

PROVING THE CASE



DETEKTIVE Station Sergeant Peter Phillips has a dislike of — and fascination for — fraud.

"With a murder the body is there and the problem is to find the perpetrator but with fraud it is the opposite — we normally know who the perpetrators are, the difficulty is in finding out how they did it!" he said.

"The fascination is in the mental challenge and how everything depends on the meticulous putting together of documents. We rarely get admissions because in our major cases we are dealing with white collar criminals with the best legal advice.

"Fraud is all about the challenge of being able to prove a case without being able to get any admissions. There's nothing like spending 12 months on a brief and then getting that little piece of evidence that clinches it; that pins it down.

"In Operation 'Diamond' I was able to prove that a person had paid a deposit to enter the scheme in June yet the first futures contract received was dated February in the same year. That small

piece of information proved the scheme was a sham."

Detective Station Sergeant Phillips said many people mistakenly saw fraud as a dry subject.

"I have been doing it for six years and I thoroughly enjoy the work for its variety. You may get a brief covering a fraud in the fishing industry and to investigate it successfully you have to learn all about that industry — you have to know more about the industry than the people perpetrating the fraud who are actually in it.

"This office had a case recently of a case of fraud in bean exports to Arabia and the investigating officers had to learn all about the export industry in that field. The same applies to social security, health and insurance frauds.

"Each brief in this office is a different challenge. Through its work the National Criminal Investigation Branch has created a professional image and we are getting a lot more inquiries about joining it from AFP officers than we did in the past."

Detective Station Sergeant Phillips said a lot of his animosity towards fraud

offenders could be put down to the fact that he regarded himself as an ordinary member of the public, just doing a job. "When some rip-off outrages the public it also outrages me. The NCIB is the public's representatives in these areas."

He hoped the Career Structure Review would help keep experienced fraud investigators in the branch.

"The fraud area is one that requires a lot of stability with its staff. People have to work in this area for a number of years to build up expertise.

"But under the present system, people get to the rank of sergeant and then, quite properly, look for a senior sergeant's position which may have to be somewhere else." He said that if the CSR recommendations were implemented people would be able to stay in the same area and still have some career advancement.

And Detective Station Sergeant Phillips is not theorising. "I have been qualified as Inspector for six months but I have not applied for any positions because this is where I want to stay!"

CRIMINALS FINGERED BY NEW COMPUTER



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giving the identity of the possible offender.

Those at the commissioning included Commissioner McAulay, other senior AFP officers, and representatives from the computer company, NEC.

AFIS allows a rapid check to be made of any fingerprint taken from a crime scene, even a single print, with any of the mainland police forces. It is possible to establish the identification of prints which would have been unsearchable using the former manual system. It can also greatly reduce the time needed to establish a person's national criminal record for court presentation if necessary.

It has been phased into the mainland Australian police forces since 1986 and the cost for the AFP's link-up has been approximately \$800,000. It is a specialist computer system, dedicated only to fingerprint identification and it is believed to be the first national link-up of a fingerprint system anywhere in the world.

The AFP came on line with other mainland Australian police forces when the Minister for Justice, Senator Michael Tate, officially commissioned the AFP's Fingerprint Identification Sub-system on May 16.

The new NEC Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) located at the AFP's Services Centre at Weston replaces the much slower manual system through the Central Fingerprint Bureau which operated in Sydney and was run by the NSW Police Force on behalf of the other Australian police forces.

As a test run, a single fingerprint taken from an ACT crime scene was fed into the system by Senator Tate and within six minutes a 'hit' had been returned