

Community policing at its best

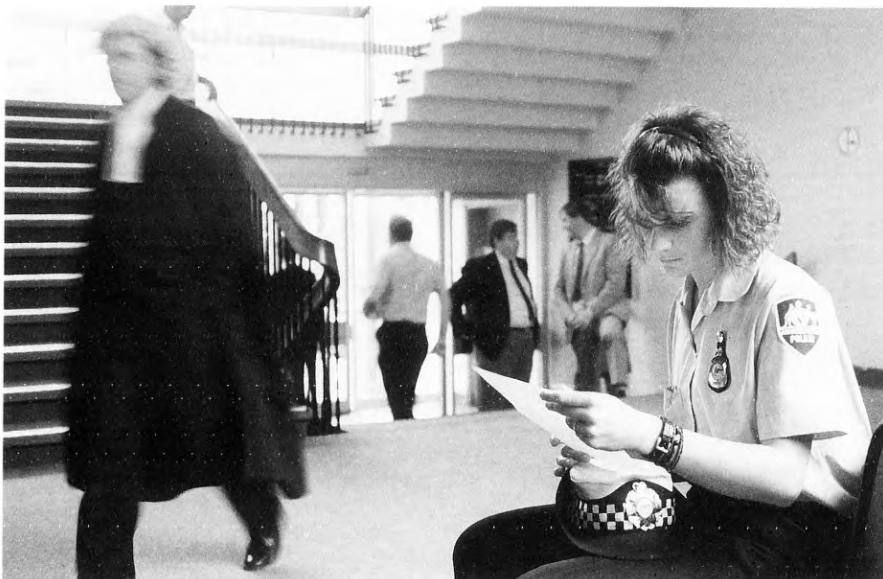
Nowhere else in Australia is the AFP so visible and so directly in contact with the members of the community than it is in the Australian Capital Territory. In providing a traditional community policing service, ACT Region members encounter challenges that their fellow AFP officers in other regions may seldom face. Nevertheless, ACT Region members are experiencing the same change process as the rest of the AFP.

ACT Region members provide a full range of community policing services and have a proud tradition of community involvement.

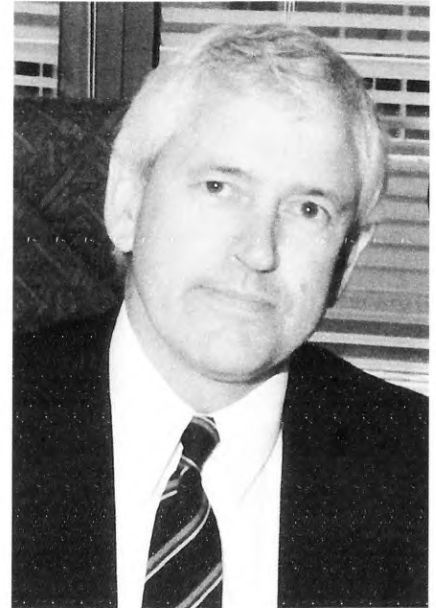
Encouraging community input, ACT Region has maintained a flexible attitude towards the methods employed to maintain the peace and to protect Canberra's community.

Policing in the ACT is divided into Belconnen District, City District, Woden District, and Tuggeranong District with police stations at Civic, Canberra's central shopping precinct, at Belconnen Town Centre in the north, Woden Town Centre in the inner south and Erindale in the far south. The administrative regional headquarters is located in the Winchester Police Centre, Belconnen.

ACT Region has proved innovative in community policing, being among the first Australian police to introduce Neighbourhood Watch, Rural Patrol, bicycle patrols,



AFP uniformed police and plain-clothes detectives service the community policing needs of the people of the Australian Capital Territory.



Deputy Commissioner Jim Allen is assisting Commissioner Palmer in the day-to-day management of ACT policing.

and strategically placed police shopfronts. In recent times the region has introduced Diversionary Conferencing which provides minor offenders and their victims resolution options outside the court system and Country Town Policing which locates a police officer within suburban communities as a first point of contact on non-urgent police matters.

On April 18, 1995, the Chief Police Officer for the ACT since 1991, Assistant Commissioner Peter Dawson, retired from the AFP after 35 years of police service.

As a result, Commissioner Mick Palmer assumed the responsibilities of the Chief Police Officer for the ACT. Commissioner Palmer is assisted in the day-to-day management of ACT policing by Deputy Commissioner Jim Allen.

These are interim arrangements to

enable the Commonwealth and ACT Governments to consider the findings and recommendations of Stage 2 of the ACT Policing Review before more permanent management arrangements are established.

The ACT is policed by the AFP under an arrangement with the ACT Government.

Changes applied in the ACT

The organisation-wide changes have been applied to the ACT Region with an immediate benefit being the ability of experienced specialists to cross-train uniform personnel and for a greater number of uniform police to be integrated with detectives to conduct significant investigations.

As part of this move, in June 1995, the Major Crime Branch was disbanded and its members re-deployed across the four police districts to spread the expertise of the investigators throughout the region.

The members retained carriage of any investigations they were conducting prior to their redeployment and continued those investigations with the support of regional resources where appropriate. This redeployment gave the AFP a keener edge in fighting crime within the ACT.

In late May 1995, the major refurbishment of City Police Station was completed at a cost of \$7.6 million Canberra, and more particularly the central city, is now served by a first-class police facility.

At the opening of City Station Commissioner Palmer referred to the application of the AFP's organisational change in the ACT.

"All government bodies, and the police are no exception, are being asked to do more with less and in this climate I doubt if there are any police chief executives that do not feel they need additional resources.

"The difficulty is that governments do not have unlimited revenue, and we must compete for scarce resources with a range of other priority bids and agency initiatives.

"In relation to the AFP, I believe we have an obligation to first get our own house in order to ensure that we



Regular public opinion surveys in the ACT continue to rate highly the policing service provided by ACT Region.

are operationally as efficient as possible before any approach is made to government for additional resources. Indeed we cannot expect governments to take us seriously unless our case has credibility and can stand close scrutiny.

"The AFP's change program is aimed at creating a flexible and multi-skilled organisation which maximises the developmental opportunity and operational skills of the widest possible percentage of our people and, through the strategic use of those people, deliver the highest and most effective level of service to our community.

"Criminality is now more mobile, organised and sophisticated than at any point in history and law enforcement agencies must adapt to this new environment. The link between organised drug importation and the tragic deaths in the ACT in recent months is a good example of the insidious potential of organised crime to directly and dramatically affect the lives of ordinary people and local communities.

"The challenge for policing is to have skills and processes which allow us to most effectively manage and control these links and the resultant crimes.

"One of the challenges faced by management is to motivate, skill and

empower the widest number of the organisation's staff and to improve improve employee challenges and opportunities. This involves the use of highly skilled and experienced members to train, coach and develop others so as to remove elitism where it may exist and to maximise the capacity of the organisation to deal with the diversity, unpredictability and difficulty associated with many of the expectations of our community. A team approach with skills and resources spread across the ACT offers, I believe, the best recipe.

"The abolition of the Major Crime Squad in the ACT is a good example of how the AFP changing the way it does business and not the business it does.

"The expertise that was in the Major Crime Squad, which was housed at the Winchester Centre, is now available all police stations in the ACT. It has not been lost as suggested by some – it is simply being better shared.

"As a result of this skill transfer the AFP will develop a wider range of personnel with experience in investigating major, serious and other crime and this will mean we will be in a better position to deal with these investigations and our people will have more rewarding jobs as a result."