
Susan Harwood¹ and Helen McDermott²

¹Independent Researcher
Member Australasian Council of Women and Policing,
Director Susan Harwood and Associates, PO Box 103 Northbridge, WA 6865
susan.harwood@iinet.net.au

²Vice-president Australasian Council of Women and Policing,
PO Box 3994 Manuka, ACT 2603
helenmed@ozemail.com.au

Abstract: The absence of women from leadership roles is still a feature of contemporary policing in Australia, and it appears that the presence of small numbers of women in some senior ranks has done little to significantly alter the ‘culture’. Audrey Fagan was the first woman to head the ACT Policing component of the Australian Federal Police and only the second woman in Australia or New Zealand to lead a policing jurisdiction. She had to manage many contested territories throughout her policing career; her untimely death at the pinnacle of her career leaves questions yet to be answered about the price women pay when choosing to work in densely masculinist workplaces such as policing.¹ This chapter provides an overview of the political, social and feminist antecedents to Australia’s policing organisations. We begin with a brief account of the first female chief commissioner in Australasia, Christine Nixon, before discussing the leadership of Fagan.

Keywords: women leaders, women policing, masculinist workplaces, gendered practices

Introduction

The Australasian Council of Women and Policing (ACWAP) selected outstanding police leader Audrey Ann Fagan as the main subject for this chapter as a way of highlighting the significant challenges that aspiring women leaders still face in Australian policing organisations. Fagan—a woman held in high esteem by many and particularly by women in policing—was the first woman to head the ACT Policing component of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and only the second woman in Australia or New Zealand to lead a policing jurisdiction. We believe that her leadership style and contribution to the community entitles her to a place amongst the biographies of women leaders in 20th-century Australia. While our primary focus for this chapter is on Fagan and what we know of her experiences as a woman leader in policing, we begin by providing a context for our study through a short history of women’s place and space in the policing profession.

© The Author 2011. Founders, Firsts and Feminists: Women Leaders in Twentieth-century Australia. Published by the eScholarship Research Centre, The University of Melbourne; all rights reserved.

188
and a brief account of Australia’s first woman chief commissioner, Christine Nixon.

**Women Enter the ‘Secret Garden’**

In considering the political, social and feminist antecedents to the policing organisations we see today, we question to what degree broader social changes have impacted on the culture of policing and on the role and participation of women and women leaders in this densely masculinist culture. From our own research, we know that women who aspire to a career in gendered workplaces are often presented with difficult choices as they engage in a continuous process of self-management. In addition, and as Amanda Sinclair has suggested, such women need to manage how they will either deny or promote their sexuality, femininity and professional relationships with other women, as well as with male colleagues. These choices are often made against a backdrop of men’s continuing resistance to the increasing numbers of women becoming eligible for promotion.

From the outset, policing was associated with men: ‘Peel’s men’. This was not surprising given that from its inception in Britain in 1829 the original statutes ‘described police as men’. Women’s entrance into policing has been marked by its slow pace and subordinate place relative to women’s entrance into other occupations and into the paid workforce generally. As Frances Heidensohn has noted, women’s entry into police work occurred within the context of the previous half-century of changes to women’s role in society:

> History is very important as background: women did not suddenly enter policing in the early twentieth century from nowhere; they had at least half a century of increasing participation in public life in which many of them had sought to control social ills through voluntary action, and through increasing use of state agencies.

Why has women’s participation in policing been such a struggle? And importantly in the context of this project, why are there still so few women in leadership positions in policing in Australia? Heidensohn has described this anomaly in the language of invasion, occupation and exclusion:

> women’s entry into policing is a version of *The Secret Garden* in which some uppity women laid siege to a male preserve and gained admittance, only to find themselves regularly being excluded from most of the garden’s primary activities for more than fifty years.
Police women emerged on the Australian scene in 1915; by 1923, each state except Queensland had police women. A study conducted by Jennifer Brown and others has shown that, while there were growing numbers of women in policing during the 1940s, this changed when these jobs were handed over to homecoming soldiers: ‘As in Britain, in New Zealand and to some extent Australia … after the First World War there was a reduction in numbers or slow down in recruitment of women to accommodate the re-employment of returning soldiers’.  

By 1971, women constituted just 1.8 per cent of police personnel in Australia. By 1991, this figure had grown to 12 per cent and, by 2001, the national figure stood at 19 per cent. By 2007/08, it was 25.6 per cent. At the current rate of growth, the participation rate for women may not reach one-third (33 per cent) until 2020. Prenzler and Hayes have observed that ‘for much of the twentieth century women were allowed a place within mainstream policing only in the most limited functions and numbers’. Elsewhere, Harwood has canvassed the nature, extent and impact of these negative aspects of women’s experience of policing.

Women’s entry into policing’s ‘secret garden’ was made easier with the introduction of equal opportunity (EO) legislation. By the mid-1980s, Australia, the UK and the USA were all implementing EO strategies, and women (including Audrey Fagan) were marching into policing in far greater numbers. As illustrated by Clare Burton’s analysis of defence organisations, the removal of overtly discriminatory barriers also had the deleterious ‘knock-on’ effect of exposing women to sexual harassment and discrimination: ‘Sexual harassment is a widespread problem in all areas of work where men are reacting strongly and negatively to the ‘invasion’ of women into their domain. It appears particularly strong in the uniformed services, here and in other countries’.

Gutek and Done reframe sexual hostility as gender harassment and explain that such harassment is used to discriminate against women: to disparage them, ‘their accomplishments, and their ability … treating them in a demeaning manner’. The nature and extent of such demeaning and disparaging behaviours are critical to our understanding of gendered power relations.

The dominance of masculinism within policing goes with the subordination of women to male power within that gendered culture. Tim Prenzler’s research indicates that the resistance to the laws introduced in Australia during the
1980s has taken different forms in each state and that this resistance has been successful in maintaining a workplace culture that is not receptive to women:

Despite major organisational changes in the last few decades, policing still presents a hostile environment to women. Policewomen report continuing problems with high levels of sexual harassment and job segregation. Male officers report distrust of women’s ability and admit to opposing parity for policewomen.  

When Prenzler wrote an historical overview of women in policing in Australia in 1994, he was somewhat challenged by the task, commenting that ‘there is a dearth of substantial published material on policewomen in Australia’. Calling for more primary research, Prenzler observed: ‘Most histories of police in Australia give little or no space to issues of female participation. More critical, sociologically-based studies have also tended to perpetuate the assumption that “police” are “men”’.

**Feminism and Women’s Participation in Policing**

Joan Acker’s research is key to our improved understanding of how workplaces are gendered. Organisations, according to Acker, are imbued with a masculine view of the world, a view that obscures any other: ‘As a relational phenomenon, gender is difficult to see when only the masculine is present’. Since 1999, there has been an increased focus on gender relations within policing. Whetstone and Wilson explored the impact of the glass ceiling, while Prenzler’s focus has identified some of the factors contributing to the glass-ceiling effect, including sex discrimination and, with Hayes, the impact of physical testing on women’s capacity to enter policing. Prokos and Padavic analysed what they called the ‘hidden curriculum’ of recruitment school, while Ni He and others studied the links between gender and police stress. Diana Grant’s research on gendered stereotypes of women in policing is counterpoised by Lonsway, Moore and others, who cite the advantages to organisations of hiring more women. Taking another perspective, Metcalfe and Dick explored the issue of police employees’ commitment to policing—and find that women are just as committed to the job as their male counterparts.

These and earlier researchers appear to share a common conception: that, while women police continue to be resisted, contested, challenged and challenging, the community wants more women police. Heidensohn proferred some explanation for this in suggesting that social control is something at which women excel: ‘It is inescapable that women’s involvement in social control has often been outstandingly successful, if by success we count the
curbing of vice or crime, or the reduction of public disorder’. Amplifying this ‘more women is better’ argument, Grant suggests that it constitutes a unifying theme in much of the scholarly literature and is based on an assumption of gender difference:

The view that policewomen will create a positive impact is illustrated by Martin, discussing how women’s greater role flexibility means they are able to display more range and adaptability than men in their approach to policing, because they can draw upon both masculine and feminine ways of communicating.

In this regard, Joseph Balkin’s earlier study (1988) provides some useful insights into the difficulties created for women when they do display their skills to their male colleagues. His research indicated that male officers’ lack of acceptance of women was underpinned by the fact that women could perform their job competently. Balkin suggested that this display of competence was such a threat to their masculinity that male officers persisted in maintaining the ‘uniformly negative’ as well as inaccurate and distorted view that women were not as competent as they were: ‘The evaluation studies of policewomen on patrol show, without exception, that they can do the job. Yet the studies of policemen’s attitudes show, without exception, that the men do not believe the women can do the job’.

Metcalfe and Dick’s 2002 study, referred to earlier, extends Balkin’s equal competence argument to include the case for women’s equal commitment to the job. They conclude from their survey data that ‘female officers are just as committed as male officers’. These researchers make an important observation about the dominant values that have contributed to the (false) perception that women are less committed, and therefore less desirable, as police officers:

Conceputalisations of police work which draw on masculinist characteristics and qualities have reinforced the view that policing is not a suitable job for a woman. Central to this assumption is that women are perceived as less committed to a policing career.

In discussing such views, Grant has suggested that the range of issues surrounding women’s participation in policing has itself become the subject of controversy and thus ‘serves as the wellspring for an increasing amount of research comparing the performance of female and male officers on a variety of dimensions’. While her own study indicates that the gender stereotypes of women in policing affect the public’s perception of women’s (and men’s)
performance in their roles, Grant also observed that ‘gender stereotyping of police officers and police tasks does a disservice to officers of both genders’. Stereotypical images, myths and false conceptions about women feature prominently in research findings on women in policing, and many of the researchers present women’s experiences in policing in the context of a distinctive police culture.

The absence of women from leadership roles (and the associated excess of men) is still a feature of contemporary policing in Australia, and it would appear that the presence of small numbers of women in the upper echelons has done little to significantly alter the culture. Chan’s study referred to research conducted by Heidensohn and others and she commented briefly on the negative outcomes that occur when the numbers approach, rather than a culture-change approach, is adopted to improve the participation of women in policing:

women recruited into male-dominated police forces adapt either by embracing the male police culture, and thus becoming ‘defeminised’ into police-women; or by taking on a more traditional, service-oriented role, and thus becoming ‘deprofessionalised’ into police-women.

Reiner’s research on police culture adds the descriptors ‘machismo’, ‘conservatism’ and ‘prejudice’ to the cultural lexicon of policing. Fielding asserts that because policing organisations are built on entrenched values of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ that demand ‘aggressive, physical action’, they are therefore characterised by ‘a strong sense of competitiveness and preoccupation with the imagery of conflict’.

Christine Nixon

Nixon was not the first senior woman in policing in Australasia; in 1989, Bernice Masterson was the highest ranking woman in policing and the first woman to be appointed an assistant commissioner in Victoria Police. Six years later, Bev Lawson was appointed a deputy commissioner in the NSW Police. Unfortunately Lawson only served a short time in this role before she died unexpectedly from a stroke in January 1998, aged 57. But, as Sinclair has suggested, Christine Nixon’s appointment to Victoria Police in 2001 was groundbreaking for a number of reasons, not the least being that, at that time, ‘there had been no women leading police forces the size of Victoria’s in the rest of the world—none in the US, UK, in most parts of Europe nor Asia’. Sinclair’s subsequent seven-year period of ‘shadowing’ the chief commissioner affords some rich insights into the different style of leadership that women can bring to policing. Commenting on the stereotypical ‘heroic’
model of leadership that is the more accepted model, Sinclair observed that Nixon is a ‘stand out’ exemplar of the opposite, modelling a ‘transformational and authentic’ leadership style. Earlier, journalist Andrew Rule had remarked that Nixon was able to turn her ‘outsider status’ (a woman and from another state) into a ‘badge of integrity and independence’. Rule also referred rather ambiguously to Nixon’s ‘steady gaze of a seasoned pro’ while also presenting as ‘the scone-making favourite aunt from central casting’; he further observed that she is a ‘tough cookie’.

Marisa Silvestri’s study on the impact of gendered practices on female leaders in policing suggests that women are well aware of such ambiguous positioning within their workplace. Reflecting on the dilemmas that confront women police officers as they move up the ladder, Silvestri commented that many of her interviewees had tried to gain entrance to the men’s club by adopting ‘male models of identity and behaviour’. Such models were anathema to Nixon, who appeared to maintain her feminist sense of self throughout her challenging time at the helm of Victoria Police. Quoting the Dalai Lama’s work on the importance of leaders creating an organisation with a strong and warm heart, Sinclair asserted that ‘Christine sometimes seems unique in emphasizing the need for a strong and warm heart in Victoria Police’.

When Nixon left Victoria Police in 2008, she and her supporters could review a positive legacy of organisational change, not the least of her many achievements being the reduction in crime in Victoria, a significant increase in the numbers of women in her workforce and the introduction of more flexible work practices for officers with family responsibilities. Both Christine Nixon and Audrey Fagan, the main subject of this chapter, had similar ambitions about changing the culture of policing to be more receptive to women; it is also highly regrettable that neither was succeeded by other women in any Australasian jurisdiction. Nor (at the time of writing) is there a growing critical mass of women leaders in policing in Australasia

Audrey Fagan

By all accounts, Audrey Fagan, like Nixon, did not adopt masculinist models, retaining her femininity and acknowledging her difference as a woman in her rise to the top; in so doing, she demonstrated an inclusive style of leadership distinctly different from subscribers to the ‘men’s club’. How did she do this? Some clues can be garnered from the profile that follows, the details of which are gleaned from the various articles, obituaries and speeches that followed
Audrey Fagan’s untimely and tragic death in 2007. As will be revealed, Audrey Fagan was a well-educated, motivated and thoughtful leader who spent time and energy empowering those around her.\textsuperscript{42}

Audrey Fagan was born in Dublin, Ireland and was nine years of age when she immigrated to South Australia in 1971 with her parents, Arthur and Jenny. In 1980, at the age of eighteen, Fagan joined the AFP and began her policing career ‘on the beat’, working her way through the ranks while tackling the masculine culture of her chosen profession. She spent the first five years of her career in Canberra in the AFP’s ACT community policing function, starting on the beat and spending some of this period in the areas of juvenile crime and fraud. Fagan then spent two years working on Christmas Island. By all accounts, she was a committed and highly accomplished officer, working her way across the range of functions in the AFP including investigator training and investigating internal corruption. She also served as a liaison officer to government.\textsuperscript{43}

Over a period of 26 years, Audrey Fagan undoubtedly had to manage the gendered practices of policing as she embarked on her journey through a range of challenging areas, including the fraud squad, juvenile justice, general crime investigation, policy development, and political liaison. Fagan also earned a reputation for her work helping to prosecute sexual assault cases. During this time, she became a mother and step-mother.

By the late 1990s, Fagan’s skills and experience were being recognised and she was appointed chief of staff to AFP commissioner Mick Keelty. Later, she was executive director of protection, overseeing the integration of the Australian Protective Service into the AFP. Fagan’s management style was risk averse and she was as concerned with the detail as she was with the overall vision, traits that Keelty no doubt valued and utilised in the roles to which he appointed her. While building her career path, Fagan furthered her education, gaining a bachelor of science from the Australian National University (ANU), as well as a graduate certificate in applied management and a graduate diploma in executive leadership from the Australian Institute of Police Management. She sat on many boards and committees, making a valuable contribution to many facets of policing.

During her rise to the top, and despite the challenges she faced in the process, Fagan also supported and mentored women behind her. The Australian Police Medal she received in 2004 was awarded not only for her contribution to Australia’s counter-terrorism effort but also for her work in enhancing and promoting the role of women in law enforcement. Fagan saw first hand the
impact that a masculinist organisation had on women. In the mid-1990s, she was handpicked to work with the then up-and-coming Mick Keelty on an internal investigation into sexual harassment in ACT Policing. While the outcome of that investigation was the dismissal of thirteen police officers from the AFP, the two women who initiated the complaints were also victimised by the investigative process. In terms of Audrey’s career, being part of this high-profile investigation led to greater prominence within the AFP and no doubt contributed to her steady promotions afterwards; she also gained first-hand experience of how women in policing walk a difficult blue line.

In 2005, 25 years after arriving in Canberra, Audrey Fagan was appointed to lead the ACT Policing component of the Australian Federal Police, at the same time becoming an assistant commissioner of the Australian Federal Police (which contracts its services to the ACT). Audrey was only the second woman (after Victoria’s chief commissioner, Christine Nixon) to be placed in charge of a policing jurisdiction.

Audrey was active in the Canberra community. She was often a speaker at women’s forums, breakfasts and events around the city and within the policing community. She took her role as a senior woman in policing seriously and contributed to events for women in policing. For example, she represented the Australian Federal Police as one of the co-chairs for the 2002 Women and Policing Globally conference, a joint international initiative for ACWAP, the International Association of Women Police and the AFP. She also contributed to women and policing internationally, attending and speaking at a number of the National Center for Women and Policing’s annual leadership conferences in the US. Audrey was always supportive of organisations such as ACWAP, participating in conferences and contributing to or supporting others to participate whenever possible.

ACWAP member Jenny Fleming worked at the ANU at that time and reported that, after her appointment, Audrey Fagan followed her predecessor’s practice by collaborating with the Australian National University on a number of projects. Fleming remembered that Audrey introduced a welcome difference to this collaboration, becoming a motivating force for the research team by demonstrating an ‘unwavering belief’ that research could inform positive change and practical policy.

In the same year that she was promoted to her new role, Audrey Fagan delivered the keynote address to ACWAP’s ‘Women and Policing’ conference in Darwin; those attending the conference recall that Audrey’s
presence generated palpable excitement amongst her audience. A number of women police were from surrounding Pacific Island countries and, like many of their Australian counterparts, had not previously experienced a woman police leader. Audrey showed them women’s leadership in action; as well as presenting a key paper on leadership, she illustrated that being a female leader in a masculinist organisation included retaining a sense of humour and humility. Audrey was the star performer when she took the lead in the hypothetical discussion that closed the conference. Her quick humour, strategic thinking and willingness to make sure everyone’s views were heard provided an insight into how women in leadership positions can keep a perspective on their own importance and acknowledge that they only play one of the roles in making policing happen.

The paper Audrey prepared and delivered to the Darwin conference also demonstrated much about her style of leadership. Stepping outside the culture she knew best, Audrey moved her audience beyond women in policing to make specific reference to a number of women leaders whom she admired. Given the dearth of women police leaders, this was both a clever and educative tactic. One of those Audrey named was long-term Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, whom Audrey described then as epitomising ‘the perseverance, self-knowledge, and inspirational qualities which define great leadership’.

Fagan’s speech also brought into sharp focus the little-known skills of a woman commander who had led NASA’s space shuttle ‘Discovery’. In naming and profiling commander Eileen Collins and her mission specialist, Wendy Lawrence, Fagan observed that these NASA women demonstrated the ‘enormous steps forward women have taken in embracing leadership roles in an increasingly dynamic and complex time’. Highlighting the extensive preparation and experience required for the role, Fagan referred to the problems encountered on this particular space journey, commenting that ‘we can only imagine the unique challenges facing Collins in leading the Discovery mission’. Here is what Audrey had to say about the commander’s leadership style:

As you would all know, leaders cannot work effectively in isolation. The leader is at the helm of a team, guiding, mentoring, encouraging and developing those people who work around them to achieve the common goal. In this case, the common goal was to return to earth safely, having satisfied the directions of mission control and successfully prepared the damaged craft for landing.45
Importantly, Audrey also emphasised those aspects of leadership that focus on people skills, trust, empowering others and communication:

In order for a modern leader to survive the complex challenges of the dynamic environment in which so many of us work, we must trust our people. There are many dangers in assuming that you know best. Increasingly the modern leader’s strategic outlook must be very broad … we cannot and do not know it all. Like Commander Collins, we must surround ourselves with skilled, competent and trustworthy people and motivate them to achieve their potential.\(^{46}\)

In selecting these leaders for comment, Fagan showed that she admired those who faced the challenges of responding to an unpredictable environment, such as the one that police face every day. The success of their leadership was measured by the achievements and triumphs of their team, not by their individual legacy or external recognition. At the same time, Fagan was undoubtedly aware of the particular challenges facing those leaders within policing who try to bring about change.

Tragically—for Fagan, her family, her friends, the Canberra community and policing in Australasia—the ACT’s first woman chief police officer did not survive the complex challenges of her working environment. Fagan ended her own life on 20 April 2007 after she had endured an attack on her professional competence by the local media. The following quotation is taken from an article written ten months prior to Audrey’s death, at a time when she had emphasised the importance of community policing; clearly, local journalist Peter Clack equated Audrey’s approach with a ‘soft’ (therefore ‘bad’) style of policing:

\[\text{community policing … is just one more smokescreen. Crime figures must be bad. A few individual police will be ordered to or will volunteer for community work. But it usually isn't a good career move, and mostly it attracts nice, harmless non-investigative police—like Audrey Fagan herself ... How does soft and cuddly community policing fit in with so called “intelligence-led policing”, the mantra that preceded Audrey Fagan? ... police have effectively vanished from Canberra. They are there but they are invisible. It's so reassuring. It's so Audrey of them.}^{47}\]

The similarity between these comments and the attacks on Christine Nixon by the *Herald Sun* in Victoria is indicative of the backlash against women’s leadership. Policing is wrongly portrayed in these media observations as
physical control and force against the community, a model well suited to a masculine preference for using force rather than negotiation and problem solving. In reality, police are charged with serving and working with the community to solve community and individual problems and with maintaining the standards the community sets through its law.

Part of the continuing problem for women in policing and similarly masculinist organisations is the mental model of what constitutes a ‘good’ police officer; clearly, the desired model implied in the popular press is one of a loud-voiced, hard (‘command and control’) male officer. As Smith has contended, the community appears to have difficulty ‘in grasping authority for women’s voices and for what women have to say’. 48

Not surprisingly, comments such as these were revisited when Audrey died and there was much speculation about the particular set of circumstances that contributed to her death. While some of the focus was on her treatment by the media, other commentary linked her death to the stresses of her dual roles, with one of several newspaper articles reporting that insiders within the ACT Police suggested that Fagan ‘inherited a position with an almost impossible brief: being accountable to the ACT Government while being run as a division of the AFP’. 49 This latter proposition gained some support after the tribute paid some weeks later in parliament by Senator Kate Lundy (ACT); however, Lundy also canvassed other possibilities in her speech:

Her job was difficult, certainly, but she appeared to cope successfully as a respected leader in what has been described as a tough and still male-dominated profession. She was accountable in two or three different arenas: the Federal Police, headed by Commissioner Keelty; the Australian Capital Territory government and Minister Simon Corbell; and the federal Minister for Justice and Customs. Audrey’s loyalty to and support of her officers may have made her feel targeted in recent local media criticism of the police, especially following an incident of sexual abuse and the tragic death of Clea Rose, who was hit by an underage, unlicensed driver in a stolen car being pursued by police in Civic. That inquest re-opened this week. Maybe the very fact of being regarded as a role model and mentor to so many placed a burden on her too. She had to live up to so many expectations. We may have expected her to be a superperson, and such expectations can place a too heavy burden. We simply do not know what stresses prompted such despair. 50
Another newspaper article included the following quotation from Fagan’s former boss, Commissioner Mick Keelty:

In every sense of the word, Audrey was a high achiever and an accomplished police officer with her academic achievements and additional roles enhancing her impressive career … Assistant Commissioner Audrey Fagan leaves a legacy of an outstanding senior executive of the AFP … She brought to the job a contemporary and fresh approach to community policing.\textsuperscript{51}

Stunned by Audrey’s premature death, ACWAP members decided to honour the leadership contribution that this exceptional woman made to women and policing through the Audrey Fagan Memorial Award. This award celebrates the life, achievements, community policing work, support of women and the importance of continuing education and qualifications to which Fagan was committed. Each year, the ACWAP committee selects a worthy winner whose name and achievements are recognised through bestowal of the award at the annual ACWAP Excellence in Policing Awards Dinner.

The Canberra community also recognised Audrey Fagan’s contribution, with the ACT establishing several scholarships in her name. One is the Audrey Fagan Post-Graduate Scholarship, which provides $20,000 to encourage women from the ACT to further their studies and professional development in the areas of law enforcement, care and protection or professional support services for women who are victims of violence, and to encourage the retention of skills within the ACT community. Another is the ACT Government Audrey Fagan Churchill Fellowship, an annual $30,000 fellowship available to women pursuing an overseas investigative project in areas related to law enforcement, care and protection, or professional support services for women who are victims of violence. Finally, the Audrey Fagan Young Women’s Enrichment Grants provide young women with up to $2000 to further their interests and to participate in a mentoring relationship (ACT Government).

These are very tangible and appropriate tributes to the memory of Audrey Fagan; however, the impact of her unexpected and untimely death continues to resonate today among women in policing and particularly women in the AFP. There is still a great deal of sadness and sense of loss amongst all those who knew and loved her. The inclusion of Audrey Fagan’s biography amongst a group of other remarkable Australian women will ensure a further and long-lasting record of her great contribution as a woman leader in 20th-century Australia. Importantly, women who aspire to leadership roles in this
(still) densely masculinist workplace will be able to learn from Audrey Fagan’s experiences (and those of her colleague Christine Nixon). More than a decade before Audrey’s death, Christine Nixon had already canvassed the particular difficulties associated with attempting to change the culture of policing:

Is change possible? To initiate change to a policing service is a formidable challenge. Policing is an inherently conservative institution and like other government organisations, has its own culture arising from attitudes and patterns of behaviour that make change difficult.52

Despite such difficulties ACWAP members recognise that it is crucial that we continue to acknowledge, celebrate and record the achievements of such outstanding women who have worked tirelessly for their communities.

1 Dr Sue Lewis coined the term ‘dense masculinity’ to describe the gendered work practices at her research site at a fire and emergency services organisation. There, the excess of men over women results in practices, policies and behaviours that are imbued with masculinist characteristics. Personal communication with Susan Harwood, September 2005.

2 This history of women’s participation in policing has been adapted and condensed from the literature review in Susan Harwood’s doctoral thesis, ‘Gendering Change: An Immodest Manifesto for Intervening in Masculinist Organisations’ (PhD thesis, University of Western Australia, 2006). See chapter eleven, and, in particular, page 454 for summary of findings on negative experiences of women in policing.


4 The first police came to be known as ‘Peelers’, after their founder Robert Peel. From Kerry L. Milte (written and edited), with assistance by Thomas A. Weber, Police in Australia: Development, Functions and Procedures (Sydney: Butterworths, 1977), 23.


6 The greatest distinction compared with other occupations is that women in policing are not moving into management roles at the same rate as women in other occupations.


8 Author’s emphasis.

9 Heidensohn, 42.


11 Tim Prenzler, ‘Women in Australian Policing: An Historical Overview’, Journal of
At that time, this figure was approximately 6 per cent higher than the USA, and 1 per cent lower than the UK.


14 Harwood, chapter 11.


19 Ibid.


26 Grant, 54.


28 Metcalfe and Dick, 400.
28 Ibid., 400–01.
29 Grant, 56.
30 Ibid., 71.
32 Term used by Amanda Sinclair, presentation to ‘Women Leading Change’ trainers’ course, Airlie Leadership Development Centre, Victoria Police, Melbourne, February 2005.
37 Ibid., 7.
39 Ibid.
40 Marissa Silvestri, Women in Charge: Policing, Gender and Leadership (Cullumpton, Devon: Willan, 2003), 118.
42 Some of the key elements to this introduction are adapted from an obituary written by ACWAP member Professor Jenny Fleming for ACWAP’s Journal of Women and Policing 20 (Winter 2007): 4.
43 Some of these details of Audrey’s early life are summarised from ‘The Australian Women’s Register’ (National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW) in conjunction with The University of Melbourne). Accessed at www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE2703b.htm
44 The National Center for Women and Policing in the US is a division of the Feminist Majority Foundation, which was founded in 1987, and is an organisation dedicated to women’s equality, reproductive health and non-violence.
46 Ibid.
50 As recorded in the Senate Official Hansard No. 5, Forty-First Parliament, First Session—Ninth Period, Thursday 10 May 2007, 175.
51 Mark Dodd, ‘Final Salute to Top Officer and Mum, Australian, 28 April 2007.