



Platypus

Australian Federal Police Staff Magazine

No. 7 December 1984

AFP ROLE GROWS IN HEALTH SYSTEM ABUSE

Medi service frauds 'may be close to \$200m.'

Medifraud and overservicing by some members of the Australian medical profession was now 'quite staggering' — possibly as high as \$200 million a year, AFP Acting Assistant Commissioner (Investigations) Col Winchester, told the Australian Hospital Association's recent National Congress.

He said medifraud was repugnant because it was the public who had to pay for it.

The congress, attended by representatives of all Australian Hospital Associations, was held in Hobart.

Mr Winchester was speaking on the AFP's role in the growing abuse of the country's medical health system.

Acting Assistant Commissioner Winchester said that the doctor-patient relationship was regarded as sacrosanct.

"However, when it is abused so that a few may ransack the public purse for their own benefit, then I believe that not only should the full weight of the law be brought to bear on those responsible but that society should also be vocal in condemning them," he said.

The investigation of medifraud and overservicing was one of the AFP's priorities.

"To some it may appear that fraud is the principal dishonest practice and overservicing the secondary dishonest practice. However, our experience is that the reverse is true," he said.

"Overservicing is the primary dishonest practice and herein lies a problem for the AFP because it is not an offence against the criminal law."

There were, however, preventive

measures within the Department of Health to deal with it.

Mr Winchester said the ingenuity of some members of the medical and associated professions to defraud knew no bounds.

"To me, medical fraud is the more repugnant because it involves the sick, the retarded, the aged and the vulnerable in a scheme whereby those on comparatively high incomes seek to gain at the expense of those clearly less fortunate.

"In the end, the expense falls on

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Christmas greetings — Commissioner



"As 1984 draws to a close, it is fair to say that the year has been one of the busiest, and in many respects, one of the most momentous in the AFP's short history.

We have achieved record drug seizure levels, continued the effective combatting of fraud against the Commonwealth in all its manifestations, continued to provide the highest level of community policing in the Capital Territory and assumed responsibility for directing and co-ordinating Australia's coastal surveillance. The violence directed at some family law court judges resulted in the provision of security arrangements by both the AFP and NSW police. This unattractive and demanding task, not part of the mainstream of policing, has been a credit to the uniformed side of the Force, as also is the general policing of Australia's major airports.

Administratively, the external Joint Management Review recommended major new reforms, many of which have now been implemented. There have been new initiatives in training and a different approach to the regional chains of command.

All were major achievements and I am well satisfied with the performance of the Force itself and the Public Service members.

But enough of That Was The Year That Was. Now is the time when our thoughts turn to the festive season and the New Year celebrations. Traditionally, these are times for the family and friends, yet for police officers, Christmas and New Year are often amongst the busiest and most demanding periods of all.

To all members, whether off duty, or to those who for service reasons have to defer their personal celebrations, and to their families, my best wishes for a Happy Christmas and for a good start to 1985."

Neighbourhood Watch program to get big boost in New Year

An AFP Neighbourhood Watch pilot program in Canberra has been so well received that a major extension of the scheme is to go ahead in 1985.

Up to 30 Watch schemes are to be launched in Canberra suburbs during the next year.

Inspector Graham Taylor has

been appointed as OIC of this program.

The response to the pilot scheme in the suburb of Kambah has been one of 'extreme enthusiasm', Sergeant Alex Fyfe, in charge of Community Relations, said.

Neighbourhood Watch is a community-based program in which residents become personally involved in crime prevention. It has had considerable success overseas and has recently been introduced to Australia.

"We are receiving calls daily from Kambah residents reporting things that are occurring in their area," Sergeant Fyfe said.

The pilot scheme was opened recently with 400 people from 600 houses in the selected area attending the initial meeting.

"This was not a bad effort," he said. "The Watch has brought the people of this area together. They are identifying their own area as belonging to a cell in which they are playing a leading part in controlling the spread of crime in their neighbourhood."

The pilot scheme had been so successful it was planned to launch another three in January next year.

"We will be looking at the suburbs of O'Connor and Campbell, with possibly a second area in Kambah," he said.

"From then on, three schemes a month will be launched for the rest of the year. That's 1800 houses a month, covering a total of 56,000 people in the first year."

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RESCUE SQUAD'S HELP PRAISED

The Commissioner has received the following letter of thanks for AFP participation in 'Exercise EMCORD', conducted by the NSW Rescue and Emergency Services Co-ordinating Committee on 22 September.

On behalf of the NSW Rescue and Emergency Services Co-ordinating Committee (Regional), Yass Area Group, I write to extend to you and your officers our sincere appreciation and gratitude for enabling the active participation of members of your Rescue Squad in both the design and conduct of the (Exercise EMCORD).

I would particularly wish to acknowledge a special vote of thanks to Sergeant Peter Baldwin for his many hours of input, assistance and advice. Sergeant Baldwin's efforts were a principal ingredient in ensuring the subsequent success of the exercise.

Together with the support of the OIC Rescue Squad, Sergeant Kevin de Landre, the planning and conduct of the exercise benefited from operational expertise and skills, this being reflected in the professionalism later demonstrated by the participants.

The above was proven to be during the course of the debriefing and the discussion that followed, chaired and controlled by Sergeant Baldwin, in that all the participants were able to clearly identify the lessons to be learnt.

The interaction between your Rescue Squad and the local area emergency services has again served to underscore the continuing need for this type of liaison and co-operation.

*Peter le Grand
Secretary, RESCC (Regional)
Binalong, NSW*

CONTACT

Sir,

I am writing to express my gratitude for the assistance given me and my family.

At about 5pm I rang to enquire how to arrange to contact someone in Western Australia. I had just received word that my mother was critically ill in hospital in Sydney and I wished to contact my brother, an MP from Western Australia, who was visiting Aborigines in his electorate out from Fitzroy Crossing in the bush.

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The response to Neighbourhood Watch by residents had been most encouraging for officers involved in establishing the program.

The Officer-in-Charge A.C.T. Region, Assistant Commissioner Val McConaghy, said: "It is a return to the values of small town Australia, although the idea goes back to the Statute of Windsor in 1285 which stipulated that men of the town were required to stand watch at night."

Neighbourhood Watch was an extension of Community Policing to protect urban Canberra, he said.

Inspector Taylor said every police force in the world had come to realise that even with all their equipment, they could not hope to contain the ever-growing incidence of crime in the community. Neighbourhood Watch was a way of helping counter it.

He said the whole point of the

LETTERS

The officer on the desk (or in operations) said he would get the police up there to contact my brother for me — the officer's name was I think Constable Perversi.

Within two hours my brother, who was in the bush in one of the most remote areas of Australia, had been contacted and he was able to telephone me.

I am pleased to report that my mother, who had to have a very serious operation in the night, is now much improved. It was great for our family to have been able to be in touch with my brother with your help.

Thank you once again and please pass on my thanks to anyone who may have been involved.

*John Stephens
Woden Shopping Square
CANBERRA ACT*

MARCHATHON

Sir,

On behalf of the committee and players of Canberra City Band, I would like to express our thanks and appreciation for the assistance given to us by the Australian Federal Police on our Marchathon on Friday 7 September.

In particular, we would ask you to pass on our thanks to officers Paul Morris and Garth Edwards who travelled with us on the march. Their advice, assistance and patience, and good humour were invaluable on the day, and contributed greatly to the success of our venture.

Again, we thank you for your assistance, and look forward to continuing a close relationship with the Australian Federal Police.

*Lindsay Frost
Canberra City Band
Marchathon Co-ordinator*

ESCORTS

Sir,

Our family would like to sincerely thank the officers involved with the RMC in arranging escorts for our son Alister's funeral. We were very impressed and comforted by the dignity and compassion of the funeral and burial and your officers helped in no small way.

We would be pleased if you

would convey this to the officers involved, again with our warmest appreciation.

*Nan and David Kettle
Kardinya, WA.*

PATROLS

Sir,

I would like to commend the Police Force in the Tuggeranong Valley. We were away from Canberra for most of August, a situation which had previously been advised to the Wanniasa Police.

Since returning, my next door neighbour informs me that your Officers were very diligent in making frequent patrols of the area. They were also concerned enough to check personally with our neighbours. It is gratifying to learn of such initiative as opposed to the criticism often heard.

Would you please convey our thanks to our Officers at Wanniasa.

*K.A. Myers
Kambah, ACT.*

INCIDENT

Sir,

We would like to express our thanks to a member of the AFP, Sergeant David Wilson, who, whilst off duty, came to the assistance of a member of our Security Staff, Mrs Carol Andrews.

The incident involved a juvenile offender, and but for Sergeant Wilson's timely intervention would have resulted in the non-apprehension and/or possible injury to Mrs Andrews.

It is gratifying to know that this type of response is forthcoming and while no doubt Sergeant Wilson would probably consider the matter as 'routine', we do appreciate his actions and assistance.

*B. Fellows
Administration Manager
Grace Bros.
Belconnen ACT*

INQUIRIES

Sir,

In recent months, staff and disabled employees of this organisation have had reason to be in contact with a number of officers of the Australian Federal Police. I am writing to commend their actions and attitudes to you.

Detective Sergeant Ron McMahon and Senior Constables Tony Van

Acker and Dave Loughlin have been involved in a lengthy, and somewhat complex, situation involving a former resident of one of our residential facilities.

Throughout the length of the investigation and subsequent court appearances, all three officers have displayed a genuine concern for the welfare of the gentleman involved. Their co-operation and assistance towards members of my staff has been exemplary. They are to be congratulated for their efforts.

In recent weeks, First Constable Jim Williams and Alan Roach have also been involved in a matter requiring police attention. Their sensitivity and practical approach to the situation was very much appreciated.

I sincerely hope that this organisation can continue to call on the services of the Australian Federal Police and receive such exemplary services.

*K.J. Baker
Executive Director,
Handicapped Citizens' Association
Fyshwick, ACT.*

ACCIDENT

Sir,

Just a note of appreciation for the kindness and understanding your police showed to me when I was involved in an accident. They were very efficient, but this did not stop them from being kind and understanding. I feel it is a shame more police are not like the Canberra police.

The accident was attended by Senior Constable P. Roland and his partner.

*Leonie McCallum
Kellyville, NSW.*

SEMINAR

Sir,

I am writing to thank you for the most useful and informative material that Detective Sergeant Bruce Lewis contributed to our seminar on Drug Awareness.

His contribution was greatly appreciated by both students and staff and we are grateful that he was able to take part.

*Judy Cooper
Canberra College of Advanced Education
BELCONNEN ACT*

means, and by receiving police crime statistics for their area regularly.

Sign-posting of areas where Neighbourhood Watch operates provides additional deterrent to criminal activity.

Inspector Taylor said the Kambah pilot scheme had provided much information which would help in the launching of the Watch in other areas of Canberra.

The Neighbourhood Watch No. 1 had held its home-security meeting with 300 people attending. At this meeting, the all-important stage before the handing over of the operation by the police to the residents, the people in the Watch area were given final training in methods of protecting their property and in the simple techniques they could use in aiding crime prevention.

Neighbourhood Watch Area signs would be erected in the Kambah area shortly.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

scheme was that it became a community-based operation in which the police input was confined to organising Watch areas, getting the scheme running, and then providing residents with information on the progress of police investigations.

The actual operation of Neighbourhood Watch was in the hands of the residents themselves. This not only gave residents the satisfaction of knowing they were assisting themselves, but gave police the on-the-spot tip-offs which helped make their work more successful.

Explaining the operation of Neighbourhood Watch, he said: "Each Watch area is designed to cover about 600 residents, with an Area Co-ordinator appointed from the volunteers to take over responsibility for liaison and information exchange between

police and residents."

Each area was then divided into Zones, each comprising 30 homes. Zone leaders were elected and became responsible for fostering co-operation between residents of their zone, administration of committees, and liaison with the Area Co-ordinator and a Police Co-ordinator, who was appointed to operate in the Watch Area.

This officer was attached to the Police Community Relations Unit, and headed a team known as the Neighbourhood Watch Operations Team, who implemented and supported Watch programs within the areas selected.

Inspector Taylor said residents of Watch areas were trained in crime prevention and became involved in an active way by participating in 'Operation Identification', in which valuable household items are marked by engraving or other