

MINISTER TAKES FIRST PASSING OUT PARADE

by Philip Castle

Pictures by Stephen Dau

OF the 24 Australian Federal Police officers stepping out to join the ranks on Wednesday 8 April on the parade ground at the Police Services Centre at Weston, perhaps Constable Cathryn Bell of Sydney was the most proud.

She was presented with the special plaque as dux of course 1018 much to the surprise of her father Mr Harry Bell and her uncle and two aunts who were there. They had not been told she was to top the group of five women and 19 men of whom ten will go to Eastern Region in

Sydney, six to Southern Region in Melbourne and six to community policing in the ACT.

Constable Bell, 23, of Sydney, was given her prize by the newly appointed Special Minister of State, Senator Michael Tate, who is the minister responsible for the AFP. This was his first public function involving the AFP since taking office. He had flown from Hobart that morning to ensure he could attend the parade. He told the passing out group and the two support classes of about 70 on parade that they had joined an elite police force. It was already getting the message across to the Australian public and the criminal world that it was a force to be reckoned with in the fight against crime.

He said the training was the first step in development into the AFP of which he was proud to be Minister. He said that in the last edition of *Platypus*, the Commissioner Ronald Grey had said that the AFP had developed a 'reputation of honesty and integrity.' That was totally correct and well founded and that gave him increased satisfaction as Minister. He was delighted that the dux prize had gone to a woman who had done so well. She epitomised the bright future ahead for those officers who would be so critical in removing the spectre of crime which at the moment threatened every Australian household.

The parade was watched by about 70 family and friends and senior AFP officers. The music was provided to a high standard as always by the Band of the Royal Military College, Duntroon. The marching was precise and well coordinated. It was only revealed later that the two supporting classes had insisted that they wanted to be part of the parade and were prepared to put in the extra time needed to come up to standard.

A group of ACT region motorcyclists completed the parade.

Constable Bell said after the parade that she had not told her relatives because she wanted to keep it a surprise.



Senator Michael Tate with Commissioner Ron Grey at the passing-out parade.

Apparently that worked as they were totally caught off guard when she stepped out to receive it.

Before joining the AFP she had done three and a half years of a landscape architecture course at the University of New South Wales. She had decided it would be difficult to get work in that field and that she wanted a change. She had considered joining one of the other State police forces but thought the AFP offered greater opportunities and a more varied career. She wanted to eventually

get into drug investigation because she had strong feelings about how they hurt society.

She with her colleagues had just completed 13 weeks basic training and would now, for the next year, undergo practical on-the-job training in the region and complete the detective training section towards the end of that year.

She said she had done well in her theory examinations. She put that down to her previous academic work but said she had had some problems with the

physical fitness aspects. Some of the study had been easy but other parts had stretched her almost 'to the outer limits'. She was now looking forward to getting into the real thing.

She, along with other Police Officers, recruits, guests and VIPs, then got together for morning tea where Constable Bell had a more relaxed meeting with the Minister Senator Tate and Commissioner Grey. On Wednesday evening the course had its traditional graduation dinner at the AFP's College at Barton.



Senator Michael Tate, Special Minister of State, with Constable Cathryn Bell, 23, of Sydney, and her father, Mr Harry Bell of Sydney.



Senator Michael Tate chats to members of one of the supporting classes at the parade.

Senior Constable Phil Newton leads the new constables in the slow march past the review party.

