



Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes

Statement of Jo Kenworthy

23 February 2023

This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I would be prepared, if necessary, to give to the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes as a witness. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1. My name is Jo Kenworthy.
2. My address is known to the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes ("the Inquiry").
3. I am a former Senior Sergeant in the New South Wales Police Force ("NSWPF"). I was employed by the NSWPF from August 1998 until August 2019, a period of approximately 21 years.
4. In 1999 or 2000, I decided I wanted to become involved in the NSWPF Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer ("GLLO") program. I completed approximately three days of training in the same year. I became aware of the program through my contact with Sue Thompson, whom I met prior to joining the NSWPF. I completed a 6-week student placement with Ms Thompson whilst studying for a Bachelor of Social Science in 1997. I was interested in becoming a GLLO because I knew that the work they did was incredibly valuable and made a difference to the LGBTIQ community.
5. GLLOs are described on the NSWPF website as "contact officers for the broader sexuality, gender diverse and intersex communities." Among other duties, GLLOs play an important role in responding to homophobic and transphobic incidents. They also liaise with specialist areas within NSWPF, champion LGBTIQ inclusion at work, and are available to provide support to LGBTIQ staff.
6. I was a GLLO within NSWPF from around 1999 or 2000 until August 2019, when I left NSWPF. When I first became a GLLO, I was based in the Leichhardt Local Area Command ("LAC") where I worked for three years. When I moved to NSWPF headquarters in 2001, I continued as a GLLO.

My experience as a GLLO

7. Ms Thompson first established the GLLO program within the NSWPF in 1990. The program was innovative and the first of its kind in Australia. In the early stages of the program, the majority of GLLOs were officers in LACs based in metropolitan Sydney, such as Surry Hills and Newtown. When I joined in 1998, there were GLLOs in most metropolitan LACs. Gradually, there came to be GLLOs in almost every LAC in NSW, including regional LACs.
8. When I became a GLLO, I was required to attend a GLLO training course at the NSWPF Academy for approximately three days. I recall that it was sometimes difficult for officers to obtain a position on the GLLO course, as it was only run once or twice a year and it was a popular course. For many years, Ms Thompson was responsible for running the course and preparing the curriculum. The training included specific information on the history of the relationship between police and LGBTIQ communities, challenges and sensitivities experienced by some community members in their engagement with police, and effective responses to people who are victims of crime.
9. Among other duties, GLLOs provide support to members of the community who contact police to report a hate crime. An individual who attends a police station can request specifically to speak with a GLLO and is usually invited to: (i) speak with a GLLO there and then (if one is on duty and available); or (ii) make an appointment to speak with a GLLO at another time (if no GLLO is on duty). A GLLO may speak with an individual directly or sit in as a support person while a second officer takes a report from the individual. Although it was not always possible to ensure that a GLLO was on duty at any particular time, in my experience one was usually available in inner-city LACs including Surry Hills, Newtown, and Leichhardt. At these LACs, I recall that there were six to eight GLLOs at Surry Hills LAC. Individuals could also call a police station to make an appointment to see a GLLO at a time convenient to them.
10. In my role as a GLLO, I had a range of duties which were additional to my ordinary police responsibilities. Some of the activities I was involved in as a GLLO were as follows:
 - a. I attended domestic violence incidents where one or more parties identified as LGBTIQ;
 - b. I acted as a support person to victims who attended the police station to report homophobic and transphobic incidents;
 - c. I ran training sessions in my LAC for new NSWPF recruits on LGBTIQ-related subjects, such as how to manage homophobia in the workplace;

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- d. On one occasion, I travelled interstate to Queensland with Ms Thompson to assist training Queensland Police in the establishment of their own GLLO program;
- e. I visited schools and youth and community centres within my LAC to speak about LGBTIQ-related subjects that have particular significance to young people, such as sexual orientation and homophobia;
- f. I worked with a range of community organisations to forge better connections between police and LGBTIQ young people. For instance, I attended the LGBTIQ youth organisation Twenty10 during my time at Leichhardt LAC when it was based in Glebe. GLLOs made these visits for the purpose of getting to know some of the kids and build relationships;
- g. I acted as a support person for LGBTIQ police officers, particularly in circumstances where they sought to discuss employment or personal issues; and
- h. I attended LGBTIQ community events (such as Fair Day) and marched in the Mardi Gras parade. When attending those events, we attended in our capacity as GLLOs rather than as general duty or specialist police officers assigned to other roles.

Reflections on the GLLO program

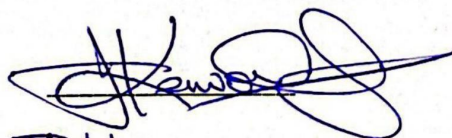
11. There was a lot of good work done with the LGBTIQ community by the officers involved in the GLLO program. In my experience, I found that the officers who volunteered to be a GLLO within their respective commands were very passionate about making a difference and bringing about change, both within NSWPF and out in the community. I was fortunate that my role as a GLLO officer was always supported by more senior officers, both at Surry Hills headquarters and the LACs I worked in.
12. I believe that the GLLO program played an important role in attempts to bridge the divide between the LGBTIQ community and police. Before the GLLO program, and especially in the 1980s, many individuals who identified as LGBTIQ experienced so much fear in coming forward to the police to report crimes or seek assistance. The GLLO program helped to support the development of a safer, more receptive, and more accepting atmosphere within areas of NSWPF police. I think that it made it easier for members of the LGBTIQ community to come forward to police and report hate crimes and domestic violence. In the 1980s and 1990s, many LGBTIQ individuals did not report incidents of domestic violence because they did not want to be treated differently on the basis of their sexual orientation. *This is despite the fact that there are many instances of same-sex domestic violence in*

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the community. In fact, the first ever domestic violence incident I attended as an officer involved a same-sex couple.

13. The GLLO program fostered an environment of greater acceptance for young LGBTIQ people. It was a big deal for school students to attend school assembly and hear a speech from a police officer in uniform who identified as LGBTIQ. The act of standing up in schools - being in uniform and being accepted - communicated to students and other members of the school community that it was no longer acceptable to treat people differently because they identified as LGBTIQ.
14. I recall that the first time the NSWPF marched in the Mardi Gras parade was a very significant moment. Over the years, more and more GLLOs marched and other organisations (including Fire and Rescue NSW and the Australian Defence Force) began marching in the parade as well.
15. In my view, the most challenging obstacle faced by the GLLO program was resourcing. During my years in NSWPF, GLLOs always performed their duties part-time in addition to their police work. Officers do not receive any extra allowance for completing GLLO duties. Most commanders were very supportive of GLLOs and the program, but some were understandably apprehensive about losing one of their officers to GLLO training or to GLLO duties if they were already short staffed. It was sometimes difficult for commanders in LACs to arrange the roster to facilitate GLLO participation. This meant at times there was pushback.
16. To manage some of these resourcing issues, I believe the program would benefit from the creation of a permanent GLLO role for a Sergeant that could assist the Civilian Senior Policy and Programs Officer role. There should also be a permanent GLLO position at inner-city LACs, such as Surry Hills. I believe that there have been attempts to create a full-time permanent position for a GLLO in the Surry Hills LAC, but I am not sure if a full-time role ever eventuated.

Signature:



Name:

J. KENWORTHY

Date:

23/02/23