



# THE "HANDS ON" APPROACH

**T**HE AFP's new approach to recruit training confutes the off-repeated criticism that police are still using 19th Century methods for 20th Century solutions. A primary aim of the revamping is to better prepare the recruits to more quickly fit in and respond to the needs of the region in which they ultimately will work. In a training period of 49 weeks, the recruits receive a reasoned mix of practical and theoretical, while also grappling with social issues in contemporary society. Modern technology is used to videotape practical scenarios in which they may be involved and beam them directly into the classrooms for all to see and evaluate.

The new three-phase approach to recruit training involves:

- an initial, live-in training period of 13 weeks in Canberra;
- 28 weeks in the regions in which recruits ultimately will work; and
- the final eight weeks — Stages 3 and 4 — in Canberra for finishing off.

Recruit Training Branch OIC, Chief Inspector Tony Howard, said a restructuring of staff also had taken place within the Recruit Training School.

"What we have done is the result of a great deal of discussion and self evaluation," he said. "We believe it is working for the betterment of the AFP."

He explained aspects of the new training philosophy.

## Stage 1

An evaluation of Stage 1 still sees solid emphasis on the traditional subjects of police administration, administrative law and practices, law theory, police powers and offences and behavioural studies. The new development has come in the Practical Evaluation Unit and the Behavioural Studies Module.

"The Practical Evaluation Unit is unique and has been developed entirely by the Recruit Training School," Chief Inspector Howard said. "We believe we have the only police training establishment in Australia today which places such an emphasis on 'hands-on' training."

The hands-on approach aims to reinforce theory gained in the classroom; give students the opportunity to practise much of the theory in a realistic environment; build confidence in communication skills, both written and oral; and enable better monitoring of students'

progress. As one walks around the college complex at Weston, an understanding of the hands-on approach comes quickly.

What once were syndicate rooms are now realistically equipped clothing stores, post offices, a bedsitter flat, kitchenette, police station front office, charge room, muster room and a courtroom.

Here the newly-acquired video equipment and editing suites have become an important aid. You can watch as the postmaster quickly explains why he has called police and points to an agitated male who immediately becomes abusive and aggressive. The actors are police instructors and new recruits.

It is but one of more than 100 practical exercises that are now possible. The major ones are beamed back into the classrooms via the wall-mounted monitors where the remainder of recruits take notes, ready to present their own scenarios of the exercise.

Command operational orders, in basic fashion, have been prepared for a wide range of offences such as damage to Commonwealth property. Each student must complete an assessment of the exercise, which is marked to a set formula.

"As far as use of the video equipment is concerned, we are still learning," Chief Inspector Howard said. "But already we have produced two short training films on well recognised case law — Christie v Leachinsky (arrest) and Robson v Hallett (trespass).

"A further short film on methods of effecting an arrest also has been completed."

Research topics added to the content of the first 13 weeks now include communications systems used by the AFP, Aboriginals and the Law, Freedom of Information Act, and bomb threat and bomb searches.

The Human Behaviour Module aims at enabling recruits to better understand the principles, both psychological and physiological, of the role of police in today's society.

It is not completed, however, until the final recall period of training. Stage 1, in the initial 13 weeks, has four broad heading bands — Police Lifestyle, Minority Groups, Police Psychology, and Field Trips to such locations as the Koomari Disabled Workshop, Aboriginal hostels and Health Commission facilities.

Within these bands, discussions encompass topics such as stress and personal health, cultural awareness, Aborigines and the disabled.

One week of firearms training also is provided in this initial period.

## Stage 2

Stage 2 is the period when recruits spend 28 weeks in regions. The threefold aims are to provide:

- practical on-the-job training to consolidate theoretical aspects of Stage 1;
- exposure to tasks for which practical training cannot be conducted; and
- an assessment of the practical aptitude for police work of each probationary recruit.

The initial four weeks is spent in the traditional local procedures component, followed by 24 weeks of practical training by rotating recruits to various operational areas. The maximum period in any one area is six weeks with recruits under constant assessment on performance in various situations. This assessment is done at the regional level.

Each recruit carries a task book and all tasks have to be completed during the 28-week regional secondment.

Branch commanders see that tasks to be completed in their areas are performed satisfactorily, with the Regional Training Officer forwarding these ongoing assessments direct to Chief Inspector Howard.

Each training module within each area is assessed before the recruit is again rotated.

"These recruits, or more correctly, members, are not treated as observers as they are sworn in as constables from day one and are fully operational," Chief Inspector Howard said. "In this structured way, the wider the real exposure the greater the benefit for the new member and the AFP."

"The program relies on participation and involvement of all members to ensure the probationary constable is exposed to as many facets of on-the-job experiences as possible."

## Stages 3 and 4

Stages 3 and 4 constitute the final, eight-week long recall period. The four-week Stage Three consolidation period comprises examinations and exercises on matters that should have been studied, plus the conclusion of the Behavioural Studies course covering Crisis Intervention (grieving, domestic violence and crowd control), Police Psychology 11 (interviewing, mental health, the criminal mind and rehabilitation) and the final field trips to the Salvation Army Hostel and Handicapped Ward at Woden Valley Hospital.

Stage 4 is an introduction to criminal investigation and assessment of members for possible future deployment. The reaction of recruits to the new training approach is as varied as are their backgrounds.

Most seem to be reacting well.

Catherine Grassick, 19, of Canberra,

said it made her think about police situations and that some of the instructors 'deserve Oscars'. Catherine, a clerk in the Public Service before joining, said she also found the study components difficult to keep up with. "The workload has been much heavier than I thought it would be and my advice to intending recruits is to bring plenty of vitamin pills," she said. "It also helps if you can type, and if you're physically fit."

Alan Schmidt, 29, of Perth, who is married, was due to become a store manager with a supermarket chain before deciding to join the AFP.

Alan said he had dropped money to join the AFP, but he believes the variety will make up for it. His wife, whom he sees only at weekends, has moved to Sydney to be closer during his training.

Alan said that once he gets through he wants to go back to the West and ultimately work in the AFP's criminal investigations branch.

Nineteen-year-old former farm worker John Kerrigan, of Adaminaby, in the NSW snowfields, admitted finding the academic side 'pretty tough'.

"I've looked at the job as one for life," he said. "I'm doing three to four hours of solid study each night and only have one day off. I think I'll get through and it is about as tough as I expected. I feel knackered."

"The practical orientation makes a great deal more sense than being belted with lectures all the time." These recruits, in Courses 1 and 2 of 1985, moved to the regions in July.

# ADDING THE POLISH

"THE training that puts polish to a decade or more of experience at the coalface" is how Training Department's NCO school commander, Inspector Terry Butler, describes the Stage 5, 6 and 7 courses.

They, like all other phases of training, have been almost completely revamped — particularly Stage 7.

Stage 5 is the qualifying course for advancement to Senior Constable, Stage 6 the qualifying course for promotion to Sergeant and Stage 7 the qualifying course for promotion to Station Sergeant.

"No one could precisely put years of experience against any of those stages," said Inspector Butler, "but four to five for Senior Constable, seven or eight for Sergeant and nine or 10 for Station Sergeant would be a realistic assessment for the vast majority of entrants."

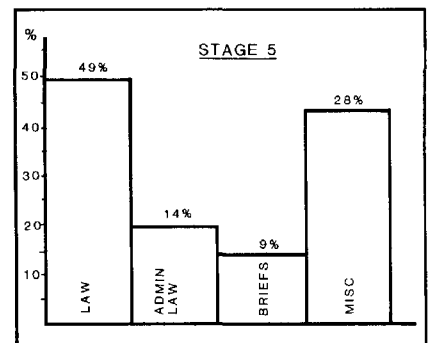
"We are now at the stage where these vital training stepping stones are locked into place in their new form."

In detail, the various components of each of these stages are:

## Stage 5

In its new, three-week concept, the Senior Constable's qualifying course began in March of this year. The diagram shows the percentage taken by each component within the philosophy of the course augmenting previously acquired skills and behaviour.

For example, among the topics in the law component are the Australian Federal Police Act and Regulations, the Complaints (AFP) Act, the Public Order



Act, the Customs Act (narcotic seizures), the Crimes Act, particularly stealing, fraud, receiving, search, entry and the application of Commonwealth law.

Evidence also is a substantial part of the course as is aspects of criminal responsibility.

The Administration component hones in on specific aspects of administrative law and practice such as FOI, firearms and General Orders and Instructions, while the brief-writing segment is self-explanatory.