

Recruits meet community needs

Being part of the community is fundamental to policing, and even the newest recruits are immersed in the ethic of contribution.

Before Leticia Davidson joined the AFP she lived in rural Queensland and was involved in the State Emergency Service where she helped with bush fires, missing people and rescue operations. After joining the AFP as a recruit, she continued helping the community when the bushfires struck Canberra in 2003.

"My recruit class helped during the bushfires by being available to perform traffic control, protecting people and their property as well as relocating people where needed," Federal Agent Davidson said.

Her commitment to community service has continued to this day.

"After I graduated I was posted to the AFP Sydney Office where I continued my community work by helping with the Special Olympics. I assisted in fund raising and event management which culminated in the annual Gala Dinner," she said.

"Being able to help support these disadvantaged children was an honour that I thoroughly enjoyed. Seeing their smiles when they knew that they would be able to go overseas to represent Australia in the Special Olympics was a joy.

"I'm now a board member of the Chequered Ribbon Association (CRA) which raises funds to support the families of police officers who have died while on duty. This year I helped to organise the CRA Ball, and some of the new recruits from the College also donated their time to assist."

Learning the benefits of community involvement begins on the first day in recruit training. Sergeants Craig McPherson and Chris Peattie are recruit trainers at the AFP College and part of their job is helping the students get out into the community while they are in Canberra.

This community engagement is based on the philosophy of Sir Robert Peel, who created London's first police force in 1829, and is regarded as the father of modern policing. His most frequently quoted 'Peelian Principle' is "the police are the public and the public are the police".

Throughout their training at the AFP College, recruits are reminded that the community they will be policing is also the community they belong to, and they must learn the difference between law enforcement and enforcing the law. Police are members of the public who are paid to uphold the values and laws of the society they live in, and they can achieve much by setting a good example to members of the public, particularly young people.

"Recruits volunteer their personal time to assist ACT Policing's Crime





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01: Police Volunteer Bas Ormeno helping out with Operation Safe Plate 02: Recruit Lucy Hocking taking part in Operation Safe Plate 03: Recruits show their prowess at the limbo at a blue light disco 04: Recruit Jonathon Turkich keeps children entertained with games at a blue light disco 05: Cars queue at Westfield Woden to take part in Operation Safe Plate.

Prevention team by helping to run events such as blue-light discos," Sergeant McPherson said.

"The discos are for children aged between eight and thirteen, and they also incorporate other forms of entertainment such as indoor rock climbing and games.

"The recruits are keen to help, but we also have to ensure that they have enough time to study and take time out for themselves."

Recruits not only help the community, but are also a valuable asset helping police officers with operational tasks that require large numbers of people. For instance, when a murdered man's body was discovered near a child care centre in Canberra in September 2008, recruits assisted police by helping search the surrounding area for evidence.

"An extra 20 pairs of eyes can be extremely helpful to police when searching a large area, and the recruits' involvement provided

them with invaluable operational experience," Sergeant Peattie said.

Recently, recruits were enlisted to help with Operation Safe-Plate. Right across Australia there has been an increase in numberplate theft, especially in shopping centre carparks. Management of Westfield shopping centres came up with a plan to address the problem and asked police if they could help. The recruits volunteered their time to replace the ordinary slot- or phillips-head screws that attach numberplates to vehicles with one-way screws that cannot be removed without an expensive specialised tool. Recruits working at Westfield Woden shopping centre replaced the numberplate screws on more than 600 vehicles in one day.

Community policing can bring a lot of contact with providers and users of community services, especially at hospitals, drug and alcohol detox centres, and the Alexander McConachie Centre, Canberra's new jail. As part of their formal training, recruits are taken to meet

the staff at these establishments, and are also shown the correct procedures for delivering people into their care.

Recruits also donate their time to the policing community by participating in events such as the Royal Canberra Show and painting houses for charity. They act as honour guards for funerals, and helped visitors at the AFP 30th Anniversary open day.

"Interaction with the public gives the recruits a real understanding that they are part of their community, which continues throughout their policing career," Sergeant McPherson said.

"They learn to communicate with people from all walks of life and all cultures and religions, and how to respect their views while upholding the law.

"This in turn engenders respect from the community, when members of the public realise that police are not something to be feared, and can actually help them."



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