

# Community policing *has changed radically*

[John A Davies APM OAM  
Chief Police Officer]

*ACT Policing is an integral part of the complex whole that is now the Australian Federal Police. Like the wider AFP, ACT Policing is now a radically different body than that of 19 October 1979. It has evolved from a traditional para-military policing body of mainly Anglo Saxon males, who possessed a standard educational background, to one which exhibits an ever increasing scholastic level and diversity in its make-up.*



John Davies APM OAM  
Chief Police Officer

Our employees, on average, have a higher level of education, come from a range of religious and ethnic backgrounds, can often speak more than one language and hunger for more complex and challenging roles. It is also significant to note that a third of our workforce is now women, which I believe is a vast improvement on the ratio that existed prior to October 1979. The average age of our recruits is now around 29, most have experienced several work roles before choosing a policing career.

In 1979, potential for upward movement was more often than not limited to opportunities created by retirement or the death of serving members. Merit rarely featured in advancement and work demands were high but personnel generally did not have to take on more than they could chew.

My comments are in no way intended as criticism of those who worked pre-October 1979. It was a different era and people worked hard with real commitment and dedication in what was even then a difficult and much misunderstood profession. It was, however, a



Chief Police Officer John Davies with Steve Lancaster, Mandy Newton and Tony Murney with Communications Senior Constable Tony Giorgio.

time when Australians believed (or were at least told) that ever increasing improvements in industry and technology would mean that by the new millennium we would all be endeavouring to come to terms with our increasing leisure time.

Nobody at that time, including the futurists, foresaw the very different world in which we now live and operate – scarcer resources, increasing roles and demands to deal with crimes that were not even predicted. Higher workloads and the resultant frenetic work environments have brought increasing pressures to bear on families. We are continually looking at ways of ensuring our members retain a sensible work life balance. Of course, this unfolding scenario applies across all areas of society not just policing.



Responsibility is at an all time high, as is accountability. Our communities still expect that 'their' police will be there at a moment's notice to deal with 'their' problem and police, as members of our community, wish that it could be so. Now, more than ever, we need to be continually engaged with the community at large to ensure that both sides appreciate the needs, expectations and realities of policing in the 21st Century.

"With these ever increasing demands, police have had to evolve from a reactionary model towards an intelligence led organisation. Obviously a considerable amount of our work is still reactionary, however, more and more, we are working in partnership with other agencies both government and private sector, as well as the community generally to share the responsibility. As part of this re-engineering process we have also modified our intelligence processes to assist in proactive targeting. In tandem with the changes in organisational culture and structural realignment we are also utilising a much larger range of technology and forensic tools in our fight against crime. Obviously the use of DNA is at the forefront of this field.

The AFP's ACT Policing component now operates under an Arrangement established between the respective Commonwealth and ACT Police Ministers. The next Arrangement is due for signing in March 2005. A joint ACT Policing study oversighted by the AFP and the ACT Department of Justice and Community Safety is currently underway which will better inform all relevant parties to ensure that the governance arrangements, accountability mechanisms, assets and resources under the Arrangement are the most appropriate for our rapidly changing environment.

It is a testament to all members of ACT Policing that amidst the massive organisational changes and environmental swings that they have remained committed and focused in maintaining the ACT as a safe place to live.