill their family responsibilities.

A theme identifying financial stress was identified by Logan Police District police officers. It was experienced that childcare costs in Australia are high and with the inflexibility of the hours of operation of childcare centres and the inability for police officers to work from home, forcing police officers to take a reduction in pay by working part-time, their families experienced financial stress.

It was discovered if a 24/7 childcare facility was adopted, the costs incurred from penalty rates would be passed onto the consumer. Furthermore, as Queensland consists of metropolitan and rural areas, it was deemed by the Australian Productivity Commission that those families residing in rural areas would incur higher childcare costs (Tilly, 2014).

However, in the Australian Federal Budget 2022-23 it was revealed that the costs to childcare will be reduced for families. Commencing in July 2023, the Australian Federal Government will make childcare cheaper, by increasing up to 90% of the Childcare Subsidy for those families who earn less than a combined income of \$530,000 (Australian Government, 2022a).

A theme emerged from the experiences of Logan Police District officers was that police officers incur overtime occasionally. It was the expectation of the colleagues and supervisors in Logan Police District that police officers work beyond the scope of the operating hours of the childcare centres. This made it difficult to manage and caused stress for the family unit, incurring further childcare costs for collecting their child/ren outside the scope of the centre's operating hours.

It was discovered that police officers were required to adapt their working arrangements to suit the childcare hours. The Police Federation of Australia revealed that it was the majority of women with part-time agreements (Cole & Sanderson, 2017). This theme identified that Logan Police District police officers were to obtain a flexible work agreement, in the form of either a part-time agreement or compressed hours. This assisted in maintaining the balance between a career and family responsibilities. Research identified that flexible work agreements provided a harmonious environment due to employees achieving a work-life balance. Studies showed that organisations that offer flexibility have a harmonious and productive workforce with reduced absenteeism and stress amongst their employees.

As identified, formal childcare is unavailable outside the 6am-6pm operating times, making the duties of a shift working police officer difficult to manage their hours of operation and their family needs. Each Logan Police District police officer interviewed; had different strategies they use to juggle family with their career. It was evident there were some similarities formed from these Logan Police District police officers, which resulted in six themes emerging. These themes include lack of organisational flexibility; stress and pressure on the family; outdated management practices; financial stress; organisational expectations and adapting work to childcare hours. From research conducted in the literature review and interviewing Logan Police District police officers, the topic of childcare for shift working families appears to be an issue in obtaining a balance. There were two unique insights identified by participants 4 and 6, which although did not fit within realms of any of the six themes, were very important as they directly related to the research topic. The struggles experienced by Logan Police District police officers is likely encountered by other shift working professions.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION**

### **6.1. Introduction**

This work-based research project included interviews of seven police officers from the Logan Police District to identify their experiences with performing shift work while managing childcare responsibilities. Published research has been conducted to explore 24/7 childcare to determine if it operates in Australia and overseas, to assist with those employed in shift working professions. The research has identified that while Australia's legislation does not permit 24/7 childcare, it does provide other childcare options to families. This chapter considers the high-level conclusions from the Results and Discussion chapter and makes recommendations.

Queensland Police Service (QPS) police officers are required to work 24/7 to serve and protect the community. This shift work poses the problem of finding childcare outside the traditional centre-based childcare hours between 6am and 6pm. Issues are created within the family unit when they attempt to juggle a policing career and meet their family responsibilities in relation to childcare, forcing many families to reduce their hours and work part-time. However, this also creates a problem within the QPS as the gaps created by those part-time police officers are not filled. Those police officers who are performing full-time duties are required to take up the extra workload from the part-time police officers. The QPS is not alone in experiencing this dilemma of employees attempting to manage their families and a shift working career, as it is mirrored in other emergency service professions such as nursing, ambulance officers across other jurisdictions within Australia and the world.

### **6.2. Aim of research**

The aim of the research was to identify if 24/7 childcare centres have operated nationally and internationally to support shift working families and whether a 24/7 childcare centre would benefit the shift-working police officers of Logan Police District. The case study of the police officers from Logan Police District revealed they would benefit if childcare centres operated outside the standard hours. These police officers indicated they would be able to better manage their work life balance and stated it would enable them to return to work full-time in a shift working role. The literature review revealed many countries that offered 24/7 childcare or longer hours to assist those employees in shift working professions. These countries included England UK, the West Midlands Fire Service had its own nursery for the staff, Finland has offered

24/7 childcare for over 25 years, while Japan does not offer 24/7 childcare, it does provide longer hours of their childcare centres. Canada, however, did provide 24/7 childcare in the 1990s, but withdrew this service due to low demand.

Police officers perform a role requiring them to respond to calls for service from the community for a range of matters. The nature of the police officer's role prohibits them from having flexible options such as working from home, which is expected to create other issues as it is anticipated more police officers will seek the flexibility through a part-time agreement. This situation was not predicted to be unique to police officers as there are other professions where shift workers are unable to have flexibility to work from home or choose their shifts. This research explored other shift working professions nationally and internationally to identify how these families manage their childcare.

### **6.3. Methodology**

Pragmatism was selected as a practical paradigm to identify how 24/7 childcare would assist Logan Police District police officers. Research was gathered from national and international sources, including a variety of shift working professions, to identify how families managed their careers and childcare responsibilities. The Type-2 case study was conducted with seven police officers from Logan Police District who were specifically selected to participate in semi-structured interviews to obtain an insight of their experiences in managing shift work and childcare. These seven police officers, consisting of one man and six women, were interviewed separately and asked the same series of questions, with the duration of each interview taking approximately 40 minutes. These interviews were digitally recorded with notes taken by the researcher to ensure all participant's experiences were captured.

Thematic analysis was conducted of the data through the audio recordings, which were then coded. These codes identified six main themes which were ranked according to the coded frequency or level of importance as deemed by the participants. These six themes formed the Results and Discussion Chapter.

Limitations were identified throughout this research. Due to constraints associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher was only able to obtain a small sample of participants, interviewing only six women and one man. The researcher has identified that the representation of participants was gender imbalanced and would have been beneficial to obtain data if the genders represented were more equal. Although the participants were represented across three ranks,

namely, Constable, Senior Constable and Sergeants. It would have been desirable to obtain a larger cross section, specifically within the Constable and Senior Constable ranks, as they are the predominant ranks with young children. The researcher identified that the best method to obtain the data for this research was through qualitative interviews as it enabled the experiences of the participants to be captured. There has been minimal research conducted nationally and internationally, specific to the topic of childcare and police departments, so the researcher was required to expand the search parameters to include other shift working professions.

#### **6.4. Findings**

The audio recordings of interviews were transcribed and coded, identifying 127 codes. These codes were reviewed and grouped into six themes which were ranked according to the most frequent theme (Theme 1, 36 codes) to the least frequent theme (Theme 6, 11 codes). Any themes that emerged with ten or less codes were deemed not to be considered as a theme for this research.

The first theme identified lack of organisational flexibility to rate highly with the police officers from Logan Police District. Lack of organisational flexibility is due to their duty to provide a physical response to the community and therefore are not afforded the opportunity to work from home. It is due to these reasons that police officers seek flexibility through part-time agreements, which aids to manage family responsibilities. Similarly to the QPS, the childcare industry does not provide flexibility in their operating hours to cater for shift-working families.

This lack of flexibility was then found to place pressure on families, causing unnecessary stress as families attempt to manage their work and family commitments. The police officers from Logan Police District stated that they adopted strategies to 'make it work', which included working opposite shifts, changeover of children in the carpark or utilising their parents if available. It was highlighted that due to the stressful nature of the role of the police officer combined with other factors including fatigue and health issues, attempting to manage childcare and shift work was exhausting.

Resulting from community needs, it is common for police officers' shifts to be changed at short notice. This found to cause significant stress amongst the Logan Police District police officers and their families, as childcare places are booked in advance prohibiting last minute changes. The research performed by The Police Federation of Australia confirmed higher levels of absenteeism were magnified by

stress. In addition, this research revealed that police officers who had flexible working arrangements, experienced lower stress levels (Cole & Sanderson, 2017).

The Logan Police District officers identified outdated management practices as a theme. It was revealed that senior managers supported workplace flexibility, however it was the lower managers who practiced outdated management. The Logan Police District police officers indicated rank was an important factor of whether managers approved their part-time agreement.

Although the Diversity Council of Australia encouraged all government departments to move towards a modern workplace by offering flexible options to all staff, flexibility for police officers is unable to compare with that of other government departments (Tilly, 2014).

The participants from Logan Police District did not experience any gender discrimination within the workplace. However, the literature review identified women experienced discrimination in some European countries and the recruitment of these women was unattractive, due to their family commitments and workplace absenteeism (Fodor & Glass, 2018).

Logan Police District officers identified high childcare costs in Australia caused financial stress. This was compounded with the lack of organisational flexibility and operational hours of childcare centres. As the QPS provides no option for police officers to work from home, Logan Police District police officers were forced to work part-time to manage their work and family responsibilities, subsequently reducing their financial income.

Research identified if a childcare centre provided 24/7 service to families, then costs relating to penalty rates to operate this centre would be passed onto the consumer. These costs would further financially impact families (Tilly, 2014). Recently the Australian Government revealed in the Federal Budget 2022-23 those childcare costs would be reduced to assist families (Australian Government, 2022a).

A fifth theme unfolded relating to organisational expectations which were experienced from Logan Police District police officers was they regularly incurred overtime. The Logan Police District participants raised their concern that it was an expectation of their supervisors and colleagues the overtime is performed. The Logan Police District participants identified this to be troublesome, causing further stress for the families as financial implications are imposed when collecting children from childcare outside their operating hours.

The final theme identified from the study with the police officers in Logan Police District recognised they were required to adapt their working arrangements to suit the hours of childcare. For Logan Police District officers to balance their career and family commitments, they had to obtain a flexible work agreement. The only options available for them consisted of part-time agreements or compressed hours. Studies have proven that those workplaces offering work life, balance have higher productivity, lower absenteeism and stressed employees (Blake-Beard et.al., 2010).

The research identified two unique matters and while they did not fit into any of the six themes, they directly link to the research topic. The first unique insight involved a participant created an unconscious bias due to the nature of work she performed within the QPS towards those employees providing care for children. Selecting a childcare option was difficult for this participant and their family due to their unconscious bias. The second unique insight involved a participant who performed the role of primary carer as a father and his career came second, allowing his wife to pursue her chosen career. This contradicted the traditional role involving the mother as the primary carer for the child/ren while the father pursued their career.

## **6.5. Triple dividend**

The findings of this research will result in a triple dividend, providing the researcher with professional and personal self-development through the achievement of learning objectives, a contribution to the QPS, and a contribution of original knowledge. It will improve the knowledge base related to work-life balance for the workplace and will contribute directly to the workplace as it will provide outcomes that prepare the organisation for future decision-making and other developments. This research is significant for shift-working parents within the QPS who often place their careers on hold to raise their families. It will contribute directly to the workplace as it will provide real-life experiences of police officers and may assist the organisation for the future.

The triple dividend will benefit the researcher, organisation and knowledge through learning objectives in the form of a learning contract.

### **6.5.1. Learning objectives and reflective practice**

During this work-based study, the researcher undertook a reflective review. This consisted of determining the gap between the information already known to the researcher compared to what information is still required to be learnt. From this

reflective review, learning objectives were identified which formed the basis of this research project.

Learning objectives were developed by the researcher to identify the proposed outcomes upon completion of the Master of Professional Studies (Research) program (Figure 8). These learning objectives were created using the SMART analogy to ensure they were specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely. Using Bloom's taxonomy, the researcher identified six levels to correspond with the learning objectives.

**Figure 8 – Learning objectives**

Learning Area	Learning Objective	Bloom's Taxonomy Level
Professional Knowledge	To identify the challenges of the organisation and the childcare industry, and to evaluate the specifics required for implementation.	Knowledge
Industry Knowledge	To compare childcare situations in other jurisdictions through the analysis of various research sources	Comprehension
Industry Knowledge	To interpret the information / data obtained through the qualitative process and apply this to the student's workplace.	Application
Industry Knowledge	To analyse other policing and emergency services jurisdictions to determine their status regarding the childcare situation.	Analysis
Collaboration / Teamwork	To construct an interview with internal stakeholders to determine their needs to allow for the direction of the research proposal.	Synthesis
Creativity and Innovation	To evaluate the findings from the research and to provide a structured, written academic thesis with recommendations.	Evaluation

The researcher has met all learning objectives which has provided individual and professional self-development and a greater understanding of the industry and the experiences of the police officers in Logan Police District. Through meeting all learning objectives, this has provided the researcher with greater knowledge which will be contributed to the workplace to improve work-life balance for employees.



The researcher has identified that information previously learnt is not retained as the researcher learns through single loop learning. Single loop learning involves learning that takes place in the conscious mind and that moves into the subconscious mind where it is stored. To improve the researcher's learning capability, a continuous learning practice was adopted. The researcher discovered the importance of continuous learning throughout a person's lifetime, combined with life experiences that form a foundation for knowledge (Illeris, 2008).

The researcher established that this work-based project assisted in continuous learning as it was found to increase motivation, enabling personal development while working towards implementing change within the organisation (Lester & Costley, 2010). This work-based project has provided an awareness of the challenges experienced by Logan Police District police officers which has assisted in creating an understanding that there is an issue of childcare and shift working families nationally and globally.

## **6.6. Recommendations**

Two recommendations have been made to QPS and the Logan Police District to assist and support shift-working police officers navigate their careers while simultaneously managing childcare needs.

Recommendation 1: It is recommended that Logan Police District management explore rosters to provide alternative duties for police officers to allow them to operate during business hours, enabling them to work full-time. This will provide more flexibility within the workforce and create a better work, life balance.

Recommendation 2: The Federal Budget 2022-23, announced in October 2022, was planned for childcare to be more affordable for working families. It is recommended the Federal Government conduct a further investigation at a Federal level into the possibility of offering 24/7 childcare. Alternatively, given the complexities of the childcare system in Australia and the possible financial impacts on both childcare centres and families, it is recommended the Federal Government extend the hours of operation of childcare centres.

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# APPENDIX A: Participant information sheet

	<b>University of Southern Queensland</b> <b>Participant Information Sheet</b> <b>Interview</b>
USQ HREC Approval number: <b>HXREA206</b>	

**Project Title**  
A 24/7 childcare option to assist officers in the QPS

Research team contact details	
<b>Principal Investigator Details</b>	<b>Supervisor</b>
Beta Jordan [Redacted]	Prof Patrick Danaher [Redacted] Prof Sophia Imran [Redacted]

**Description**

This project is being undertaken as part of a Masters in Professional Studies (Research) project through the University of Southern Queensland.

The purpose of this project is to obtain alternative solutions for shift working employees in the Queensland Police Service (QPS) who wish to work on a full-time basis, but are unable to do so, due to the unavailability of childcare services. My research will explore the perceptions of QPS employees about the implementation of 24/7 childcare services and how useful and effective they would be for shift working families.

If you consent to participating in the study, you will be contacted to schedule a time to meet. An interview will be conducted face-to-face during your rostered shift, at a police station convenient to the participant and will take approximately 30 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded and will also include note taking your responses. This information will be stored on a QPS fileserver, of which the researcher has sole access. Your identity will not be disclosed throughout the process; however your demographic information will be used.

**Participation**

Your participation will involve partaking in an interview that will take approximately 30 minutes of your time.

Questions will include:

- How can a 24/7 childcare option assist officers in the QPS?
- What are the experiences and perceptions of the police officers related to the provision of 24/7 childcare services in the QPS?
- What effect would 24/7 childcare for shift working families have on employees and the organisation?
- What role can 24/7 childcare services play in improving the performance of the QPS staff?

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage.

You will be unable to withdraw data collected about yourself after the data has been analysed.

If you do wish to withdraw from this project, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland or the QPS.

**Expected benefits**

It is expected that this project will benefit shift working QPS employees by providing them with solutions to childcare.

#### Risks

In participating in the interview, there are no anticipated risks beyond normal day-to-day living. To avoid the possible risk of coercion during the interviewee's recruitment, the researcher will ask the QPS admin to send the interview invites to the participants. Appropriate personal protective equipment in compliance with the Chief Health Officer's direction at the time, including the general health of the participants will be considered before the start of the interviews.

#### Privacy and confidentiality

All comments and responses are confidential unless required by law.

For audio recordings:

- The interviews will be audio recorded for the purpose of transcription
- The recording will not be used for any other purpose
- Only the researcher will have access to the recording and the person who is transcribing the recording.
- The participant's data will not be made available for future research purposes

The project is not funded by an external third party.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely, as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data and Primary Materials Management Procedure.

Interviews will be held at a police station of convenience to the participant. The duration of each interview is expected to be between 30-60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted by the researcher. The interviews will be audio recorded and notes will be taken during the interviews. The people present at any given time will be one participant (interviewee) and the researcher (interviewer). During the debriefing session the researcher will explain the interviewees about the research, and their rights concerning their consent and privacy, the data confidentiality, the process of the interview and sharing the answers to their questions after they are compiled for further research.

The audio recordings will be transcribed by an independent person to avoid any bias due to the researcher being an insider. The researcher will deidentify and code the recordings and provide these to the transcriber who will email the transcripts to the researcher once completed. Once the transcripts are complete, they will be shared with the participants for their review to ensure their accuracy.

#### Consent to participate

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to the Principal Investigator (Peta Jordan).

#### Questions

Please refer to the Research team contact details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

#### Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, you may contact the University of Southern Queensland, Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics on +61 7 4631 1839 or email [researchintegrity@usq.edu.au](mailto:researchintegrity@usq.edu.au). The Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics is not connected with the research project and can address your concern in an unbiased manner.

## APPENDIX B: Participant consent form

 <small>UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND</small>	<b>University of Southern Queensland</b> <b>Consent form</b> <b>Interview</b>
<b>USQ HREC Approval number: HXREA206</b>	

<b>Project Title</b>
A 24/7 childcare option to assist officers in the QPS

<b>Research team contact details</b>	
<b>Principal Investigator Details</b>	<b>Supervisor</b>
Peta Jordan [Redacted]	Prof Patrick Danaher [Redacted] Prof Sophia Imran [Redacted]

<b>Statement of consent</b>
-----------------------------

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

• Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No
• Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No
• Understand that if you have any additional questions, you can contact the research team.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No
• Are over 18 years of age	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No
• Understand that the interview will be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No
o Understand that you can participate in the interview without being audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No
o If you do not want to be audio recorded during the interview, please initial here:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No
• Agree to participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No

<b>Name (first &amp; last)</b>			
<b>Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	

Please return this document to a research team member before undertaking the interview.

# APPENDIX C: QPS research committee formal deed of agreement



## QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

ABN: 29 409 225 509

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER  
ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY COMMAND  
40 Tank Street, Brisbane, 4000  
GPO Box 1440, Brisbane, Queensland, 4001



Our Ref.: DOC22/149602  
Your Ref.: QPSRC-0122-3.06

1 February 2022

A/Inspector Peta Jordan  
Queensland Police Service

Dear A/Inspector Jordan,

### RESEARCH REQUEST LETTER OF NOTIFICATION – A 24/7 childcare option to assist officers in the QPS

I refer to your application dated 30 November 2021 for permission to conduct research within the Queensland Police Service (QPS). The application has been carefully considered by the QPS Research Committee (QPSRC) and has been approved subject to the following conditions:

- 1) You carefully read, sign and return the Formal Deed of Agreement to the QPS Research Committee Secretariat; and
- 2) Any data or police resources required for this project must be negotiated and is subject to QPS operational requirements and the provision of this Letter of Notification;

Your QPSRC Reference Number for this approved research project is **QPSRC-0122-3.06**

QPS practice is to provide approved research with a dedicated liaison officer(s), where applicable, to facilitate access to required resources for your project. Your liaison officer at the QPS will be provided once relevant documentation is returned to QPSRC Secretariat (the Research and Evaluation Unit) via [QPS.Research@police.qld.gov.au](mailto:QPS.Research@police.qld.gov.au).

Should you have queries about this, please contact Mrs Sandra Smith, Manager of the Research and Evaluation Unit, on telephone number (07) 3364 8114.

I wish you well in your research.

Yours sincerely

C I HARSLEY/APM  
CHAIR, QPS RESEARCH COMMITTEE  
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER  
ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY COMMAND

QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

**FORMAL DEED OF AGREEMENT**

Approval to conduct research involving Queensland Police Service (QPS) staff, information or data is not in effect until the agreement below is signed by the Principal Researcher and returned to the Chair, Queensland Police Service Research Committee (QPSRC).

I, Senior Sergeant Peta JORDAN (4014708)

the principal researcher on the research project titled:

A 24/7 Childcare option to assist officers in the QPS

I agree that I and other researchers involved in the project will abide by the QPS Research Policy. I also agree to abide by the conditions of approval specified in my Letter of Notification.

I understand that I must contact the nominated QPS research liaison officer(s) to make all approved Organisational arrangements for the conduct of this approved research.

I have obtained the relevant permissions to use any background or third party Intellectual Property in the research project.

I acknowledge that any new Intellectual Property (including data and findings) created as a result of research with the QPS is jointly owned, unless otherwise agreed to by the Committee; and indemnify the QPS for any claims arising from any alleged breach of Intellectual Property arising from the research.

I acknowledge that correspondence relating to the progress of this approved research (e.g., 'Progress Report'; 'Amendment Request Form'; and the review of any publications) must be sent directly to the QPSRC Secretariat via email to [QPS.Research@police.qld.gov.au](mailto:QPS.Research@police.qld.gov.au).

I acknowledge that the QPSRC reserves the right to call on researchers to show cause why their research approval should not be rescinded through failure to comply with this Formal Deed of Agreement.

I acknowledge that any data provided by the QPS, including survey and interview responses, will only be used for the above nominated project and by the nominated researchers. Furthermore, if I wish to utilise the data provided by the QPS in future research I will seek approval from the QPSRC prior to commencing the project.



Principal Researcher

03/02/2022

Date

Once completed, this form is to be emailed to:

Chair, Queensland Police Service Research Committee  
[QPS.Research@police.qld.gov.au](mailto:QPS.Research@police.qld.gov.au)