# Confidential Psychological Report: Toronto Empathy Questionnaire in Selection Process for Potential Police Officers

## Reason for Assessment

Nicolas (Nic) Yarkin was referred for a psychological assessment in relation to his pre-employment review by Swanford Police to assist with the selection process for potential police officers. Mr Yarkin understood the nature of the interview and gave his consent.

## Presentation and Background

Mr Yarkin arrived punctually for the interview. He was well groomed and dressed appropriately with polished shoes. He interacted appropriately with interview, greeted with a firm handshake and identified he was nervous about assessment. Mr Yarkin stated he is a married man who feels he is ready for the opportunity with the Swanford Police as a result of his “education, experience and career goals”.

Mr Yarkin graduated secondary school and studied the Diploma of Justice while working part-time in hospitality. He has completed a court registrar traineeship and held the role of court registrar for 6 years. He described himself as having learnt a “great deal” about judicial processes and sees a “long-term future” in policing.

In providing a history, he reported he grew up in a “traditional family” in Brisbane. His older sister is a married secondary school teacher. His father has recently been diagnosed with prostate cancer. Mr Yarkin reported no prior contact with a psychologist and reported good mental and physical health. He stated he is a non-smoker, a social drinker and remains fit and active. Mr Yarkin identified his positive attributes as being solid, reliable, hardworking, fair and ethical as well as caring and compassionate. Mr Yarkin reported he had volunteered for 4 years at a homeless shelter in meal programs and has commenced volunteering at a migrant centre tutoring adolescents. When describing perceived weaknesses, Mr Yarkin reflected others may think he is too sensitive and takes on other people’s problems, though he sees it as a potential strength rather than liability.

## Assessment Tools

- Semi-structured psychological interview
- Mini International Personality Item Pool (Mini-IPIP), 20-item version (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006)
- Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ), 16-item version (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009)

## Assessment Results

On administration of the Mini-IPIP (International Personality Item Pool), Mr Yarkin scored within the medium range for Extraversion and Intellect/Imagination. He scored high on Agreeableness and Conscientiousness and low on Neuroticism. His performance on the self-reported Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) identified a high score of empathy.

Interview results suggest that Mr Yarkin is goal orientated and community minded. He has acknowledged a positive attitude towards his family and connection to them. His experiences indicate he is expected to have a positive approach when dealing with vulnerable members of the community. Mr Yarkin expressed a commitment to improving his performance through a variety of methods. His previous history displayed a consistent work ethic and skill development in managing competing needs of study and career advancement and volunteer work. He has identified interests that would assist with emotional stability.

## Summary and Recommendations

Based on interview observations and psychometric data, Mr Yarkin presents as a highly agreeable and conscientious person who identifies that he is enthusiastic for the opportunity for a policing role. Research suggests that those who score highly on agreeableness and conscientiousness are organised, self-disciplined and dependable even-tempered people suitable for policing roles (Inzunza, 2016). Behaviourally, high levels of agreeableness correlate with less engagement in workplace misconduct (Sanders, 2008) and high conscientiousness is linked to low substance and drug abuse (Cortina, Doherty, Schmitt, Kaufman & Smith, 1992). As a candidate who scored medium on extraversion and intellect/imagination, research shows that this demonstrates an appreciation of variability over routine and a competence to build relationships with others and are better equipped to deal with most citizens. The ability to respond to emotionally complex situations and make information-based decisions is easier if officers are not too emotionally engaged (Inzunza, 2005). Mr Yarkin scored low on neuroticism demonstrating emotional stability and an ability to establish diligence and optimism in his chosen field of employment. Low levels of neuroticism are correlated to low levels of anxiety and depression (Cortina et.al., 1992). This, supported by his engagement with Vipassana mediation and demonstrated interpersonal skills should result in an aptitude to manage stress in difficult situations. Mr Yarkins performance in the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire proposes that he has high levels of empathy which will support him in policing due to the typically antagonistic role of police-citizen relationship (Inzunza, 2005). The skill to make judgements in both positive and negative aspects of the role requires high levels of self-awareness as demonstrated by the candidate. Mr Yarkins described experience in a homeless shelter and volunteer work with immigrant youth should be considered an important factor for creation of positive attitudes with juveniles from minority communities, community policing and reduced victim attrition before court (Birzer, 2008). Successful police officers are identified as assertive, dependable and uncomplicated (Sanders, 2008) and Mr Yarkin has no disclosed history of previous job firings, divorce or unstable family. Mr Yarkin did not identify in his interview participation in team sports or a friend based social circle.

1. The current assessment suggests Mr Yarkin is self-disciplined, capable and stable. However Mr Yarkins assessed medium levels of extraversion and intellect/imagination suggests he would benefit from the Certificate IV in Leadership and Management Training with TAFE. The course is designed to increase effective leadership skills and assertiveness, team building capabilities and conflict resolution, so that he may engage

with the public and further develop his ability to resolve complex situations objectively.
2. It is advocated that Mr Yarkin's trainers be made aware of his father's recent cancer diagnosis and possible family relocation should he be identified as a successful candidate as he may require emotional support and adjustments to his training schedule.

## Part B: Appendix of Assessment Tools

Psychological testing can support pre-employment testing by saving time, resources and money to train recruits who are later deemed unsuitable (Cortina, et.al., 1992). Several tools were used in the development of this report.

The Mini- International Personality Item Pool (Mini-IPIP) is a self-completed questionnaire designed to identify an individual's ability, behavioural traits and cognition based on the Big Five elements of personality. The questionnaire consists of 20 item scale with a 5 point Likert scale measuring from 1 (very inaccurate) to 5 (very accurate). The Mini-IPIP showed "acceptable reliability" and showed similar patterns of relationship with the longer 50 item International Personality Item Pool – Five Factor Model (IPIP-FMM) (Cooper, Smillie & Corr, 2010). The mini-IPIP provides a classification grouping result for the five scales of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and intellect/imagination, otherwise known as openness. The mini IPIP is useful when time is limited and a short assessment is required. The use of the shorter questionnaire assists with maintaining participant interest and engagement and providing accurate information (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird & Lucas, 2006). Review of the mini-IPIP has demonstrated acceptable reliability and internal consistency when identifying personality structure. The Big Five model has been used to assess consistency in job performance, socialisation and personal characteristic which are correlated to police performance and predict work dedication, social and health related behaviour ( ……).

The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) is a self-identified measure recording levels of interpersonal sensitivity and empathy as an emotional process rather than a cognitive process (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar & Levine, 2009). The questionnaire assesses the individual's perception of frequency of responses to 16 item scenarios. The scale uses both positively and negatively worded situations to identify measures of appropriate sensitivity, altruism, and sympathetic physiological arousal and allos for gender different results. The TEQ has been demonstrated to be useful for examining emotional levels as research shows it to have construct validity and high internal consistency when measuring concern and response to others (Spreng, et.al. 2009). This assessment is useful for identifying levels of emotive response to dealing with vulnerable or victimised members of our community.

The semi-structured interview supports the assessment of desired skills of knowledge, ability and personal characteristics by accessing information about social skills, mental ability and employability skills. The interview has a specific structure to ensure appropriate information is gathered and increases reliability of accuracy. Information can be used to predict future performance by candidate as personal and employment history provides details of ability and socialisation within the workplace and wider community. The use of trained interviewers increases the reliability of information elicited and increases ability to identify signs of pathology (Chapman & Zweig, 2005) The benefit of a semi-structured interview is question consistency, standardised evaluation and the benefit of rapport building to ensure accuracy in information

provided. This provides additional detail and specifics that may not be collated through self-directed tests and assist with identifying suitable candidates.

## References


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