



# Police Community Relations in New Zealand

*\*By Andrew Hiller*

**\*Mr. Andrew Hiller, LL.B.(Syd.), LL.M.(Pennsylvania), Barrister at Law (New South Wales and Queensland), Senior Lecturer in Law, University of Queensland. Mr. Hiller is an Ordinary (Associate) Member of A.C.P.C. and also Queensland correspondent for the Australian Institute of Criminology and Chairman, Legal Committee, Queensland Ethnic Communities Council).**

In New Zealand, a separate division of the Police Department, called Public Affairs, co-ordinates the activities of police engaged in community relations, youth aid, crime prevention and press liaison. This Division is headed by an Assistant Commissioner, presently Mr. G. Dallow, O.B.E., who is himself a qualified Solicitor following part-time law studies at Auckland University while a police officer.

The staff of the Public Affairs Department includes a steadily increasing number of commissioned officers and sergeants who are designated as community relations co-ordinators for various districts. They have the general function of fostering, encouraging and maintaining understanding between police and members of the public. It is the responsibility of the Community Relations Co-ordinators to establish liaison with youth groups, ethnic groups, welfare organisations and other appropriate groups with a view to fostering good relationships with them. The Community Relations Co-ordinators arrange addresses and other presentations by police to all sections of the public, including seminars and other meetings with minority groups, as well as open days, displays and other like activities. They are also concerned with police in-service training in the community relations field, including training designed to enhance knowledge by police about minority groups and to eradicate any racial prejudice which individual police might feel about such groups and arranging translations of crime prevention and other appropriate materials into other languages.

The Community Relations Co-ordinators are in turn assisted by other Public Affairs Division police. The latter include police Community Constables who are charged with establishing direct communication with a particular locality and to identify themselves with that locality. They occupy an office within their area of responsibility and are in attendance there in the office at set times, which are clearly displayed outside the office and are published at intervals in the local newspaper. The office may be separate from the local police station and is then described as the Community Constable's Office. There are some twenty such offices now operating in New Zealand.

The Community Constables are entrusted with the function of regularly undertaking foot patrols in shopping centres, children's play areas, hotels and places where thefts, disorderly behaviour and other offences have been known to take place. They have the further responsibility of liaising with local community leaders, administrators of the local authority, headmasters of schools in the area, social workers, sports administrators, licensees of hotels and other appropriate persons with whom liaison should be established. At the same time the Community Constables are required to maintain

liaison with other police working in the area and to advise them of matters of mutual interest. They are required to wear full uniform at all times, unless there is good reason to the contrary.

A particularly progressive aspect of community relations activities in New Zealand has been the establishment of Joint Teams, commonly known as "J" teams. Each team comprises a police officer, a social worker from the Department of Social Welfare and a Department of Maori Affairs community officer, assisted sometimes by representatives of voluntary organisations from the general community. These teams concern themselves particularly with young people with problems, such as those on drugs and the unemployed. They are designed to provide assistance by way of counselling and referral wherever possible and to use arrest action only as a measure of last resort, to be avoided wherever possible. They have built up good personal contacts with employers, public health authorities and drug treatment centres, school principals and teachers and with voluntary organisations in the community. I understand, and have every reason to believe, that these teams are carrying out excellent work in assisting young people and others in need. They dress informally, use Christian names and can establish a good rapport with many young people in places such as discos, coffee houses, bars and like establishments.

Joint participation by three Government Departments in the New Zealand joint team activities, supervised by senior officers of each of these Departments who themselves meet regularly as a co-ordinating committee to discuss their team's activities, is a significant feature of the New Zealand system. Within the Police Department, the police joint team member is responsible to the police community relations co-ordinator.

This co-operative enterprise through joint teams in crime prevention and towards good community relations with young people deserves consideration in Australia. The same applies to the very worthwhile activities of Community Relations Co-ordinators and Community Constables mentioned above.

*Mr. Hiller visited New Zealand during December-January last. In the course of his visit he had several conferences and discussions on the subject of police-community relations in New Zealand with Senior police officers, including the Assistant Commissioner in Charge, Community Relations Co-ordinators, Joint Team members and with members of the legal profession, academics and others. He has visited New Zealand on a number of previous occasions for research and other purposes and was at one time a lecturer in law at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.*

*Ed.*