

Creation of women's liaison officer recommended by forum

By Robyn Kean and Richard Crothers

Continuing to foster the role of women within the AFP, last November's Women's Forum resulted in an 'in principle' agreement by Commissioner Mick Palmer for the establishment of a women's liaison officer who will have direct access to his office on issues raised by the AFP Women's Network.

Federal Agent Audrey Fagan will fill the role of National Women's Liaison Officer until an elected officer has been determined by the network.

Other recommendations arising from the forum included the creation of women's networks in all regions, the removal of any remaining discriminatory practices in the AFP and the move towards the application of job sharing and part-time work in operational policing environments.

Eastern Region hosted the forum with the conference theme being: 'Careers, Culture and Change' and was aimed at AFP culture, the change process, and women's perspectives on promotion, mentoring and networking. Sixty-five delegates, representing all AFP regions attended the forum.

Key-note speakers included Kerry Chikarovski, former Minister for Consumer Affairs; Carmel Niland, of Carmel Niland and Associates; Christine Williams, Commissioner of ATSIC; Christine Nixon, Assistant Commissioner of NSW Police and Commissioner Mick Palmer.

Dr Stefa Wirga, a human resources

management specialist, was the forum's facilitator.

Other speakers included AFP personnel who spoke on a variety of topics, with the change process, the ACT Region sexual harassment case and Carmel Niland's report on the AFP featuring high on the agenda.

Afterwards, Commissioner Palmer met with a delegation and considered the recommendations and proposals that arose from the forum.

He agreed in principle that each region should form its own women's network.

It was agreed that the one network would be formed in the ACT geographic region to represent both community and national functions, with the possibility that ACT Region would have its own officer to liaise directly with with the ACT chief police officer on network issues.

The forum encouraged regional networks to approach their managers for funding to allow for newsletter printing costs, travel costs for representatives and sufficient funds for guest speakers at network luncheons. This would further ensure the



Federal Agent Audrey Fagan will fill the role of National Women's Liaison Officer for the time being.

network's success and reinforce management commitment to advancing women in the AFP.

The Commissioner has requested that regional general managers assist their networks by providing, where appropriate, time off for network meetings, hospitality funding and travel

Integral to the ethos of the AFP is the recognition by its people, of the personal qualities and values needed to ensure that it is regarded as successful; made up of professional individuals empowered to achieve their full potential; and in so doing, enabling the organisation to achieve its organisational goals and be recognised accordingly.

Mick Palmer — Mollymook, NSW, 1994.

Photo by R. W. Crothers



Commissioner Palmer at the AFP Women's Forum held in November 1995

assistance to attend interstate meetings.

Professional Development at headquarters will take responsibility for examining recommendations aimed at removing discriminatory practices that remain in the AFP.

It was decided that specific issues hampering the introduction of job sharing and part-time work in operational areas in ACT Region and elsewhere should be raised within the enterprise bargaining process.

Women and technology

Among the speakers at the conference, Kerry Henderson from Head Office, Canberra, presented a paper on how women in the AFP could use technology to create a fair and equitable workplace.

She said by acquiring technical literacy women could improve their career mobility and become empowered to make a significant contribution to the management of the AFP.

Drawing on the current change process within the AFP, Ms Henderson said most employees, women in particular, are now headed along a path of multiskilling. However, she questions if women have profited from multiskilling.

She said that while there certainly have been individuals who have taken advantage of this opportunity and advanced through the organisation, generally the AFP has a segmented workforce, where many women work

in administrative areas doing what is still stereotypically defined as "women's work".

Ms Henderson pointed out that it is possible to use technology bring about the establishment of new information and communication channels with the most obvious being electronic mail and its associated bulletin boards.

"I would like to see the implementation of a bulletin board for

women's issues and organisational values," she said.

"When we can use technology to increase communication and initiate alternative interactions within the organisation it will be possible that new styles of work, organisational values and management within the AFP will develop and lead to benefits for all employees, managers and staff alike."

Ms Henderson said women should not underestimate the scale and complexity of the task involved in realising the benefits of using technology to bring about cultural change in the AFP.

"At the same time, cultural change can offer real prospects of decent work for many women," she said.

"In the AFP it is organisational obstacles, rather than a lack of technological literacy, which is usually responsible for inhibiting women's advancement.

"Although women are increasingly entering professions that employ technology, it is the structural and social problems that inhibit women's application of technology," she said. □

Newsletter launched for women in policing

Last November saw the launch of a newsletter targeted at women involved in Australian and New Zealand policing, with the second edition being published this month.



Under the masthead *The Whip* (Women Here In Policing) the newsletter is part of a strategy to bring together women in policing in Australia and New Zealand.

The first edition was produced by NSW Police and the second by the AFP. New Zealand Police members are in line to produce the third edition and volunteers are called for to produce subsequent editions.

The Whip will provide information about, and of interest to, women in the policing industry.

Contributions, advertising enquiries and subscriptions should be directed to:

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