

# Pounding the pavement

**When Ken Bemi was working out in the gym 25 years ago, he little thought that one day he would be working at the frontline of Australia's national security.**

Achieving his goal of becoming a police officer was not easy for Inspector Ken Bemi. In the early 1980s, the Queensland Police Service had a height-to-weight ratio rule, and Ken was tall and slim. He spent many hours in the gym trying to gain weight in order to overcome the first barrier to entry.

His efforts paid off and Ken was accepted into the Oxley Police Academy in 1984. Six months later he was sworn in as a constable and was posted to Brisbane City Station.

More than two decades later, Ken has risen to the rank of Detective Inspector and for the past three years he has been a

special AFP member. Inspector Ken Bemi is an Airport Uniform Police (AUP) member at the Gold Coast Airport..

In 2005, the Wheeler Review found that existing airport security was inadequate and recommended a unified command structure for policing at all major Australian airports to help maintain Australia's national security. This was the genesis of the Unified Policing Model and the Airport Uniform Policing function for the AFP.

Airport Uniform Police are called upon to attend any kind of incident from shoplifting to drug smuggling. As special AFP members, they retain their State

or Territory police powers and are able to operate under State, Territory or Commonwealth legislation as required.

Ken left school in 1980 and went to TAFE to learn a trade. He also worked part-time at a fast food outlet where a number of police were regular customers. He became friendly with a couple of the officers and, after hearing about the diversity of their work life, decided that he wanted policing to be his career.

Ken's first week as a police officer was memorable. He was knocked flat on his back trying to break up a brawl, had his police cap stolen and was



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01: Planes at the airport 02: Inspector Ken Bemis 03: Ken Bemis competing in the Gold Coast marathon.

involved in a car chase through the streets of Brisbane.

Ken was one of the first five QPS officers to join the AFP as an AUP member. He began duty at Gold Coast Airport in June 2007 and, at that time, was the only AUP member there. Six months later another two AUP members began work.

“Starting an office from scratch and negotiating the myriad of challenges that accompanies such a task was something that I had never done before and it’s great to be able to tick that box now,” Inspector Bemis said.

“This would not have been possible without the support

that I received from AFP staff already in place at the Gold Coast Airport.

“I consider myself fortunate to have experienced policing in two different organisations.”

Ken is now Officer in Charge of the AUP at the Gold Coast Airport. AUP staff numbers have grown to 22, and the Gold Coast Airport Station has matured into an effective, homogeneous law enforcement and crime prevention unit.

“Doing an honest day’s work and going home confident in the belief that you have contributed in some small way to making your local community

a safer and more secure place to live and work in is very satisfying,” Inspector Bemis said.

“Never be afraid to venture outside your comfort zone and perform different duties. Often, opportunity knocks but once and unless you seize it, you may never get that same opportunity again.”

AFP members at the Gold Coast Airport are committed to an active, physical lifestyle. They regularly take part in sporting events, including cycling, surfing, surf life-saving and football.

Ken recently completed the gruelling 42-kilometre Gold Coast Marathon.

“If you want to run and finish a marathon, you need to put in the time and effort,” Inspector Bemis said.

“This means training even when it’s wet, cold and miserable.”

“The same ethic applies to policing. It has been a very satisfying experience for me to become part of the AFP.”

