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by Philip Castle

**T**HE first stage of what will become a major new training complex for the Australian Federal Police will begin operations in December this year on a 204 hectare site at Majura which is on the northern border of the ACT.

Stage 1 of the site is an evasive driver training circuit of 2.1 kilometres with permanent administrative buildings and workshops to provide driver training for all AFP recruits and specialist drivers. The large site will also accommodate kennels for AFP dog training. The cost of the present works is \$1.3 million and provides the basic framework for much greater development.

The current AFP driver training circuit located on the eastern borders of the ACT near the Sutton Forest will be phased out and handed back to the National Capital Development Commission. It was completed in 1979 and is now too small and inappropriate for the AFP's needs. In 1981 the NCDC offered the Majura site to the AFP and plans

were developed and work began clearing the site of unexploded projectiles in late 1985. Much of the bitumen track, buildings and surroundings landscaping and security has been completed since work began in May 1987.

The Project Officer for the site for the Office of the Australian Federal Police, Mr Frank Brown, said that the new site would give the AFP driver training instructors more room to develop greater training techniques and provide more safety features. The Sutton Forest site was becoming too small, crowded, could not offer the full range of AFP training, and particularly did not allow room for drivers to make mistakes. The wet area and skid-pan-circuit was also too small and would have needed development if the AFP was to stay there. A new manoeuvring/wet area would be developed in Stage 2 of the development of the site.

Mr Brown said that the Sutton Forest track was designed to provide defensive driving training and had had many bad

features deliberately built into it such as reverse camber curves, blind corners, rough surfaces and increasing tight corners.

'One of the prime reasons for the new circuit is to provide a normal driving circuit to teach evasive driving and how drivers can avoid trouble,' he said. 'It is a high speed circuit with in-built safety factors with particular room for the driver to run-off if the section cannot be negotiated. The roads will be wider and in this stage will not have any flaws built into them. Sutton was deliberately designed to be difficult. Provided the new funds are approved the additional facilities will be made in 1988.'

He said there had been some speculation about what would be done with the Sutton Forest circuit when the AFP moved out but that was a question for the ACT administration. It could be used for other government driver training such as that needed for other emergency services drivers, bus drivers and Commonwealth car drivers.

'The beauty of this new site is that there is plenty of room to develop a number of other features,' Mr Brown said. 'We can develop an off-road track, motorcycle training and specialist driver training, for example anti-terrorist evasive action driving.'

'It is a state of the art circuit and will be the latest in design based on studies of similar circuits overseas. It will be the best in Australia and comparable to anything overseas.'

Nearly all the recent driver training for the AFP has been conducted at the Sutton circuit and last year more than 500 drivers were given some vehicle training there. Because of its flaws it is not a high speed loop and is difficult to train officers under its configuration on high speed driving techniques.

Senior Sergeant Peter Donovan, one of the instructors from the Police Skills Unit, said that the track was designed in 1975 and first used in 1979. It did not anticipate the technological changes and speed of more modern vehicles.

He said, 'The new facility will allow police drivers to use the vehicles to their maximum performance; their speed, cornering abilities, braking and steering. This will be possible in a safe and controlled environment. Because of the changing role of the AFP and of course crime, police officers have to know what to do while they are driving VIPs, counter terrorism driving and surveillance techniques. They need to know what to do if something happens, or if they are shot at, pursuing criminals or traffic offenders or responding to emergencies. The Sutton complex was designed for a different generation of cars and circumstances facing the then ACT Police Force.'

*Construction is well underway*



*One of the archeological sites at Majura*

'Drivers can make mistakes under these simulated conditions and if they lose a vehicle they have room to move and run-off without damaging themselves or their vehicles.'

'Majura will be most advanced and up-to-date as anything we are aware of. We have looked at what the other State police forces have and we will be delighted with it.'

'Stage 2 will extend the main circuit which will incorporate the basic circuit and add cross-overs, roundabouts, give-way and stop signs and traffic lights. A sand trap arrangement will be laid at some of the critical corners to slow a vehicle down if it runs off.'

'The present skid pan at Sutton is too small and a new and enlarged manoeuvring-skid area will be built incorporating an inground sprinkler system.'

The instructing and class room areas at Sutton have been in temporary fibro huts since they moved in. In the new complex there will be three classrooms and modern offices. There would also be a series

of parking bays and modern workshop. The preplanning for the site has included an environmental impact study which has examined the water flows and care has been taken to ensure the drainage from Woolshed and Landers Creeks in the site is properly continued. It is not expected that the noise levels caused by the AFPs use will adversely affect anyone as there are only two rural properties near by. The site is situated between two ridges which would protect most noise flows from being heard by any residents in suburban Canberra. The site is underneath the flightpath of the Canberra airport north-south runway and there are a series of shooting ranges not far away which would create greater noise than the training of AFP drivers.

A detailed archaeological study was undertaken by Mr Jonathan Winston Gregson who identified seven sites, one of high significance, all of which have been carefully protected. One appears to be a grave marked by stones.

Part of the 204 hectares includes some rough elevated terrain including Beacon Hill which rises to 698 metres. Care has been taken to reduce any major erosion and landscaping will further stop any run-offs. Some additional trees will also be planted to give greater security.

Deputy Commissioner John Johnson, in charge of AFP administration, said that the site offered a number of developmental possibilities and because of its size could be used for a number of other training purposes. It was not impossible to foresee that in the future, perhaps in 15 years time, that the AFP moved a number of its facilities into that area, such as its basic recruit training and specialist training such as search and rescue, bomb searching and natural disaster training.