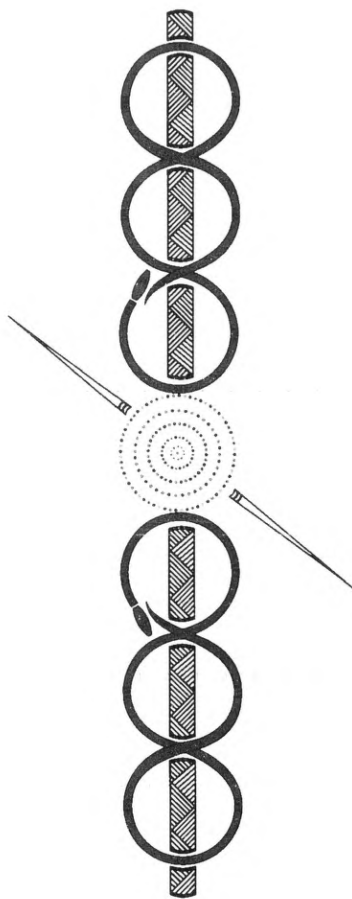


# Indigenous employment strategy launched

By Detective Acting Sergeant Jo Campbell  
OIC AFP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit

**R**ecruiting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people will be stepped up under a new strategy formed as a joint campaign by the AFP and the Department of Employment and Education and Training.



• The AFP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategy logo was designed by Detective Constable Russell Brown who is a member of the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community.

Indigenous Australians will be encouraged to join the AFP under a new recruitment strategy.

With only eight Aborigines in the AFP at the present time, the aim is to increase indigenous staff to 58 or two per cent of the work force by the year 2000.

The AFP will encourage Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to consider careers as sworn or unsworn staff.

The strategy is a joint effort by the AFP and DEET. The AFP will provide about \$4.5 million towards implementing the scheme with DEET providing more than \$800,000 to support a range of support and development programs.

The three main objectives of the strategy are – to attract, recruit and retain indigenous Australians.

## ATTRACTION

The aim of this part of the strategy is to present the attractiveness of the Australian Federal Police as an organisation to work in, to indigenous people, both young and more mature.

Firstly, prepare marketing material on the AFP specifically designed to attract the attention of indigenous students at high school and post secondary institutions.

Secondly, the AFP will arrange for the delivery of this information to targeted groups within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## RECRUITMENT

There are two recruitment streams into the AFP at present, police members and staff members. This strategy will seek to ensure entry of indigenous personnel through both.

### Police Member Stream

Strategies here are dependent on



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the capacity of the AFP to recruit over the next few years. As such recruitment targets have been set to commence in the 1995-96 year, and are then set at eight per year for five years. While some loss is to be expected, this level of intake should result in around 2 per cent indigenous police members by the year 2000.

A broad approach will be adopted which seeks indigenous recruits with tertiary qualifications, through bridging programs offered in the various states and territories and direct from the community, taking into account relevant work and life experiences of people working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

The AFP will also take action to support indigenous recruits through their training at the training college.

### Staff Member Stream

There has been limited entry level recruitment to the AFP over the

recent past. Base grade positions are not abundant and staff turnover has been extremely low. Nevertheless there have been, and will continue to be, separations from the organisation which create vacancies from time-to-time.

The organisation's recruitment processes have not attracted the attention of potential indigenous candidates. This is the first matter which needs to be addressed if the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members is to move closer to their representation in the general population. Entry level training is a further means of bringing indigenous people into the organisation in a structured manner.

The aim, as regards the Staff Member Stream, will be to increase the number of indigenous staff members to around 15 over the period of the strategy.

### RETENTION

A significant expansion of the number of indigenous staff within the AFP over the next few years will require measures to ensure the organisation is as supportive of them as it is of all others. The most effective way to do this will be to ensure that those joining the organisation are fully incorporated as members of their local work team and the wider organisation.

For some, younger people in particular, there may be a need to provide some initial support measures to help overcome issues such as lack of familiarity with the culture of the organisation and personal uncertainty as regards protocol and communication.

### Placement After Training

The AFP will adopt a more flexible approach to placement of recruits after training in order to ensure that suitable indigenous members are not lost to the organisation through unnecessarily rigid approaches to choice of placement. The emphasis in placement should be on "best fit"—for the organisation and for the member.



*Photographed at the launch of the AFP's indigenous recruiting strategy are, from left, AFP law cadet Marshall Solomon, Queenbeyan Clerk of Court, Cathy Little, Commissioner Mick Palmer, OIC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit Jo Campbell and AFP forensic cadet Garry Rivett.*

The AFP recognises and will take account of culturally important issues, such as family ties, which are critical in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Within reason, the organisation will consider such ties in offering work placements, particularly first placements, to indigenous recruits. At the same time all efforts will be made to ensure indigenous recruits are aware that the AFP is a national organisation and first work placements may be in areas away from their current home base.

The AFP will adopt a more flexible approach to the placement of recruits after their training which will see indigenous members suitably placed to ensure a 'best fit' for them and the organisation.

### Cadetships

A Cadet program has been established to recruit indigenous Australians with specific tertiary qualifications. Areas to be considered for cadetships will include, forensic science, law, accountancy and business studies. Two cadetships will be offered each year.

The cadetships will involve employment with the AFP, with an appropriate training salary, while engaged in full-time study. Holders of cadetships will be expected to work

within the organisation during the long break between academic years.

Cadetship positions may be established in any state or territory where the appropriate courses are available and appropriate AFP work experience can be provided.

### Police Recruitment Network

A student support network for new police members and staff members will be overseen by a new Aboriginal liaison officer Detective Sergeant Sheryl Hedges, currently the AFP's only female indigenous member. The AFP recognises that all police services will be facing similar issues in relation to indigenous employment and there are considerable advantages in co-operating and learning from each other.

It will initiate contact with other police services and attempt to establish a network of officers working on similar strategies. The purpose of this network will be to encourage and share best practice in the field. As such it will be a semi-formal arrangement through which the experiences of each participant can be shared and there be some joint problem solving of issues which arise.

In the light of the recent review of police actions in relation to the recommendations of the Royal

Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody the AFP will provide a leadership role in encouraging best practice in this field. It will host an annual meeting of the network in which all strategies can be examined and co-operative action developed.

**Community Policing**

The AFP's community policing responsibilities which bring it into contact with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are confined to the ACT region and Jervis Bay. In each of these situations considerable efforts have been made and continue to be made to develop and maintain good working relationships with local Aboriginal communities. The realities of police work are that this relationship will be tested from time to time.

For the longer term, the most effective strategies for the AFP's relationship with indigenous communities are likely to be:

- to have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as members of community policing. Such members would not be confined to dealing

with indigenous offenders, but would undertake the normal range of duties of all police. Their presence, however, will assist the organisation through being a source of advice to others both at the time of action and more generally. They will also provide an example of joint acceptance of responsibility by the police service and the community for community policing;

- the availability of preventative programs aimed at reducing crime, particularly among young people. Continued support for programs such as Police and Citizen Youth Clubs and the recent ACT involvement in supporting the development of skills in computer technology among indigenous youth are examples. The more the AFP can support the work of elders and community organisations in this way, the more likely it will be that trust will be high and preventative programs will succeed.

Part of the strategy is not only to maintain a good policing relationship with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander communities of the ACT region and Jervis Bay, but also to improve our relationships with indigenous people wherever we operate.

It is proposed to achieve this by having indigenous members of the AFP policing the community and ensuring the availability of preventive programs, particularly for younger people.

Overall, this strategy is part of a broader program to achieve a workforce which is as diverse as the population it serves.

Attending the program launch were Senator Bob McMullan, representing the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Jackie Oakley and Commissioner John Patterson for ATSIC as well as leaders from the Ngunnawal and Wreck Bay Aboriginal communities.

Printed material including brochures, posters and stickers have been produced to help publicise the scheme. For information contact Jo Campbell, officer-in-charge of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit at Headquarters on (06) 275 7621.



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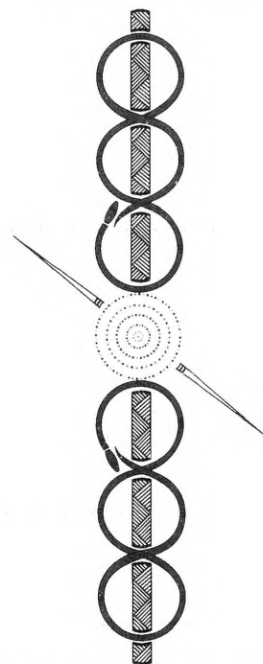
The AFP inaugural Indigenous Officers Seminar was held at Forestry House, Yarralumla ACT during the last week of July. Attending the seminar were:

**Back row (l to r)**

Detective Constable Russell Brown, Tracey Whetnall (AFP consultant), Gail Ferris, Detective Sergeant Sheryl Hedges, Detective Constable Craig Siams.

**Front row (l to r)**

Detective Constable Dave Bell, Detective Constable Shane Robinsion, Detective Acting Sergeant Jo Campbell, Bill Collins, Paul House.



- The centre piece in the design represents a hearth/meeting place or creation and is symbolic of Canberra which is the 'hearth' of the AFP. The spear is representative of the warrior class. The circles represent the six regions of the AFP and the hatched bars are the dispossessed indigenous people. The serpents on either side are significant of joining together the indigenous people and police.