

WELFARE

SUPPOSE you've exhausted your sick leave credits, you have to take some time off without pay, and there's a payment due on the house? What do you do?

If you're a member of the AFP you have a Welfare Officer to go to. Not only members, but their spouses or survivors (and families), and retired members and their families. There's a Welfare Officer in each region, with a back-up in case of his or her absence.

You can seek advice with a personal visit or by telephone. If necessary, the Welfare Officer can visit you in your home or workplace. The advice is absolutely confidential, and your personal records are not noted. The Officer is a member of the force, but always wears civvies.

In any large workforce there are some major areas of concern, and the AFP is no exception. The AFP aims to reduce stress in members by providing a departmental source of assistance to resolve personal problems, to promote harmony and so improve the efficiency of the organization.

Common causes of problems are marital discord, alcoholism, health, shiftwork, and resignation or retirement. Other problems crop up when a member is transferred, with the attendant worries about schooling, housing and money. An analysis of a recent Welfare Officer's report shows that extended sick leave was the most common cause for a consultation, with retirement running a close second. Welfare officers suspect that many problems are not brought to their

attention possibly because members are unaware of the service, or, more disturbingly, because problems are being 'kept in'. Problems aired with a confidential adviser early in their development may be resolved with very little effort. Problems suppressed may develop into serious ill-health.

Much welfare advice is administrative in nature, so it is important that the officers know the ins and outs of the AFP. Senior Sergeant Rod Greschke, who has just finished a six-year stint as ACT Region Welfare Officer, is such a one. Rod had 21 years with the ACT Police. He has done TAFE courses in counselling skills.

Rod has found that early retirement, particularly invalidity retirement, presents many problems.

'Don't have too high expectations of yourself in the first year,' Rod advises retirees. 'Lack of direction makes some people think they are failures.'

'Few people plan their retirement, and invalidity happens when you can't plan for it. Retirement is rather like the grieving process,' said Rod.

Rod Greschke believes that people should not rush into retirement decisions. There is a period of emotional unease during which hasty decisions can be made. One of the more common retirement decisions was one to move house, often to what the member perceives as a more equable climate. Some months, and many thousands of dollars later, the retiree realises that he would be better off 'back home'.

Rod's place at the ACT welfare desk has been taken by Senior Constable Angela Brown, who has been assisting in the job for some time.

Here are the names and addresses and telephone numbers of the AFP Welfare Officers:

Australian Capital Territory

Senior Constable Angela Brown
Weston Complex
Unwin Place
Weston ACT 2611
062 870 209

Eastern Region

Det Senior Sergeant P.E. Prytherch
TNT Plaza Tower 2
Lawson Square
Redfern NSW 2016
02 690 8823

Northern Region

Senior Constable M.G. Knispel
8th Floor, Australia House
145 Eagle Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
07 227 0845

Southern Region

Det Senior Sergeant C.J. Arnold
Hamilton House
102-104 Jolimont Road
East Melbourne Vic 3002
03 633 050

Central Region

Det Senior Sergeant R. Tinsley
129-130 Greenhill Road
Unley SA 5061
08 274 8811 Ext 839

Western Region

Detective Sergeant D.H. Veitch
Perth Airport,
Belmont WA 6000
09 277 8564

Northern Territory Region

Senior Constable Michel Merean
Cnr Albatross and Whit Sts
Winnellie NT 5789
089 845 288

OFFICE STRUCTURES

NO redundancies and no substantive pay losses. That's what the Public Service Board has promised as a result of the restructuring of the clerical and keyboard groups in the Commonwealth Public Service.

It will now be possible for a clerical assistant or a typist or a data processing operator to start at the bottom of the ladder through entry by the clerical assistant test, and then progress to a fifth level as a Clerical Administrative 5, a Clerical Assistant 8, a Typist Controller 3 or 4, or a Personal Secretary 2.

Graduate Administrative Assistants may enter at the second or third level through the graduate selection process, with or without keyboard skills.

In the old structure, staff are restricted to a narrow range of skills and experience. The new structure offers better career prospects, more flexible and interesting jobs, and simpler pay scales.

For example, a typist may be required to provide word processing services, but much of the work might be preparing affidavits and search warrants having a substantial amount of clerical activity.

And again, a clerical assistant may be maintaining registers and generally assisting in the work of a branch, but the work might be largely performed at a computer terminal or typewriter.

Both of these people will now be, in

effect, on the same promotional ladder.

The new structure is limited to the clerical and keyboard groups up to and including Clerical Administrative 5, where women are concentrated in the Public Service. Many women have been trapped in narrowly-designed work streams with limited career possibilities. This has caused a lot of work-related stress and occupational health problems such as RSI.

In the Office of the Australian Federal Police duty statements are now being revised. The OAFP is taking the opportunity of revising all duty statements, as the duties of related positions will be affected by the changes. ●