

S. Dau

• Looking upward, visitors and workers will see the vast atrium as they enter the new building.

TOGETHER *at last!*

PLATYPUS Number One announced, in January 1984, that the 'AFP Centre to be ready in 1987'.

For the first time since the formation of the Australian Federal Police in October 1979 much of it will come together into a central headquarters building. The past seven years have been frustrating with so many different related sections working in different locations. It won't all be solved by the March move into the interim. AFP headquarters in Northbourne Avenue, Civic, but for many at last it will be a pleasant change to deal more

quickly and efficiently with each other to face common challenges. It will give more time to tackle the real tasks.

Unfortunately not all the outlying sections can be fitted into the new headquarters and that won't be possible until the purpose built headquarters becomes a reality.

The 1984 plan proposed such a building owned by the Commonwealth. Costing around \$21 million, it was to be on London Circuit, near the Lakeside International Hotel. Construction was to have commenced in October 1984 and been

completed by March this year. Funding was not available then, and has not been found since. The Minister for Local Government and Administrative Services, Mr Tom Uren, announced in 1985 that leased space would be provided for the AFP. His Department, DOLGAS, is responsible for all Commonwealth property of this kind, and it has taken a ten-year lease on Northbourne Towers, now nearing completion.

The demand for office space in the central business district of Canberra is high, and much of the office accommoda-

tion constructed in recent years has been taken up by the Commonwealth on a long-term basis.

Leasing avoids the complication of servicing long-term loans for large capital works in a financial environment where capital is needed for other purposes.

A disadvantage of leasing is that the building has to be usable for purposes other than the special requirements of the AFP. In this case, certain specialised units will still have to be outposted. We are hoping that the AFP will have its own headquarters before the lease expires.

Mr Trevor Parkinson, seconded to the AFP from DOLGAS for the duration of the project, said that the Department of Housing and Construction (DHC) used a 'fast track' method of documentation and construction of the building fit-out.

Civil and Civic were appointed Project Management Group to co-ordinate the architectural, mechanical, electrical and hydraulic works. They waived the calling of tenders. There are, of course, cost penalties in this method, but there are large savings in time and 'dead rent'.

Fast tracking does require considerable co-operation between, in this case, the AFP, DHC and DOLGAS. Mr Parkinson said that the AFP responded to all deadlines on time. The project team received excellent support from AFP members and staff.

The Building

Mr Parkinson said, "Although Northbourne Towers is not a custom-built base for the AFP, it does have some distinctive features. There are two basement levels and seven other floors. The two wings flank an attractive atrium rising from ground to first floors and then slopes back to the fourth floor. The atrium faces outward onto Veterans Park, now being landscaped."

The floors of the AFP's new quarters are of post-tensioned concrete with sup-

porting columns. External cladding is in pre-cast concrete panels. Double glazing of the windows facing east and west, with venetian blinds, provides solar control. North and south windows are mostly single-glazed but curtains will be fitted.

Altogether, about 9500 sq.m. will be available for the 640 staff expected to occupy Northbourne Towers. Some increase in numbers can be accommodated.

Of the three lifts, only two will serve the basements.

Layout

Floor layouts reflect new government guidelines, and take into account functional relationships and requirements of individual occupants. Working spaces have been kept as open as possible to ensure that as many people as possible have natural lighting. Demountable screens with work stations maximise flexibility and enable rapid and inexpensive layout changes. Where partitioning is used, construction is plaster finished with vinyl of different colours for different sets of floors. Some rooms have fabric-coated feature walls.

Standard lighting has been modified where screen-based equipment is expected to be used.

Communications

Communications facilities are state-of-the-art, with provision for possible technology changes. The PABX includes a Customer Administration Terminal System enabling phone number changes without the need to bring in a technician.

The terminal has the capacity to print our internal telephone directory, allowing amendments to be readily prepared and issued.

Safety and Security

Bombproof curtains in sensitive areas, security cameras on every floor and computer controlled alarms and access systems will make our new headquarters extremely secure.

One of the few areas directly accessible to the public will be the glass-fronted recruitment office on the ground floor, facing east.

Access to other areas will be limited to AFP members, Office of AFP public service staff, and escorted visitors. AFP members not in uniform will be required to wear their badges while in the building, with OAFP staff displaying their identity cards.

Within the building, certain high security areas will be accessible only to specially authorised AFP members and staff. Computer controlled access and monitoring arrangements are designed to ensure that entry is available only to those with a need to know.

The basic security system will be installed before people move in, and it will be progressively upgraded to incorporate all the features described above with an estimated total cost of around \$300,000.

The building will be occupied 24 hours a day, but after normal working hours only certain national and international duty functions will operate. During normal working hours an AFP member at the HQ main reception desk will be available to answer public enquiries. Community Policing, assistance to the people of Canberra City will continue to be directed from the City Police Station in London Circuit.

An emergency warning and evacuation system has been installed in the HQ, with speakers in strategic spots connected to Warden Information Posts. These are connected to a central panel operated by a Chief Fire Warden.

Accessibility

Being in Canberra's central business district, our new quarters has all the advantages of an inner city location, and some of the disadvantages.

Parking for official and other authorised vehicles is provided in the basements. Parking outside the building in the service area parallel to Mort Street on the east side is restricted to Commonwealth vehicles, disabled drivers and medical practitioners.

Local and interstate bus terminals are nearby, within easy walking distance, and taxi ranks are across the street.

Amenities

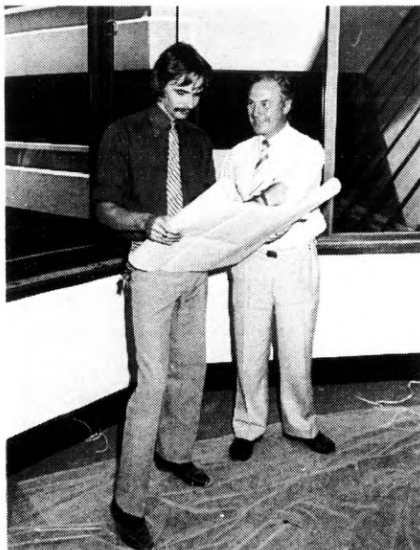
The proximity of a wide range of eateries means that it was not necessary to include canteen facilities in the new building, although beverage making facilities are available on each floor.

Other staff amenities include a light exercise room, and shower and change rooms. The first floor has a large recreation room with kitchen.

Project Officer Trevor Parkinson said, "This move is a milestone in the short history of the AFP. It draws together for the first time those elements which have been located in the converted bedrooms of Havelock House, the leased space in the NRMA Building and part of AMP Building, and some specialist units at Weston. Most of those members who work in the old Barton offices, believed to have been built for General Macarthur but never used by him, will be able to move to the central offices."

The new arrangements will be enormously beneficial by reducing travel, improving communications, giving police operations greater security, and most of all, the experience gained in gathering together the diversity of functions for which the AFP is responsible will be immensely useful when we acquire our own purpose-built headquarters.

The project team has put in a hard 18 months on this enterprise, and Mr Parkinson, Inspector Joe Royle and Mr Graeme Keed have earned our thanks for a job well done.



• Site Manager, Geoff Voysey (left) and Project Officer, Trevor Parkinson, conduct final checks in Northbourne Towers.

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