

This is an uncorrected proof of evidence taken before the committee and it is made available under the condition it is recognised as such.



LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr PS Russo MP—Chair
Ms SL Bolton MP (virtual)
Ms JM Bush MP
Mrs LJ Gerber MP (virtual)
Mr JE Hunt MP
Mr AC Powell MP

Staff present:

Ms R Easten—Committee Secretary
Ms M Telford—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO SERIOUS VILIFICATION AND HATE CRIMES

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

FRIDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2021

Brisbane

FRIDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2021

The committee met at 9.30 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open the third public hearing for the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's inquiry into serious vilification and hate crimes. I respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whose lands, winds and waters we all share.

My name is Peter Russo. I am the member for Toohey and chair of the committee. The other committee members with me today are: Mrs Laura Gerber, the member for Currumbin and deputy chair, who is appearing via videoconference; Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa, who is appearing via videoconference; Ms Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper; Mr Jason Hunt, the member for Caloundra, who is appearing via videoconference; and Mr Andrew Powell, the member for Glass House.

On 12 April 2021, the Legislative Assembly agreed that the committee inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on matters relating to serious vilification and hate crimes in Queensland. The purpose of today is to hear evidence from stakeholders who have made submissions as part of the committee's inquiry. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. You have previously been provided with a copy of instructions to witnesses so we will take those as read.

These proceedings are similar to parliament and are subject to the Legislative Assembly's standing rules and orders. In this regard I remind members of the public that, under the standing orders, the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and will be subject to my direction at all times. The media rules endorsed by the committee are available from committee staff if required. All those present today should note that it is possible you might be photographed during the proceedings by media. Images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I ask everyone present to turn mobile phones off or switch them to silent mode. The program for today has been published on the committee's webpage and there are hard copies available from the committee staff.

ABDELSALAM, Ms Galila OAM, Chief Executive Officer, Islamic Women's Association of Australia

JAMAL, Mr Habib, President, Islamic Council of Queensland

KADRI, Mr Ali, Chief Executive Officer, Islamic College of Brisbane; Committee Member, Holland Park Mosque

CHAIR: Good morning. We ask that during your evidence today you please refrain from using unparliamentary language such as swearing or offensive terms, even if you are quoting a third person. I thank you for your cooperation in that. Would you each like to make a short opening statement, after which the committee members will ask some questions? This session is due to finish at 10 am.

Mr Jamal: Good morning, all. I pay my respects to the traditional owners of the land and to the elders past, present and emerging. My name is Habib Jamal. I migrated from South Africa. For the first—more than half—35 years of my life I lived under apartheid, so I understand certain issues maybe more than others. I moved to New Zealand, spent 10 years there with my family and then migrated to Australia. We have been living on the Gold Coast for the past 21 years.

I have been the treasurer of the Islamic Society of the Gold Coast for almost 19 years. I have been a trustee and treasurer of the Gold Coast Mosque Trust for 10 years. I am a qualified JP for the past 13 years and currently I am the President of the Islamic Council of Queensland and have been for three years. In my spare time I work as a practice manager for the Olsen Avenue Medical Centre. That is it in a nutshell, thank you.

Mr Kadri: Good morning, everyone. My name is Ali Kadri. I too want to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we meet and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I came to Australia as an international student from India. I was born in the western state of Gujarat, where Mahatma Ghandi comes from. Prime Minister Modi is also from the same state. In India, as a Muslim minority we face discrimination and racism. I lost family members to Hindu nationalism and extremism in 2002.

Since coming to Australia I have completed three postgraduate qualifications. In 2010 I joined the Holland Park Mosque as a committee member and a spokesperson. Since then, in 2014 I have been a spokesperson of the Islamic Council of Queensland. Since 2015-16 I have been a director and since last year I have been the chief executive officer of the Islamic College of Brisbane. The Islamic College of Brisbane is the largest and the longest standing Islamic school in Queensland. We have a number strand of 1,460 students with over 200 staff who are predominantly non-Muslim.

My experience in Australia has always been positive given that I have come from a country that, despite being the largest democracy, has had its fair share of troubles between the communities. Finally, I want to thank the committee for taking the initiative to contact the communities and hear from us and the secretariat for the great work they are doing.

Ms Abdelsalam: Good morning. Salaam alaikum. First, thank you very much for this opportunity. If I lose the language, it is due to my young age as well as I am coming from a different background. I want to first acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we stand. I was not prepared for an introduction because I have my speech, but I will try to say something about myself.

I am Egyptian. I come from a family of 10, seven of them girls. The first five were girls. My father was not keen on girls and I tried to make him and other members of the family proud that women can do as much as men. I migrated to Australia 14 years ago with my husband as a skilled migrant. In university I was leading the women and also leading the university colleagues in sport and others. I was honoured by getting the woman of the year for the years of my study in Egypt. It shows you what a strong personality I have. But the first three years of my life in Australia was affecting my personal feelings. I was depressed and I had to do counselling because I faced discrimination and people not giving me the opportunity to be involved, which led to a severe depression. Then I started to look at my life and I started to do something new. I want to talk about that later.

CHAIR: Galila, you mentioned that you have a statement. Would you like to give that now?

Ms Abdelsalam: Because it covers a few sections of the community, I want to see what my brothers will say because maybe they will cover the same and I can focus on the IWAA and women's issues.

CHAIR: Who would like to start?

Mr Kadri: As a spokesperson of the Islamic Council of Queensland and a committee member of the Holland Park Mosque, whenever an incident took place in the community I have been personally involved, whether it is with the individual or a community organisation. One of the incidents that freshly comes to my mind is a graffiti outside the Holland Park Mosque where somebody painted a swastika and wrote the name of the terrorist who killed 52 people in Christchurch, with 'Saint' at the beginning. That incident was reported to the police. I have been involved in communicating with the police, providing evidence and so on and so forth, with CCTV footage and so on. Unfortunately, the police investigated the crime as wilful damage to property. To the shock of a lot of people in the community, it was not just a simple incident of wilful damage to property, especially when the name of a person who has killed 52 people in a mosque is glorified outside a mosque. That caused a tremendous amount of fear in the community where, for a few weeks, the visits to the mosque on Friday afternoon reduced. A lot of community members I was speaking to were afraid to actually come to and send their family members to the mosque.

Upon further discussions with the police and asking them why this particular incident has been simply investigated as wilful damage to property, the response I received from various investigating officers was that it is because we do not have adequate laws to cover those kinds of crimes in Queensland. That is where I first thought that maybe the legislative protections we have in Queensland, in such a diverse multicultural and multifaith community, are not enough to provide assurances to all communities that they will be safe when they go to pray and do a simple act of pray.

The second incident I would like to share was at the Islamic College of Brisbane when a pig's head with a swastika drawn on it was left at the school. This was right before the children were to come into the school. While a few kids were exposed to it, we were able to remove it before many kids came.

Once again, the whole matter was investigated as just wilful damage to property and vandalism. This is another incident where the community felt that there is not enough legal protection for them against that kind of vilification and hatred.

The third and the last incident—there are many, but I do not think half an hour will be enough for me to go through them—was with me personally and my family. We were at Southbank Parklands with my sister, her two children—one is seven years old and one is a two-year-old boy—my mother and my sister's husband. An intoxicated person came in and started abusing us for being Indians. He used words like 'slaves'. He used words like, 'We rightfully colonised you', and so on and so forth. I responded to the person by saying, 'Leave us alone.' He then spilled wine on me. The police were called and once again they wanted to investigate that matter and charge the person with common assault.

That is one more example where I think current legal protections in Queensland are not adequate to cover the type of crimes we are facing in today's world, whether it is physical, whether it is on social media or whether it is on organisations or within the organisation. Those are some examples that I would like to share with the committee. I strongly believe that we do need legal reform to make sure that our growing and diverse communities feel safe and feel that Australia is home. I personally feel we live in one of the best countries and we need to continue to work hard to make it even better.

Mr Jamal: I endorse everything that Ali stated. With my experiences on the Gold Coast, quite often we get damage to our property, especially the fence that is surrounding the mosque area. On a few occasions we have had a pig's head thrown into the car park. Again, we report it to the police, which we normally do, but there is no further action.

On a very personal basis, I must add, my wife takes regular walks and she dresses like sister Galila with the hijab. On an average, I would say, once a week a passing motorist or a group in a car will either hurl abuse or throw something out of the window. Invariably it is a McDonald's bag. It does happen even up to today. That is something that we feel personally.

It is not a criminal offence but we experience this quite often in our medical centre where my wife is a GP and I manage the practice: fairly often you get a person coming in and asking, 'Are there any Australian doctors?' We have excellent staff who are Australian on the front desk. They now learn to say, 'Look, these are all Australian doctors but this practice is not for you.' We do not encourage them.

From a community point of view, quite often I hear from members in my community, 'We are applying for jobs and just cannot get work.' They invariably put it down to the name on the CV—if it is Habib or Mohammed or something like that. That is a barrier against them. These are some of the realities as a migrant community. I think the new generation—most of our children and grandchildren—are born here, so they cannot be regarded as migrants anymore. We are now fully-fledged Australians, but these are the barriers that we do face.

CHAIR: Thank you, Habib.

Ms Abdelsalam: I will try to make it as short as possible, but there are a lot of issues which are related to women which I would like to share with you.

CHAIR: You do not need to make it short. The committee would like to ask some questions, but we are also very interested to hear from you. We have 15 minutes. We will get there.

Ms Abdelsalam: Thank you very much. I want to explain about Muslim women. Many people in the community consider Muslim women as not educated or they see us as not as intelligent or controlled by men. Men who are our community leaders know that we are not. I am an example: I am strong and intelligent and I am considered a leader in the community as others, not less than them.

We choose to wear the hijab because it is our choice. No-one pushes us to do that. Some Muslim women do not wear hijab—they come from certain European countries. I will talk about my personal experience of discrimination against me over a number of years. When I apply for jobs, sometimes I get rejected because I am wearing hijab. Years ago they were obvious and they said it directly. People pass me by saying, 'How long have you been in the country?' I say, 'Five or six years.' They say, 'And you're still wearing this thing?' They think they are being nice to me and they do not understand that this is part of my religion and part of my culture. When applying for a job there used to be a direct saying: 'If you want to get a job, go and take your hijab off.' That led to me feeling very down. I lost my self-esteem. I was not comfortable to apply for a job. There are too many stories about people being discriminated.

I will share my personal experience. I was in a train with my little boy at that time going to the hospital and some man approached me. He was screaming and no-one defended me. I was shaking. I was eight months pregnant. I was shaking and it affected my son. I felt unsafe in Sydney, so I moved Brisbane

to Queensland. The Queensland people are very nice. When I came on holiday, they were really accepting of me until I moved in and the situation was the same. This is when I decided to get a women's support group with women from Muslim backgrounds sharing the same experience.

From there we grew to the Islamic Women's Association of Queensland at that time. The Islamic Women's Association of Queensland grew. We were managing to provide services and to give opportunities to Muslim women and women from multicultural backgrounds. From having a few people working, we now have more than 450 to 500. The majority of them—90 per cent of women—have found an opportunity to work with IWAA. We have offices in Sydney, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Toowoomba and Melbourne.

We try to empower women to stand up for their rights. Every time we put our head up something happens. We had September 11. How did September 11 affect us? We were in the office, which is in a neighbourhood, and from the first day the neighbours started calling us names and telling us to go back where we came from. Too many women experience incidents. One of my colleagues was in the car and someone just threw a cup of coffee in her face. Too many of us are being ambushed in a corner, in a car park, on a train or on the bus. Some of them pull the hijab. There is a lot of experience which impacts and affects young people. Imagine a woman coming back shaking and crying and a young boy of 12 or 15—they feel like a second-class person. That impacts on them. They are not going to get anywhere in this country.

There are stories of a young woman at school wearing the hijab and her hair is tied back and the teacher told her, 'You have a tumour on your brain,' just because she had her hair behind her. Another incident was when girls were walking and the teacher was calling them and they did not hear her. The teacher said, 'Of course you cannot hear because you are wearing this thing on your head and you cannot hear me.' There are too many stories, as I said, that show women feel unsafe and feel that they are not first class, whether it be an employment issue or at school or elsewhere.

Why are they not reporting that or the reporting is very minimal? Simply because either they do not know where to go and how to do it or they fear that they are going to be discriminated more, especially students, or they think what is the point: 'We talk and nothing happens,' like brother Ali experienced. What is the outcome? Nothing. We have too many incidents. Messages are left on our phones telling us to 'go back where you came from'. We get letters quoting the Bible saying, 'This is not the place you should be in.' Graffiti is on our cars. Because our car is identified as a Muslim organisation car, we get graffiti that says, 'Go the f back to where you come from.'

The law is very weak to protect women. Women are easily identified. One story is very important. As I said, there are some Muslim women who are not wearing hijab. They are Bosnian or Albanian. Because people think they are European like them or not from a Muslim background, often they hear people talk about Islam very badly. They feel embarrassed and they want either to stand and say they are Muslim or to walk away or they just feel very bad and not say anything. This impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of these people.

CHAIR: Thanks, Galila.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you to each of you for coming today and for taking the time out of your busy day to help us better understand what is happening in your communities. The focus of our inquiry is to try to find a pathway forward, to try to make sure we are doing better in this space as a parliament and as a community. I am keen to hear from each of you as to what you think could be improved, both in the law and in our community.

We have heard from other submitters that potentially what might help is if we were to create an aggravated offence—so a circumstance of aggravation within our legislation—so that hate crime or serious vilification can be identified as part of a charge as a circumstance of aggravation. I am keen to hear whether or not you think that is something that might help. I am also keen to hear whether or not you think changing legislation would improve the circumstance that you were talking about with people not wanting to report, with people feeling like nothing is going to happen anyway if they do.

Mr Kadri: It is important that we identify these incidents for what they are in the legislation for multiple reasons. One is to provide assurance in the community that these incidents are going to be taken seriously—that these offences are not just like petty crime or any other offence. It is a specific class of offence and the motivations of the offenders are different to a person who would simply harm someone for other reasons.

The other important issue is that, because of the lack of identification of these kinds of incidents, we are not able to collect data in this state. We do not know how many incidents of hate crime have taken place in a certain period of time because we are not classifying them as hate crime or vilification

and so forth. I think special allowance within the legislation to identify these crimes for what they are will allow us to gauge the growth of these incidents and apply proper strategies through legislation and deterrence to legislation or through educational programs which create a better social cohesion.

While legislation is a strong indicator that government is taking this seriously and people who are committing these crimes will not go unpunished for what they are doing, it is also important for us as a the society, and most importantly the decision-makers in the parliament, to know the extent of the problem the community is facing. We would strongly suggest within the legislation to be able to identify these kinds of crimes, whether it is vilification, hate crime and so forth. It will make us more socially cohesive and it will provide a strong deterrence against any such crimes.

Mr Jamal: If those laws are embedded then we need police to be trained to identify them and also then support the people who are reporting these crimes to get those statistics up and have more impact in terms of the regularity of the crime itself.

Ms Abdelsalam: Technology now can easily identify people on the road or on the street. One of the reasons women decline to report it is that they are concerned that no-one will believe them. There are cameras everywhere now. They can use this technology to pick up the image of what happened. They can address it in the proper act to note that it is assault or discrimination or vilification against the person.

Ms BOLTON: You have all mentioned education. In the last couple of years, have you seen any initiatives or programs that are educational in this space, either from the state or the Commonwealth government?

Mr Kadri: I think there are attempts to create better social cohesion but they are mostly targeted towards counterterrorism, if you like. They have always surrounded diverse communities or Muslim communities in particular being a problem rather than anti-discrimination, hate crimes and vilification. We have not seen a program particularly—I could be wrong; I may have missed some. I do not think there are any effective and efficient longstanding programs which target hate crime, vilification and discrimination against the migrant communities or multicultural communities.

Mr Jamal: In my experience there has been a lot of interaction between the QPS or the AFP but not education programs as such, not even interaction with many MPs and state government officials at all three levels of government. In terms of interaction, I can only talk on behalf of the Muslim community. We meet at the same forums with other multicultural community leaders as well. I think for me that has been an eye-opener in that everybody is so approachable and we can talk to them. In terms of education programs, I am not aware of any.

Ms BUSH: Ali, in your situation with the common assault charge, I am interested in the prosecution and whether there was a prosecution and how you felt about that or whether the perpetrator demonstrated remorse. I am interested in understanding how that worked.

Mr Kadri: That was not the first incident which my family faced. I think I am so disappointed with the system that I had decided not to press charges to make a point about charging someone with common assault when their intention was to vilify my community and scare a nine-year-old and throw wine on us. I am sad to say, but I do not have the trust in current legislation to effectively address it. That person, who had other criminal history, would have just taken that as one more charge without any particular program.

To bring your attention to the legislation we have enacted since 11 September, we have over 60 or 70 pieces of legislation in counterterrorism and we are yet to really seriously think at creating legislation which addresses vilification and hate crime. I think it is time now to do so. Without it, the community will lose trust in the system, as I said particularly me. I decided not to as a matter of protest.

Ms BUSH: That is a good example.

CHAIR: That brings this session to an end. I thank you for your attendance today and for taking time out of your busy schedules to be with us.

BIRRELL, Mr Dan, Senior Manager, Participation, Clubs, Community and Competitions, Football Queensland

CROGER, Mrs Ana, State Integrity Manager, Football Queensland

CHAIR: I now welcome witnesses from Football Queensland. During your evidence today, we ask that you refrain from using unparliamentary language such as swearing or offensive terms, even if you are quoting a third party or something you have heard, seen or read. I thank you for your cooperation on that. Would you like to make an opening statement, after which committee members will have questions?

Mrs Croger: Thank you for the opportunity to be present at this public hearing and to brief the committee on this important issue. Football Queensland is charged with administering the sport of football in Queensland. It is the world game. It is the single most watched and participated in sport around the world across cultures, and it is really a universal language. Sport—and football is no exception—is one of the foundations of Australian society, and its values and benefits are far-reaching, providing physical and mental health benefits along with social, economic and cultural benefits that connect communities from diverse backgrounds together to build skills, relationships, networks and friendships. Sport is often described as the great leveller in any community. With support and capability, members of the community have access to playing sport from grassroots to elite levels.

We would like to today endorse the Brisbane Lions submission, and as a sporting partner of Multicultural Australia we would like to support their recommendations and expand on these with our statement and examples in our sport. I would like to seek permission to table for the committee some examples on this issue in our sport.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted. The only thing I will add is that sometimes when we receive documents there may be some information that we need to delete.

Mrs Croger: We have redacted any identifications.

CHAIR: We might have to do some further redactions.

Mrs Croger: That is fine. We believe it is important that there is effective legislation but, more importantly, effective responses at all level of governments as well as community agencies and private sectors to work together to report and respond to instances appropriately. Serious racial vilification is not uncommon in sport. We are here as one of a collective of four sporting codes to share the importance of considering the damaging effects it has on players, staff, volunteers, patrons and officials in our sports. The impacts are far-reaching on community social cohesion and can have significant adverse mental health effects on victims and their communities.

We as sporting organisations and elite clubs would like government to endorse a capability-building, positive community campaign that aims to stamp out racial vilification in sport at every level. Thank you for your time and this opportunity for a special hearing from these sporting organisations and clubs. We appreciate the chance for having a collective voice.

CHAIR: Thank you. Dan, would you like to add anything?

Mr Birrell: I have nothing further to add from that avenue. For us it is probably about sharing some of the stories, anecdotes and examples we have in our sport and working collectively towards a solution.

CHAIR: On that aspect of working towards a solution, do you have any suggestions on how to deal with this?

Mr Birrell: Absolutely. As part of this process as well, there are four recommendations coming out of it. A key one for us would be law reform for online social media platforms. Some of the key examples that we have proffered today have been as a result of social media and perhaps the lack of education, especially in a younger cohort—from potentially 12-year-olds and up. Some of the examples we have seen throughout this year in my experience are more just education based, which would segue into recommendation 2 which is better education in schools. That is about supporting schools to implement education policies that further shed light on and increase awareness around what words and terms are I guess discriminatory in nature as well as racially motivated.

CHAIR: Are these examples that you have provided to the committee on the clubs' social media pages or on the individual's pages?

Mrs Croger: They are often on individuals. They can be on clubs and they can be on commentary on club pages. We have a process for dealing with these types of matters when they are reported to us and if they are reported to us. Certainly, we are taking a very proactive approach in

terms of getting onto these matters very quickly and making sure there is a cultural change within sport where people are finding that there is some sort of process that will follow and a disciplinary procedure so that word gets out of what is acceptable and not acceptable both on and off the field.

CHAIR: There two aspects you have raised there. The first is monitoring the clubs' pages. Do the clubs have a mechanism whereby when someone posts something it does not immediately go up but it is vetted by the organisation, or is that one task too hard?

Mrs Croger: I think you would find there are a variety of clubs using a variety of ways that you can and cannot post on their social media. Some would be vetted and some you can post on community pages, I would suggest.

Mr Birrell: Further to Ana's point, it probably speaks volumes around where, as community sport, some of our clubs sit in terms of resourcing. We obviously have clubs that are volunteer run by one or two people and then there are clubs that are run by 20 and are effectively million dollar businesses that have those processes in place where a comment has to go through an approval process prior to being posted.

CHAIR: It is a resource issue for some of the clubs?

Mr Birrell: Absolutely.

Mr POWELL: What you have shared is disgusting and despicable and has no place on the sporting field or in community, full stop. As someone who has grown up around football all of my life and with five kids all participating and my wife as the president of our local soccer club and on the executive of the Sunshine Coast Churches Soccer Association, what we are discovering and finding is that it is actually emblematic of a broader issue of abuse to particularly volunteers, referees, other players and other coaches. Should this be something that stands alone around vilification and hate, which is despicable, or should it be part of a broader community education program around respect of everyone? Do you have any input on that?

Mrs Croger: That is a very good question. You will see that I am on the program again today in about an hour. I do integrity work across sport, and we are absolutely seeing an increase in member protection issues and other issues across sport, particularly coming out of COVID. We are seeing an increase in difficulties between people in society broadly. Certainly, in this particular forum and on this particular matter, we are seeing increased racial vilification issues. I think there is a broader conversation around respect, but I think this particular matter also needs to be dealt with quite separately. We need to have a very strong legislative approach to this and a broader education piece, because I think there are a whole lot of young people who actually do not realise that what they are doing is unacceptable. I think education is critical around what is and is not acceptable.

Mr POWELL: It is partly because it is their parents who are educating them and demonstrating the poor behaviour.

Mr Birrell: In regard to Ana's point, we have tabled this morning a number of social media posts but many of these are not just from player to player. I wanted to make the point that a lot of the education needs to go further than players and clubs: it is spectators to spectators, spectators to referees, players to referees. I agree with Ana's point in regard to specifically tailoring it to racial vilification, but there is definitely a wider respect issue. Whether that is just player to player or players to referees and spectators involved, that is a concern as well.

To your point on education, what I have found is that, through some of these measures we have put in place and some disciplinary action—I can only speak obviously subjectively about where we have viewed them—the education has actually occurred from the ages of 18 to 25 when it should have occurred from the ages of 12 to 18.

Mr POWELL: Or eight to 12.

Mr Birrell: Or eight to 12—even younger, as soon as people are aware of what their words mean and what ramifications they have. As I said, there are plenty of 25-year-olds we have had conversations with who still at that point are not realising but then have become educated at that age.

Mrs Croger: I think also that disciplinary process does assist. I had a young boy recently who said something off the cuff on the field and the investigation process assisted him in understanding that it was unacceptable. He wrote a beautiful apology. It is having that process we can run to educate these kids that is sufficiently scary so they do not want to do it again.

Mr POWELL: In terms of the legislative reform that we are considering, there have been a couple of options put to the committee but there is one that a lot of people seem to support. If there were punches thrown on a football field, that would be investigated as assault. If there were punches

thrown on a football field because someone racially vilified someone else or made a hate crime, then it gets aggravated and it actually becomes an offence in the next tier up. Is that something that you have a comment on, whether there should be separate laws or whether we just add that aggravating factor of vilification and hate crime? The answer can be that you do not have an opinion and you will leave it to us.

Mr Birrell: I do not necessarily have an opinion, but I would think that if there is racial motivation to the act then that potentially is an aggravating factor, yes. One of the examples we did table—probably goes further into what you are speaking to—was a comment that a player made to another player, and the player very rightly said, 'If you say that again, I don't know how else to react but physically or to push you.' With any form of assault, there needs to be aggravating factors around how things have happened.

Mr HUNT: Let me walk back a little bit in history. When I was going through university, I had a job in a detached bottle shop and I used to walk past a particular leagues club every weekend on my way to work. I would be walking past on a Sunday afternoon a lot of the time, in time for the junior sports, and some of the commentary that I heard coming from the sidelines would just curl the hairs in your nose. Some of it was just abuse of players. I say 'just', but some of it was abuse of players and referees that you would hear at a sporting venue and some of it was directed at some of the players who were quite clearly of Pacific Islander origin and that sort of thing; it was quite clearly racially motivated. It has been quite some time, more years than I care to admit, since I was at uni, but are there sufficient safeguards and protections in place now, do you think, to address that sort of behaviour?

Mrs Croger: I think sport has come a long way in terms of its member protection frameworks and codes of conduct. We have very robust processes around member protection and discrimination. Football has an anti-discrimination policy, a member protection policy and a code of conduct. There is a robust process to deal with those types of behaviours, and that includes spectators. It is whether it is reported or not. We cannot act on things that we do not know about. If it is reported, we have a very clear process and clear disciplinary measures to deal with that type of behaviour in football in Queensland.

Mr HUNT: Who deals with it on the day? In the very first instance, when the incident occurs, the onus is on whom to report it and then who deals with it on that day, in that very first instance?

Mr Birrell: In regards to an incident occurring on game day, if it occurred off the field it is generally a club member. Before a game is played in any shape or form in Queensland for Football Queensland, we have a ground and a match official and they are responsible for the facilitation of the fixture. So if it is to occur in the spectators, it would be the ground and match official. We have an incident reporting form which has been distributed widely to clubs; they will report the incident there. This is obviously subjective in nature: if it is deemed that police presence is required, that would be their call to make. The other thing is we have two emergency phone numbers where if they needed to call Football Queensland or report it on the day then that process would be followed and we would give them the appropriate steps in terms of conflict resolution or critical incident management.

If it is to occur on the field then it would take the player reporting it to the referee or the referee hearing it. In that regard, it would be the referee who is reporting it as well through that incident mechanism, or off the field it would be a ground or match official with the club.

Ms BUSH: I take on board your views about legislative change and education reform. However, as Football Queensland, which is a large organisation with resources, I am interested in what you are doing to drive this. I think what we have heard as a committee is that it is actually all of our responsibility and, particularly in a sporting arena, there is something about that space that makes it safe for people to make comments. I am interested in what you are doing to proactively drive reporting and action such as banning notices for people who participate in that type of behaviour.

Mr Birrell: In the last of couple of years throughout Queensland we have attempted to run a respect round or a racial awareness round to further raise awareness in that regard. The other key one for us is running education sessions and not only having resources on the website but also running webinars and online forums with the ability to disseminate information to clubs and participants. Furthermore, we have the mailing list of every registered participant to send EDMs and messages to reiterate those education pieces and raise awareness in that regard. That would be the pre-emptive action or the proactive response for us. The reactive response revolves around our disciplinary processes in making sure that, in terms of an incident occurring, we are resolving it through our process.

Ms BUSH: How many spectators have been banned for making racist comments? We have all heard that it is occurring.

Mr Birrell: If I am honest, in this year alone it would be in the single digits. It does come around reporting as well, so if it is not reported and/or people are not comfortable reporting that the incidence has occurred then, yes, it obviously does not reach us. There have been spectators banned because of racial comments. I would say it is in the single figures.

Mrs Croger: There was a disciplinary outcome to every single one of those examples we have provided to you. If we have the information, we run a process and there will be a disciplinary outcome.

Ms BUSH: You proactively push out notifications encouraging people to report through the mailing lists that you have just mentioned?

Mr Birrell: Absolutely, yes.

Ms BUSH: How often would you do that, do you think?

Mr Birrell: Probably quarterly.

CHAIR: That concludes this session. Thank you for coming today and giving evidence to the committee.

**CROWELL, Mr Andrew, Player Excellence and Wellbeing Manager, Brisbane Lions
(via videoconference)**

WELLINGTON, Mr Andrew, Chairman, Brisbane Lions (via videoconference)

CHAIR: Welcome. During evidence today we ask that you refrain from using unparliamentary language such as swearing or offensive terms, even if you are quoting from another person and not necessarily swearing for the sake of it. I thank you for your cooperation in that regard. I invite either both or one of you to make an opening statement, after which the committee will have some questions for you.

Mr Wellington: Thank you very much for allowing us to speak. We have a letter of support of our submission from AFL Queensland. I think Vanessa Fabre from Multicultural Australia, who is one of our partners, had some copies. If it is permissible by the committee, we would like to submit that as well.

CHAIR: Do I have leave of the committee? Leave is granted.

Mr Wellington: While that is being distributed, I will ask Andrew Crowell to speak initially. Andrew is here representing Indigenous players.

Mr Crowell: Our Indigenous players have asked me to represent them today as they are unable to attend due to their AFL commitments. In my role I have seen the devastating impact racism has had on our players, their partners and their families. To witness and work with our players regularly as they deal with the disgusting and vile online racial abuse aimed at not only themselves but also their young children is one of the more confronting elements to my role. Our Indigenous players and their families are frustrated, hurt and tired of being targeted by abuse based on the colour of their skin and it is time for it to stop. Our players have shown immense maturity in the manner in which they respond to online racial abuse by offering and encouraging people to educate themselves in this space. They have played their role over recent years, sharing details of their personal stories, culture and the effects of racism on many occasions. Unfortunately, they believe there needs to be further measures in place to protect them and their loved ones.

Mr Wellington: I wanted to say a few words to give some context to our submission. Certainly at the elite level of AFL, over an extended period of time, we think we have made good progress in reducing instances of racial vilification in an on-field setting and from the crowd. We are certainly not where we would want to be in the sense that any incident is one incident too many, but we have seen significant improvement, we think. That has come largely through a combination of education—firstly, educating people around the impact comments have on others and educating people about the merits in other people's cultures and experiences—and accountability, the fact that we have been able to hold people accountable for their actions by calling out inappropriate behaviour and, in some places, where appropriate, applying penalties or sanctions.

Our submission has focused primarily on the impact of social media because that is an area where we have not been able to make significant progress. It is an area of continual frustration for us and hurt and pain for our players and families who are impacted. That is why our submission has primarily focused on two elements: education and accountability. Recommendations 2 and 3 in our submission are at the heart of education—educating people around the history and culture of others, and we think education of that will bring a level of respect that will mitigate these instances.

Recommendations 1 and 4 are about accountability. We appreciate there is a lot of complexity around trying to hold people accountable on social media. Even if we can bring down accounts or have accounts taken down, that does not necessarily mean we can identify the individual or individuals behind the accounts and they may well pop up somewhere else. We also appreciate that that may not primarily be a state responsibility and it may require cooperation from multiple jurisdictions. Nevertheless, we think it is a really important point or issue for the committee to consider. That is all I really wanted to say in terms of giving some context to our submission and we would be very happy to take any questions that you have.

CHAIR: This may be something you are unable to comment on, but I was interested in the matter of Taylor Walker from the Adelaide Crows. My understanding is purely based on media reports, so I am always hesitant to put full faith in what I read or hear, but is it the case, if you are able to comment, that that incident was reported by one of the players or officials? It is just not clear how.

Mr Wellington: I emphasise that I am here representing the Brisbane Lions club, so I was not directly involved in that incident, but my understanding is that that incident was reported by an official from the club Taylor Walker was part of, the Adelaide Crows. It was reported by an official from his club.

CHAIR: That obviously was dealt with internally, because the fine and the ban on playing were issued by the club itself?

Mr Wellington: No. I believe the ban on playing was issued by the AFL, by the governing body. Obviously the club had a role to play in recording the incident. I commend the club. It is a maturity in the system in that, while everyone regrets that the incident happened, the club had the maturity to report something that had happened within their own club.

CHAIR: If something like that occurred here, say at the Gabba, is there a similar process in place?

Mr Wellington: There is a process in place. It depends on the circumstances and who was involved—whether it was a crowd member or whether it was a player making a comment against another player. Fortunately, in my time at the club we have not had that happen. Typically, for the items we have pointed out in our submission, which are around social media, we would refer those to the AFL integrity unit. The AFL has an integrity unit that is able to follow up with the relevant jurisdiction. Obviously, we are part of the national competition. Some of these things are not necessarily said online by someone who might be Queensland based. It would be reported to the AFL integrity unit. We would then try and establish whether or not the perpetrator was a member of our club. If they are a member, we are able to remove them as a member. We are able to recommend to them that they undertake some sort of cultural awareness training for their own benefit. That would be the process we follow. At the moment, we are looking at strengthening some of the terms in our constitution to make it clearer as to our right to remove from our membership group members who behave in that way.

CHAIR: Is there anything in a player's contract to deal with this issue? Is that something you are not allowed to talk about?

Mr Wellington: The AFL has a code of conduct and all clubs sign up to that code of conduct. There is a requirement, not just for the players but also for me as an official. I have to commit to abide by that code of conduct. If I was to be in breach, if a player was to be in breach or if Andrew was to be in breach of that code of conduct, we would be subject to sanctions from the AFL. It would be a separate issue for the club to consider what sanctions the club might also apply, but we would certainly be subject to sanctions from the AFL for breaching the code of conduct.

Mrs GERBER: My question is in relation to crimes and legislation. I will give a practical example. If someone spits on someone else that is an assault, but if they spit on someone else because of the way they look, their religious affiliation or their sexual orientation, that is vilification or a hate crime. Has the Lions club used the law? I understand you have processes around disciplinary proceedings, but in terms of an assault being committed—or when you were talking about using social media, have you ever used the provision of using a carriage service to menace or harass? Have you pursued criminal or other proceedings within the law in relation to hate crimes and vilification?

Mr Wellington: We have certainly considered whether it is appropriate to. I cannot say categorically whether in the last two to three years we have gone to the extent of issuing it through the law. I do not believe that we have. Again, to help try and bring that to life thorough an example, when some of these incidents that we have referred to come to light, we will contact the AFL integrity unit. We will work with them. They will work with us and the police in the relevant jurisdictions to consider whether or not there is a measure we can take under the law. We will have a discussion with the police and understand what options are available to us.

We did have an example—it was not racially based—where a fan was inappropriately trying to make contact with a player and invading their privacy, effectively. We did work with the police to understand what actions we could take to ensure the safety of the player in that instance. As I say, that was not racially based. To answer your question, the answer is, yes, we will work with police to work out what can be done. Obviously in social media, quite often it is difficult for the police to identify who the perpetrator is.

Mrs GERBER: Part of what we have heard from other community organisations throughout the whole process of this inquiry is that either they do not report to police because of what is going to happen as a result of that and they cannot see that there is an appropriate outcome, or they are dissatisfied with the way the law is able to deal with what has happened to them. The reason I ask is: you are a well-resourced organisation, and if you are having difficulty using the law to remedy those situations then what chance does someone who is already marginalised and in a category that does not have the resources to be able to pursue it have? One of the options presented to the committee in relation to trying to plough the way forward is to have hate crime or serious vilification as an aggravating circumstance of what is already an offence in either the Criminal Code or the Crimes Act, depending on the final report out of this. Considering you have not utilised the law, is that something that would ever be used by the Lions club?

Mr Wellington: I would not say that we have never used the law in the sense that we have consulted with the law. We will go through the AFL process. The AFL will decide on escalation. We have certainly used the law where it involves misbehaviour at a game. It was not racially based, but it was physically threatening behaviour against other patrons.

To come back to your proposition, anything that would allow the law to more effectively respond to some of these incidents would be a positive thing. I am not trying to be critical of the law. The law are very open to having discussions with us when we have had to. It is more about just their ability under current laws to then do something about it.

It is interesting that you make the point about people's ability to report things relative to our sophistication. That is part of our recommendations—I think recommendation 3—where there is an education process to perhaps help people understand how they might be better able to report these instances: where do they go; who can help them; who can help them navigate their way through these things? People probably think it is just too hard to report.

CHAIR: That brings to a conclusion this part of the hearing. Thank you, gentlemen, for your input and for the evidence you have given today. I hope your Friday goes well and good luck for any games on the weekend.

Mr Wellington: Thank you very much Thank you for your time.

CROGER, Ms Ana, General Counsel, Head of Policy and Integrity, Netball Queensland and Queensland Firebirds

WILSON, Mr Lee, Manager, Diamond Spirit, Diversity and Inclusion, Netball Queensland

CHAIR: Good morning. Ana and Lee, I remind you about not using unparliamentary language, offensive words or swearing. I invite you to make a short opening statement.

Ms Croger: Again, thank you for the opportunity to brief the committee. We are from Netball Queensland and the Queensland Firebirds. This is slightly different from the last time you heard from me. Netball is fortunate to have very few examples of racial vilification. In fact, in the past 12 months I do not think I have had any reported racial vilification issues. We felt it was really important that we stand strong with our other sporting partners in this forum and talk to you a bit more about what we are doing in a proactive space in this environment, given we have limited cases of racial vilification that have come to us at a state level.

We are really committed to taking a proactive approach to diversity and inclusion. We have a board appointed diversity and inclusion subcommittee with delegated authority to support the strategic objectives of netball and the board. In 2020 we partnered with Multicultural Australia and four state sporting bodies, taking a really collaborative approach in breaking down barriers and cultural bias within our community. Connecting Through Sport specifically focuses on greater opportunities for migrant and refugee communities.

In 2021 we appointed our First Nations advisory committee. That really supports our strategic direction to better engage our First Nations community. We employed a dedicated reconciliation adviser to develop and implement our RAP. We have recently released our position statement on diversity and inclusion which really outlines and emphasises our zero tolerance approach to any form of bias within the netball community. We also have a framework in place to manage complaints and issues of this nature—our member protection and code of conduct framework—which is similar to other sports.

As a collective, our sporting community stands really firm on the recommendations that the Lions have put forward. We have to take a proactive approach in addressing racism within our community. The recommendations presented by the Brisbane Lions, with adequate government investment to support the initiatives, will have a significant impact on culturally diverse communities and will allow sport to properly deliver appropriate education, from grassroots to high performance, and to really shift the societal issue that is racial vilification and discrimination.

Mr Wilson: I will just add a little about my background for some context. I have been with Netball Queensland for six years, working in the inclusion and diversity space. Prior to that I was with the Australian Sports Commission for 11 years, in the Northern Territory. I have a significant amount of experience working with First Nations communities. On a personal level, we have a multicultural family. I have a daughter from China. From watching her growing up, particularly in the last 18 months with the racial issues against Asian communities, and having to answer questions from a 15-year-old-girl on why this is happening in our community, my passion is for change and equity for change. I think sport is well placed to be able to support the change that we are all trying to achieve.

Mr POWELL: Thanks again for your time this morning. I find it interesting particularly, Ana, given you were just here with Football Queensland and we are talking about two incredibly participative sports. Probably football is the highest and netball is the highest female participative sport, yet you are not seeing the same issues that football is. I do not want to lessen the issue by trying to ask what you put that down to, but is it simply that there is less testosterone on the court than there is on the field or are there other factors you have considered as to why you are not seeing what we are seeing in other codes of sport?

Ms Croger: I have thought a lot about it. I do integrity issues across sport. Doping is similar, where you see it in some sports and not others. Wagering is the same, where there are certain sports that are more targeted. I think it would make a fabulous research project, if anyone wants to fund it, to look at the nexus between integrity issues and the different types of sports. I think that would be a really interesting project. We have integrity issues that are different in different sports. I am not quite sure what the answer is or why that is. I do not know if it is not reported in netball or it is just bitchy snide remarks on the court—

Mr Wilson: Or on social media.

Ms Croger:—or on social media that do not necessarily get reported up to the state organisation. I am not sure what the answer is. As I said, in the last 12 months I have not had a racial vilification issue in netball. I do not believe that is to say that it is not occurring out there on the courts. I would say it is. It is just being dealt with maybe at that level and not coming up to the state sporting body. I am not sure of the answer. I would love to know, though.

Mr POWELL: Lee, if it is not occurring or if it is occurring but it is being managed locally, are there learnings that netball is able to provide some of the other codes as to how they are developing that spirit that in some ways is acting as a prevention or an early intervention in this?

Mr Wilson: It is an interesting one. Maybe it is because in female sports the incidents are not getting to the level where it is a racial criminal offence. Anecdotally, I think there is still that undercurrent of unconscious bias in the netball community that probably does not get reported. We were talking about the example from last night of parents making comments of African nation girls being too aggressive on the court and they should go back and play their own sport. That particular comment was made in front of the sister of one of the girls. That is not a criminal offence and it is probably not reported on. The sideline behaviour, I feel, is still an issue in netball.

The solution—and it comes back to what all the other sports have talked about—is education and having adequate resources for the volunteers who are having to deal with this sideline behaviour. At the end of the day, you have people for whom it is difficult to have that confrontation with someone over something that might be racist. I think that is probably the key. It is recommendation No. 2, I think, that the Lions have made that netball could really benefit from.

Ms Croger: Probably the only other thing I would add is that I think there is far more cultural diversity in football than there would be in netball.

Mr POWELL: I do not see it when I turn up. I see a lot of cultural diversity when I turn up to, say, a Caboolture game. I get that in football you have whole teams from one cultural background.

Ms Croger: Yes, that is right, so you probably do not have that so much in netball.

Mr POWELL: There is an element of that.

Ms Croger: I hope we do one day, though.

Mr Wilson: We are working towards it. It is happening.

Mr POWELL: All I would say to the parent who made that comment, Lee, is that clearly they have not seen my kids play sport, including my daughter. They are jolly aggressive as well.

Mr Wilson: I am heading up to Aurukun and Weipa next week. Yesterday I had a conversation with a teacher about my trip. Her comment was, 'I know a lot of teachers who have gone up there. They have to learn to run quickly or ride their bike quickly and make sure they lock everything up.' I have just gone, 'Yeah, but they're a great bunch of kids as well,' and let that sit with her. It is those unconscious bias comments that in my role I hear a lot of.

Ms BOLTON: Ana, throughout all these hearings we have heard about the role of social media. In your integrity role across codes, have you heard of different codes utilising different methods? We have heard where you can turn comments off. We have heard about filtering. Have you heard or seen anything that has made a difference within a sport online or on social media?

Ms Croger: That is actually very interesting, because in the break I looked at the new High Court ruling on discrimination. I think that will make a massive difference. The first thing I thought of is that I need to get that out to let clubs and associations know that they will be held accountable for any comments that are published. I have only just seen that in the past five minutes. I think that will make a difference because there will have to be some monitoring of those. If they are going to be held accountable, there is going to have to be some monitoring of social media accounts.

In my role, all of the codes of conduct that I deal with across sport have a social media position statement in the member protection policy and also a social media section in the code of conduct itself. That is probably how I would manage a social media incident. Again, I think social media is a really tricky one. It is a really hard one to regulate because you have personal accounts and you have public accounts. How you have a robust framework around that is going to be hard.

CHAIR: I agree with you, Ana. When you try to think about it and talk about it and try to sort out a solution, you can go down many different channels and still end up without a creative or informed way of dealing with it. My view is that perhaps people like Facebook and other platforms, with their enormous resources—we are not talking about companies that are struggling to make ends meet—need to step up and take some responsibility.

Ms Croger: I absolutely have not seen companies like Facebook take steps in a broader context that are socially responsible. I think the only way that has happened—and this is totally my opinion and not representing any sport—is through government legislation. We have seen that in the US.

Ms BUSH: I will come back to the same comment that I made earlier. Notwithstanding there are broader social issues that need to be addressed, I am interested in this. From your perspective, you are in a position of power and control. You hold these people's memberships as a player or as a spectator. What stops you? The example you gave was a good one of a comment that is not an overt comment but that is definitely in the realm of inappropriate. I do not mean to make that sound accusatory. I am genuinely interested in what is the barrier for someone pulling that woman up, taking her aside and saying, 'Listen, this comment was overheard. It is actually not appropriate. We will be writing to you and if it occurs again, unfortunately, we will not let you come to the stadium'?

Ms Croger: Nothing stops us. Certainly if I was around I would absolutely take that step. Our volunteers across sport have a lot of pressure on them. Those are people who work full-time. They have kids. I have three kids, I work full-time and I am the manager of the Rugby team and the manager of the cricket team. You are not always in a place where you are educated or have the capacity to know how to manage a situation like this. It is a big ask to be confrontational on the sideline of your kid's sport.

Ms BUSH: I think that is kind of where I am getting to. Something is obviously stopping people, and it sounds like maybe it is a lack of clear direction, a lack of training and a lack of just knowing how to actually say it.

Ms Croger: It is knowing how to approach it. The education piece is critical, in my view. We educate people on what is appropriate and what is not appropriate and then how to deal with it. Mum and dad who do not deal with complaints or integrity issues every day, like I do, do not want to be doing this and do not know how to do it. They do not have the skill set.

Ms BUSH: In all of your experience, of which you both have a lot, have you seen a program in any jurisdiction where a sport has done particularly well, like posters that are put up that say, 'This is not okay. If you hear it, parents, we give you permission to call it out as a bystander'? I am interested if there is anything around.

Mr Wilson: Play by the Rules a couple of years ago put out a really good promotional activity called Let Kids Be Kids. It was really powerful stuff. I get goosebumps even thinking about those kids saying, 'Hey, Mum and Dad, just leave it alone.'

Ms BUSH: Yes, I remember.

Mr Wilson: The challenge is rolling that down to the grassroots level. We use it as a state sporting body, but getting it down to the grassroots was probably where it did not hit the mark. Certainly as far as content goes, it was really powerful content.

CHAIR: Something just occurred to me while you were talking about that. For example, at some of the Rugby League games at Suncorp they will put up a warning not to go onto the field or if there is unruly behaviour you will be excluded from the ground. Do you think something along the lines of a public announcement to say that any racial or other vilification against spectators or players will not be tolerated would be helpful?

Ms Croger: I think elevating and educating this issue will always be beneficial. I do not know if that has actually made a change and that Rugby League has seen a change from doing that. I do not know the statistics around that. I am data driven and I would like to see the data around that. If they have then it is worth considering. I think any form of education where we explain to people what is okay and not okay behaviour and what the consequences are going to look like, and we give people the skill set to call it out, would be helpful. If that is working in Rugby League and there is data around that, I would love to hear about it.

Mr Wilson: I think it has to be multipronged. It has to be at national, state and grassroots levels and a coordinated approach. The other key to the education piece is the education system. Going to the comment of the member for Glass House about starting earlier, at year 7 and 8, age 7 and 8 is when the education needs to start around this issue because that is the next generation of kids coming through who will be hopefully driving the change.

CHAIR: That concludes this session. Thank you for your evidence today and thank you for coming along.

COHEN, Ms Renee, General Manager, Community and Game Performance, Gold Coast Titans (via videoconference)

CHAIR: Good morning. We ask that during your evidence you refrain from using unparliamentary language such as swearing or offensive terms, even if you are quoting someone else. I know that in general you would not be the type of person who swears in a public hearing but, if for example you were quoting from something you overheard or where someone had made a complaint, do not use the words that you may have heard or read for these purposes as it is regarded as being unparliamentary. I thank you in advance for your cooperation. I invite you to make a short opening statement, after which the committee will ask questions.

Ms Cohen: Thank you for allowing me to be present at the hearing and to brief the committee on this important issue. (Inaudible) game development at the Gold Coast Titans. Sport is one of the (inaudible) and its value (inaudible) are far-reaching, providing physical and mental health benefits along with social, economic and cultural benefits that connect communities from diverse backgrounds together to build skills, relationships, networks and friendships. Sport is often described as a great leveller in any community. With support and capability, members of the community have access to playing sport, from grassroots to progressing to elite levels.

We would like to endorse the Brisbane Lions submission and, as a sporting partner of Multicultural Australia, we would like to support their recommendation and expand on these with our statements and examples in our sporting club. In addition to these recommendations, we would firstly like to share some examples of programs run at our club. The Titans have created a player and staff advisory board called the Titans Cultural Collective. This group is made up of internal and external members to advise and lead the playing group around cultural topics and issues. Additionally, the Titans also have our reconciliation action plan and work with other organisations like the Preston Campbell Foundation to help eradicate racial vilification both in sport and in the greater society through our school based programs like Deadly Futures.

In addition to our various advisory working groups, the Titans participate in National Rugby League programs like In League In Harmony and the Racism. It Stops With Me campaign. These programs are an essential part of the education of racial vilification and how to eradicate it. The Titans follow the NRL inclusion and diversity strategy, which highlights the importance of cultural education and leadership. The Titans recognise that the barriers to inclusion are especially greater for those people from multicultural and Indigenous backgrounds.

We believe it is important that there be effective legislation but, more importantly, effective responses at all levels of government as well as community agencies and the private sector all working together to report and respond to instances appropriately. The impacts are far-reaching on community social cohesion and have significant adverse mental health effects on victims and their communities. We, as a national sporting code, would like the government to endorse a capacity-building, positive community campaign that aims to stamp out racial vilification in sport at every level.

Thank you so much for your time and the opportunity for a special hearing from our sporting organisations and clubs. We appreciate the chance for a collective voice.

Ms BOLTON: We have heard a lot through these hearings regarding the impacts of social media. With your Titans and your Cultural Collective program, have you experienced any vilification via your social media platforms? If you have, how have you managed that to decrease?

Ms Cohen: Yes, we have had racial vilification via our social media. We have a program in place where we work closely with the NRL Integrity Unit. It gets reported firstly to the club and then the club reports to the NRL. Then from there we work closely with the players and the party who has written unfortunately the offensive things on social media to work on a conciliation process through our Titans Cultural Collective. On the Titans Cultural Collective sit 17 different members from different countries and their community leaders within the Gold Coast. We work with them along with the party that has written these unfortunate words to educate and essentially reconcile how we can work through this and how collectively the game can help these people understand the impact that racism has on our players and the community.

Ms BOLTON: Has there been any measurement of the success of that? You probably do not know how long you have had that in place, but do you have any data to indicate how successful that is?

Ms Cohen: We have had this program in place for the last four years, and for the last 18 months we have not experienced any reports from our players or staff of racial vilification.

Ms BOLTON: That is fantastic. Thank you so much.

Ms BUSH: In terms of the conferencing and that kind of mediation process, what are some of the direct and indirect benefits that you might have noticed in terms of the broader club community as well?

Ms Cohen: The benefits to the community have been amazing. I also notice the benefits to our players working with the Titans Cultural Collective. Many of these young men and young women—we now also have NRLW players who also (inaudible) from Pasifika communities. They have people they can work with who are from where they are from and can understand their customs and culture. I think the Titans Cultural Collective has been able to also impact on our playing group. Through the conciliation process between the player and the party that has unfortunately done what they have done, I have also watched how the players have grown in understanding how broad their impacts can be. (Inaudible) position where we have these players that these kids love and follow and want to look up to. The privilege is on us to make sure that our players are upstanding citizens and make sure they understand the impact they have on the community. Them standing up against racism hopefully filters down to the young kids who are coming through the system and they understand that it is important that we all stand up against this. We have watched our players grow, because they are definitely starting to understand their impact.

Ms BUSH: That is interesting. I was not sure if you had a women's team there. I am interested in that. Something I have heard from some of the submitters prior to you is that women particularly face some barriers in reporting some of the occurrences of vilification that they experience—not just vilification based on race or religion but vilification based on gender and gender identities. I am really interested in alternative reporting options. I was curious as to whether you hear in the change rooms if there is much conversation—not an official report, but do you pick up on the experience of women more broadly in an informal way as part of the club?

Ms Cohen: Yes, definitely. By way of background, this is the first year we have had an NRLW team. I do not know if you have seen, but unfortunately the season has had to be totally pushed back so they are not able to play this year. We have girls from New Zealand and Tonga who we have relocated to the Gold Coast in readiness for this competition to start. Two days before the competition was due to start, unfortunately it was pushed back. It has been pushed back twice now; it is not until next year.

As soon as the girls entered into our system, we introduced them to the Titans Cultural Collective. My concern from some feedback I had from the girls is that they felt they should just cop it; they should just understand that this is part of being a high-profile player within Rugby League. That is what we are there for: we are there as the Titans Cultural Collective to make them understand what the reporting process is and that it is not (inaudible). We have been really mindful of their culture and customs. Feedback from girls is that they just feel like one big family. They know about the reporting process. We have player education and welfare managers for both teams. Their normal immediate reporting process would be to the player education and welfare manager, and he or she then reports it up to our football manager. Luckily, so far we have not had any reports from our NRLW players, but they know that those systems are in place and they are ready for us to work together as a club to help them through any of those situations.

Ms BUSH: It is probably too early for you to comment, but I would be interested in, putting to the side race and religion, whether there is a strong theme around vilification based on gender.

Ms Cohen: At the moment they cannot train together as a team—they can only train in groups of four due to COVID restrictions—and they have not played a game yet. I think as we get further down the track we will be very aware of that and mindful of that situation. Last night we had our awards night and the girls were introduced to all of our corporates and sponsors as a group, but that is the first time they have been together since COVID (inaudible) come into play that we have been able to bring them together as a group.

CHAIR: Representatives of the Titans NRLW were here during the last sitting week for a function with the Friends of Rugby League. Mel McMahon is the co-chair, along with Tim Mander, of that group. It was good to see them here.

Ms Cohen: They are a wonderful group of girls. We are very lucky.

CHAIR: I know that this may be outside the terms of reference but it is something that occurred to me when speaking to earlier witnesses. Do you think public announcements at the games to announce that any abusive or racist slurs between spectators or between spectators and officials might be a subtle way of informing the public that such behaviour will not be tolerated?

Ms Cohen: Definitely. We have such a platform, with the audience there watching the game. I think it is (inaudible). We have tried it at our local club level. Running those messages at Gold Coast Rugby League worked well. I think it is great idea to be running it at the stadium also.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming along. It is very helpful to hear from people at the coalface in relation to what is happening in different areas of sport. Thank you for your hard work.

Proceedings suspended from 11.17 am to 11.35 am.

PROOF

FAWKES, Ms Janelle, DecrimQLD Campaign Leader, Respect Inc

JEFFREYS, Dr Elena, State Coordinator, Respect Inc

KIM, Ms Jules, Chief Executive Officer, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association (via videoconference)

CHAIR: Good morning. We ask that during these proceedings you refrain from using unparliamentary language such as swearing or offensive terms that contravene the standing orders of parliament. That is not to suggest that you would. Obviously, with the subject that we are dealing with, unfortunately profanities and derogatory remarks are used. To use them would be in breach of the standing orders. I thank you for your cooperation in that regard. I invite you to make an opening statement, after which we will ask some questions.

Dr Jeffreys: We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet today—the lands of the Turrbal and Jagera people, lands that have never been ceded.

Respect Inc is the Queensland sex worker organisation run for and by sex workers. Our organisation runs drop-in spaces, activities and offices in the Gold Coast, Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns. Crimes against sex workers go largely unreported. Sex workers often share their experiences with us and our organisation, and we have attempted in this submission to ensure the committee hears at least a sample of the lived experiences of vilification and hate crimes in Queensland.

The Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act makes vilification unlawful on the grounds of race, religion, sexuality or gender identity. Our submission recommends that grounds of vilification be expanded to include sex work and sex workers. Sex workers as individuals and as a group experience serious vilification and hate crimes at an excessive frequency in Queensland. Individuals and in some cases groups incite hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule of us as sex workers, including threats of physical harm, because we are sex workers. However, vilification and hate crimes against us—like those outlined in our submission—are currently not recognised as a crime. Even for sex workers who because of race, religion, sexuality or gender identity could make a complaint through the available processes, the criminalisation of sex work and the licensing system are a significant barrier to accessing rights. Historical and harmful laws and targeting by police means these cases go unreported and the system fails to provide protection for valued members of our community.

When these serious vilification and hate crimes against sex workers are not recognised as a crime and are unreported it contributes to a general awareness within the sex worker community that sex workers do not have the same protections as others in the Queensland community. People who perpetrate vilification and hate crimes are emboldened by this lack of legal protection, resulting in sex workers being an easy target with no recourse to address it, stop it or prevent it from reoccurring, with significant impacts on health, mental health, housing, custody of children, quality of life and safety. The Attorney-General has announced the intention to improve health, safety, human rights and legal protections for sex workers through a decriminalised framework. Vilification protection must sit alongside decriminalisation.

The timing of this review into serious vilification and hate crimes makes the inclusion of sex work and sex workers as grounds a critical step to provide sex workers protection and legal rights. Decriminalisation will, in part, address many of the barriers to sex workers accessing rights, but for decriminalisation to be successful sex workers also need protection from vilification on the grounds of being a sex worker or because we do sex work. That is the opening statements from Respect Inc. Thank you very much.

Ms Kim: Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee. Scarlet Alliance is the national peak body representing sex workers and sex worker organisations throughout Australia. As the decriminalisation of sex work is being undertaken in a number of jurisdictions in Australia as a (inaudible) change to protect the human rights of sex workers, it is clear that mechanisms to address discrimination and vilification are an essential change that facilitate sex workers' access to the benefits of decriminalisation.

In both Victoria and the Northern Territory, amendments to the anti-discrimination legislation have been incorporated into the decriminalisation implementation process. New South Wales is the first jurisdiction in the world to decriminalise sex work; however, it failed to implement anti-discrimination and vilification protection for sex workers. It is one of the jurisdictions that is now currently discussing amendments to the legislation to include sex workers. The bill before the New South Wales parliament names protected attributes 'sex work' and 'sex worker' in the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 and includes provisions to make vilification of sex workers unlawful. This

explicitly acknowledges that sex workers are at high risk of experiencing discrimination and vilification due to historical and current stigmas, including through past criminalisation, and that this is the only way to adequately protect sex workers and our families and associates.

The vilification sex workers experience is informed by a specific set of stigmas and stereotypes about sex work and sex workers. Perpetrators of such crimes, which include media, individuals and groups, see sex workers as easy targets whether because they consider us less than deserving of basic dignity or because they know that the crimes they commit are unlikely to be reported or challenged as we do not have these protections within the law. Community attitudes towards sex workers in Queensland will not change without a signal from the government that involvement in sex work does not strip a person of their rights to live free from harassment, violence and hatred. This is why sex work and sex worker must be included as a recognised ground for unlawful and serious vilification.

In order for members of the Queensland sex worker community to access such protections, action must also be taken to remove access barriers. Sex worker victims of discrimination and vilification risk revealing their legal identity (inaudible) through civil and criminal processes. This creates additional barriers to reporting. Legal name suppression through the whole process without the necessity for reapplication at each step is a necessity. That is, the ability to complain under a pseudonym and also appear by phone or video links should all be incorporated to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of both civil and criminal proceedings. Vilification and anti-discrimination protections must operate together with decriminalisation to prevent both systemic harm towards sex workers and harm caused by public acts. All three are required to deliver the rights afforded to other members of the Queensland community.

CHAIR: We will move to questions.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you for your appearance. I wanted to understand your submission in relation to the parameters of this inquiry. This inquiry is essentially into hate crimes and serious vilification and what can be done in a legislative space, a regulatory space or an education space in order to combat what is happening and some of the stories we have been hearing from the community. Can you tell me how your industry experiences hate crimes and serious vilification and what would be the best outcome from this inquiry in your experience in order to combat that, bearing in mind they are the parameters of our inquiry, not necessarily decriminalisation?

Ms Fawkes: I think we outlined to some degree within our submission the experiences of specifically sex workers from an Asian background in Queensland who are seriously and consistently targeted for racial vilification. That takes many forms, some of which we have included within our submission. It is our hope that, within the considerations of this committee, you will consider broadening the attributes or the grounds for vilification to specifically include sex work—I understand that is not specifically outside of the terms of reference—and also recognise that parts of our community who are effectively criminalised have very unique and specific barriers to accessing rights, even those outlined as available under the Anti-Discrimination Act. We have met with the Human Rights Commission in relation to these issues, but we understand that vilification has been peeled off and is being considered by this committee. We recognise that decriminalisation is another matter for another space, but we hope that you will not think that inquiry will address these issues. Our point is that vilification for sex workers, including Asian background sex workers, needs to be considered as part of this inquiry.

Dr Jeffreys: We definitely see the inclusion of protection from vilification and hate crime within your scope of this committee as being one plank of the broader human rights work that is being done in Queensland about sex work. It is because we are a community that has been vilified, discriminated against and criminalised for so long that this is a crucial element of that political change that is happening right now—being included as an attribute within human rights protections, being included as a grounds within vilification and hate crimes and the full decriminalisation of sex work, which is happening in another arena. That other arena does not have this topic in its terms of reference. In order to see that achieved, this is the committee and the space where it needs to be progressed.

Ms Kim: While we have not had an opportunity to share our submissions with other organisations, Scarlet Alliance and Respect have heard the testimonies of other witnesses and we want to express support for expanding protected attributes to refer to persons of HIV/AIDS status, sex characteristics, sexual expression, while also expanding the definition of gender identity to clearly include non-binary, gender-diverse people alongside the additional attributes of sex work and sex worker. I think there is a recognition in those other processes that are happening in other states that vilification by its very definition is something that sex workers experience, which we hope to outline with those examples in our submission. We need specific protections because currently it is not (inaudible).

Ms BUSH: Thank you for attending and congratulations on the work that you all do. This might not come out how I intend it to, but we have heard from a range of stakeholders and I am considering why sex workers—as one particular type of occupation—would be picked up explicitly and put in here. I would be keen to hear your views on that.

Dr Jeffreys: It is because of the longstanding, historic, stigmatised role that sex workers have occupied in the public imagination in Queensland for so long and the very real threats to sex worker human rights that have come about because of decades of criminalisation. We know that sex workers were experiencing extreme hate crimes in the 1960s. Sex workers brought that to parliament at the time. In the 1970s, sex workers brought that to parliament. In the 1980s, sex workers risked a lot to bring that to the attention of the Fitzgerald inquiry. We are sitting in a time of unfinished business on this topic, yet we are on the cusp of seeing those changes put into place.

Without these protections, decriminalisation just solves one part of the puzzle—which is that this is a group that has suffered extreme marginalisation both in public imagination and in public institutions for so long. It does not please any of us to sit here and tell you that we are a community that is suffering vilification, hate crimes and discrimination. However, that is our job as advocates—to bring that reality to the table for you. It is this committee, by including those grounds, that creates the pathway for us.

Ms Fawkes: Back when the Anti-Discrimination Act was changed to include the attribute 'lawful sexual activity', leaders at the time took a very strong and maybe you could say brave move to recognise sex workers as needing that protection. We are not asking you to see this as particularly different, because by its inclusion in the Anti-Discrimination Act itself there is already recognition that sex workers experience a specific and unique type of discrimination. What we are asking you to do is extend vilification to also make that recognition.

I know what you are asking—that we are asking for something extra, you could say—but actually it would be part of the recognition by this government that it is interested in ensuring that sex workers have the same rights as other parts of the community. This is really just addressing a very long and extreme example that sex workers do not have any rights but are being harmed consistently.

Dr Jeffreys: I would add that the original inclusion of 'lawful sexual activity' as an attribute in human rights protections in Queensland was part of the spirit of licensing at the time as well. We are doing positive things to improve the health, safety and human rights of this particular community. What we are bringing you today is that that attribute has not worked for the sex worker community. As Jules has explained, this is doing the rounds of rooms like this all around the country and has been for some time—that 'sex work' and 'sex worker' are the grounds that need to be included both as attributes and as grounds for anti-vilification in order for people to have that immediate pathway to recourse to justice. We believe, based on the examples of the vilification and hate crimes that sex workers have experienced and that they have brought to us as Respect and Scarlet Alliance, that this change will make a difference.

Ms BUSH: I recognise that you operate in a complex regulatory and social environment and there is no silver bullet, but your submission is that expanding and including 'sex work' in the vilification will signal to sex workers that it will afford them another line of protection that other characteristics—for example, gender, sexual orientation and race—do not include currently?

Ms Fawkes: That is correct. The current grounds only provide protection for a small part of our community and, as we described, because of the current legislative situation for sex workers, the barriers are so significant that those people do not report.

Dr Jeffreys: We know that decriminalisation will not change that overnight either. We are talking about a crucial moment politically where these changes need to happen concurrently to see all of it work in different policy areas.

Ms Kim: Importantly, it will signal that to sex workers. It will also send a message to the community and to perpetrators that this behaviour is unacceptable.

CHAIR: Do committee members have any further questions?

Ms Fawkes: Could I make one last point on that? One of the key things that many people probably do not understand about this request to be included is that it is not a level playing field. Other occupations do not need to be included within vilification legislation because of course they have legal and other rights. When that changes, maybe in 20 years we will be having a different discussion. Even in New South Wales, where the laws did change, they are only just now including sex work and sex worker within vilification and the Anti-Discrimination Act.

Dr Jeffreys: They have seen that, even with decriminalisation, they still need that protection to be able to exercise full rights.

Ms BUSH: I do not think it is part of your submission but we would be interested in knowing which jurisdictions are in your view heading in the right direction, nationally or internationally.

Ms Kim: In New South Wales there is a bill that is currently before parliament. It is at its second reading in the Legislative Council. That actually explicitly includes provisions to make the vilification of sex workers unlawful. I know that the Northern Territory decriminalised sex work last year. As part of this, sex work and sex worker protection for anti-discrimination and also anti-vilification protections is actually being explored by the government. Victoria is currently in the process of implementing decriminalisation and is also investigating changes through the anti-discrimination legislation. With the main signal in Queensland as well, this is a great opportunity for Australia to take the lead. Australia was the first place in the world to decriminalise sex work, and now we have entities such as Amnesty International, the United Nations and the World Health Organization affirming that it is the best regulatory model for sex work regulation. I think Australia is again in a position to show that this is a part of the necessary protection for the human rights of sex workers.

Ms Fawkes: I can provide for you a bit more detail about each of the pieces of anti-discrimination legislation and the coverage.

CHAIR: Thank you. Could that be provided to the secretariat by 5 pm on Monday, 20 September?

Ms Fawkes: Absolutely.

CHAIR: That concludes this session. Thank you for your evidence today.

HANSSON, Ms Ellie, Administration, Law Reform, LGBTI Legal Service (via videoconference)

RICHARDSON, Ms Polly, Solicitor, LGBTI Legal Service (via videoconference)

CHAIR: Welcome. During your evidence today, we ask that you refrain from using unparliamentary language such as swearing or offensive terms, even if you are quoting someone else. Obviously because of the nature of this inquiry, you may have evidence of some serious vilification that involves inflammatory or unparliamentary language so we ask that you refrain from referring to that. I thank you in advance for your cooperation on that point. Would you like to start with an opening statement?

Ms Richardson: Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to speak with you today on behalf of the LGBTI Legal Service. The service is a small not-for-profit community legal centre based in West End. We assist the Queensland LGBTIQA+ community access justice. My colleague, Ellie Hansson, and I pay our deepest respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past, present and emerging as the traditional custodians of the lands on which we gather today. We also acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ sisters and brothers community and recognise their ongoing battle for visibility and inclusivity.

For those unfamiliar with the service, we provide free legal assistance and advocacy to members of Queensland's LGBTIQA+ community in the areas of family, domestic violence, criminal, employment and discrimination law. The service is actively involved in law reform, advocating for LGBTIQA+ inclusive laws and the protection of human rights. As practitioners and advocates for those in the LGBTI community, a significant proportion of our clients have experienced discriminatory, vilifying and hateful conduct. Our submission is guided by our client's lived experiences of those crimes.

The service welcomes the very important review of the current law and supports the widening and strengthening of the current protections. Our submission focused firstly on expanding the specific protected attributes in section 124A of the Anti-Discrimination Act to include current definitions, which we recognise are not static, of gender and sexual identity, sex characteristics and expression, personal association and HIV/AIDS status to better reflect the diversity of the LGBTIQA+ community.

We also recommended widening the definition of 'public act' to specifically include social media and other conduct observable by the public as hate speech and vilification via online communication platforms. As you have repeatedly heard in these proceedings, it is a real increasing issue particularly for members of the LGBTIQA+ community. The submission included the implementation of a harm based approach with a focus on whether a reasonable person with a protected attribute suffered harm as a result of the public act. As other witnesses in these proceedings have touched on, such an approach would consider whether a reasonable person who identifies as a member of the LGBTIQA+ community would have felt vilified by the public act complained of.

We recommended that the role and function of the Queensland Police Service, the QPS, in prosecuting serious vilification needs addressing. This is to empower them to investigate and prosecute serious vilification. Consideration should be given to serious vilification being removed from the ADA, the Anti-Discrimination Act, and included in the Criminal Code of Queensland, removing the administrative barriers to prosecuting currently included in section 131A. Improvements are also needed to QPS procedures, techniques and powers to preserve online content. Targeted training of QPS officers is required to identify and appropriately deal with vilifying conduct directed to members of the LGBTIQA+ community.

Finally, the submission recommended expanding the powers of the Queensland Human Rights Commission, QHRC, to require information to be disclosed, to issue and enforce compliance notices and to refer complaints of serious vilification to the QPS. We propose that further consideration should be given to expanding and strengthening the powers of the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, QCAT, to deal with noncompliance of agreed outcomes in the QHRC process. We thank the committee again for the opportunity to give evidence today. We welcome any questions.

Mrs GERBER: Chair, I have no questions. It was a really great submission and your oral submission complemented that. Thank you very much for both your appearance and your very well thought out written submission.

Mr POWELL: A bit like Laura, I found it all very self-explanatory.

Ms BUSH: Your testimony has really complemented some of the other submissions we have received. I want to pick up on your submission about the inclusion of the word 'revulsion'. I do not think I have seen that in another submission. The sentence would read, 'incite hatred towards, revulsion of, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of'. I am interested in your experience of why it so important to put that in.

Ms Richardson: It really goes to the high bar that is currently in the legislation as to incitement. We picked it up from a recommendation made by, I think, Liberty Victoria with the St Kilda Legal Service in January 2020. It was not their primary recommendation but it was a secondary and alternative recommendation. From our experience with our clients, it seems to be that the vilifying conduct, particularly online, seems to incite disgust and revulsion for members and more generally the community at large. It was something that Ellie and I and the service really liked because the word is so powerful, I suppose, as well. I might pass over to Ellie to add anything she may wish to. We came across it and thought it was quite powerful.

Ms Hansson: It goes to widening the conduct that is captured by the potential wording. With 'revulsion of', from our experience a lot of people expose the conduct that is vilifying to our LGBTIQ community. With the 'revulsion' wording, people are going, 'Hey, look at this material' and exposing it to an audience that does comment on it and makes very hateful and vilifying commentary. Having that included does make sure it is a more focused definition, if that makes sense.

Ms BUSH: You have another recommendation around the definition of 'public act' to include an online digital space as well. I am interested in your views. We have received some submissions where people would like to see that expanded to bring workplaces and schools into that definition. Do you have anything you would like to add to that?

Ms Richardson: Predominantly the vilifying conduct that we are seeing is in the online environment a bit like, I think it was, Bill Mitchell from Townsville was talking about yesterday. The current law really is not capturing what is actually going on. I appreciate the recent High Court decision that we are all digesting in relation to *Fairfax v Voller*. For us and our clients, that is where it is all coming from—the matters we are seeing currently, for sure. It is the ACT or the Tasmanian legislation that specifically refers to inclusion of social media and social media platforms.

As to schools and workplaces, we threw that around quite a bit, whether or not we were going to include it. I understand that the QAI, I think, and Legal Aid in their submissions dealt with an inclusion. We certainly would not oppose it. It was just that our focus was really on ensuring that the public act and the social media side of it were there. We had concerns that perhaps classrooms were not public places. There are obviously lots of laws and regulations and protections that already exist in employment and lots of workplaces. It was not the focus for us but we would not oppose the committee considering the inclusion of schools and workplaces.

Ms BUSH: Finally, you have referred to the need for police to be a bit more proactive and comprehensive perhaps in pursuing these charges. I am interested in your views on whether you think there are legislative barriers for them in pursuing it or whether it is a cultural issue or both?

Ms Richardson: Very easily both. In our submission we echo I think Dr Gelber, who spoke yesterday and was encouraging the committee to consider the move of the serious vilification provision from the ADA to the Criminal Code, as has been done in New South Wales. From a cultural point of view, really just being the QPS officers on the ground who are the first frontline people dealing with this vilifying conduct and public acts that are vilifying conduct, being really clear that that kind of conduct and those kind of offences are within their ambit or within their powers to deal with. I think there is some confusion and some misunderstanding. It is not clear enough in the messaging, for want of a better phrase at the moment, that it is within the power of QPS officers to deal with, investigate and take prosecutions and then it becomes a matter for prosecutions whether they continue or not. It would make it clearer. A lot of the QPS powers are in the Criminal Code and they would all be together. It would be clearer if it was together.

Of course, we are always willing to work with—and have worked with and will continue to work with—QPS through their LGBTIQA+ liaison officers et cetera to ensure that QPS officers on the ground know that those provisions are available to them. It would consolidate it for those on-the-ground officers who really have so much to consider.

CHAIR: I thank you for your evidence today. That concludes this public hearing. I very much thank all of the witnesses who have participated today. Thank you to our Hansard reporters. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's parliamentary webpage in due course.

The committee adjourned at 12.13 pm.