

ACT OFFICER COMMENDED

Lone fight fails to hold fire at shops

"One of the biggest fires in the ACT's history occurred at the new Manuka Shopping Village complex in March, 1984. The complex was gutted with damage estimated at several million dollars."

This is an extract from the AFP Annual Report 1983-84.

First member on the scene of this disastrous fire was First Constable Michael Hawthorn, now of Northern Region. The events which followed earned Michael the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.

The certificate was presented to Michael in Brisbane recently by the Commander Northern Region, Chief Superintendent Bill Antill, on behalf of the Commissioner.

While on patrol in the Manuka area, Michael noticed black acrid smoke billowing from the chimney of a take-away food store in the complex. After investigating, he alerted Police Operations and the Fire Brigade.

He entered the burning building and tried to control the fire but because of its ferocity he was unable to do so.

Michael began evacuating the area at great risk to himself. He then returned to his vehicle and took up a position to control traffic and the now considerable crowd that had gathered.

Further police units arrived and Michael was taken to Royal Canberra Hospital suffering from smoke inhalation. After observation and treatment, he was released from hospital and returned to formal duties.

The citation reads: "First Constable Michael John Hawthorn is highly commended in recognition of his actions on the morning of 12 March 1984 at the Manuka Village fire in repeatedly re-entering the burning building to ensure that it was clear of persons and personally attempting to control the blaze."

Media 'helping keep police standard high'

The Media can play an important part in the maintenance of a high standard of police accountability, Deputy Commissioner John Johnson told a special conference in Sydney recently.

Mr Johnson was speaking at a Meet the Press session organised by the Health Committee on Drugs of Dependence.

He was speaking on 'The Media and the Police in the Illicit Drug Supply Field'.

Mr Johnson said both the Police and the Media occupied positions of visibility in today's society.

Outlining the benefits that accrued to law and order from responsible interaction between the Police and the Media, he said there was a police need for the Media's undoubted potential to promote the common good.

He said: "I see three main areas in which the Media is needed and in which its objectivity will be of particular value:

- In the maintenance of a high standard of police accountability.
- In setting out the sobering reality and the social context of Australia's current drug situation.
- In making the public aware of the severity of the penalties, now embodied in Australian legislation and in the laws of many overseas countries, in respect to involvement with the supply of drugs and particularly with the importation and trafficking of drugs.

"In the first area, police accountability is an ongoing process and extends well beyond drug-law enforcement. Nevertheless, it is a matter of particular significance in relation to the huge illicit profits and organised crime aspects of the drug traffic.

"Police simply cannot afford to project themselves as anything more or less than society and the law prescribe. As servants of society and upholders of the law, the Police must be visibly upright while still striving for both effectiveness and for humanity in action. There must also be a distinct element of



• Deputy Commissioner John Johnson.

approachability vis-a-vis the public, for it is from the public that both confidence and information as to crime derive.

"Police, therefore, have to be rigorous and be seen to be rigorous in the maintenance of their own standards of probity and impartiality. There must be a visible concern that our standards of policing and police standards of conduct be kept at the highest level.

"In this continuing process, objective media reporting of specific instances of police failure to meet their standards or of specific instances where officers have conspicuously maintained the required levels of probity or duty, is particularly useful.

"Such reporting brings the question of police accountability to the forefront of the public mind, and will highlight the continuing need that standards be maintained. Such reporting also helps develop the essential relationship between the community and their Police.

"As for the second area, in addressing what I have called the social context of Australia's drug situation, I must be careful not to stray out of my depth in the preserve of sociologists and psychologists. I am, therefore, deliberately avoiding the larger question of the causes of the present drug-abuse situation, and of the "social engineering" required to rectify it.

"I am concentrating instead solely upon the fact that Australia's current drug situation does patently exist, and that we know too little of a structured nature about it.

"As a step towards increasing our knowledge of the overall situation, Australian police forces are,

incidentally, anxious to implement a common database which will at least serve to identify the drug-supply threats that we encounter and thus enable enforcement resources to be allocated proactively. The Australian Federal Police is also anxious to encourage a structured study of drug abuse patterns which might help determine more exactly what the drug-demand situation in our major cities really is.

"But in the meantime, and as no more than a shot in the existing darkness, I have been speculating, very tentatively I might add, about attitudes to drug use. The Australian ethic has always tended to accord a degree of respect to heavy consumption and full participation. In respect to the consumption of alcohol and drugs we may, until quite recently, have tended subconsciously to equate moderation with mediocrity.

"I am certainly not suggesting that we go the whole way to 'erehwon', but it is possible that the media might find it useful to continue the recent modification of Australian attitudes to full indulgence, by instilling a greater degree of pity or contempt where a degree of awe or admiration, particularly on the part of the young, may still exist.

"The Police themselves may have contributed unnecessarily to the dramatisation of illicit drug supply by according undue emphasis to the 'street' value of drugs seized. The astronomical notional 'street' values placed upon recent large seizures may, however, have become virtually meaningless to the average newspaper reader.

"The third area that I have singled out for mention requires little amplification. It seems to me that there is still a lack of public awareness of the severity of the penalties associated with offences relating to the illicit supply of drugs. Until the multiplicity of legislation at present existing in this field is reduced, it occurs to me that media reports of individual cases might usefully carry at least passing mention of the prescribed penalties involved.

"The degree to which such prescribed penalties should be emphasised in drug-education programs is doubtless of concern to educationalists.

"In conclusion, I wish to stress that the three specific areas of interaction between the Media and the Police which I have picked upon are offered for discussion and are by no means exclusive. In all three areas I see a need for objectivity even if this be at the expense of dramatic licence.

"Many police, I suspect, get quite a kick out of seeing themselves portrayed in terms of 'cop shop' drama. Perhaps our reports to the Media of individual seizures or cases have on occasion erred towards the dramatic, or have emphasised the more dramatic aspects at the expense of the mundane. I, personally, would like to see more emphasis placed upon the hard facts of each matter and less upon drama. We should see ourselves as police performing their duty to the public rather than as glorified 'drug fighters'."

CYPRUS TEAM SETTLES IN

The AFP's seven-man 22nd Cyprus contingent recently began its tour of duty.

For some, it's a case of second helping — none more so than ACT Region's Sergeant Ken Baker. Ken only returned from his previous stint on 2 July.

"I'm looking forward to making it second time around," he said.

Most, like Ken, have signed on for six months, with the option of extending that six months to a year. Most, if not all, will probably take the same option.

Another second-timer is Sergeant Ian Pine. A former Commonwealth Police Officer, Ian last served on Cyprus in 1971-72, in the days of the big contingents.

Other members of the 22nd contingent are Southern Region's Brian Williams and Tony Tulson,



• The AFP's tailor, Philip Reiner, runs the tape measure over Bob Hunter as other contingent members look on.

Northern Region's Noel Caswell, and previously ACT-based officers

Bob Hunter (VIP Protection and a top sportsman) and John Lundy.