

# Training Today

**How do you find new members who will be able to handle the demands of plainclothes investigations without first having the benefit of on-the-street experience gained through a general duties initiation?**

AFP Recruiting staff found themselves facing this quandary four years ago.

Since the inception of the AFP in 1979, the requirement had been for generalist police officers from whom could be selected a required number for detective training.

In 1985, the changing role of the AFP turned the scales towards a 75 per cent proportion of plainclothes personnel, with only one new member in four needed for uniform work.

It was time for a whole new approach to recruiting for the AFP.

Coming up with a new slogan was the first step. "The Career to Investigate" captured the spirit. But finding the people to become detectives was not quite so simple.

And it's a problem that still occupies the minds of Recruiting staff.

However, the way has been eased by changes to the system that have been far-reaching. For instance, staff who were at the formation of the AFP recall well the 'no brochures, no applications, four staff and recruiting only for Protective Services' situation that existed in those early days.

But that didn't last long. By the following year, a halt had to be called to active recruiting because of an accumulated backlog of 1000 applications awaiting processing.

The recruitment campaign had been almost embarrassingly successful as far as applications went.

With the changing role of the AFP came major changes to both the needs and the recruiting procedures during 1985-86. Entrance testing on basic arithmetic, english and general knowledge was replaced by Australian Council of Education Research tests of literacy and numeracy. At the same time, and for



*Some of the first recruits for the new AFP.... this intake began training in Canberra on 30 June 1980. Extensive changes have been made since then in the criteria which apply in the selection of applicants.*

the first time, psychological testing of applicants was introduced.

The procedures for interviewing applicants also came in for significant modification. The previous one-hour individual interview conducted by perhaps one or two staff members was replaced by an Assessment Centre, employing the Group Selection Procedures.

Today, applicants, both male and female, are brought together in mixed groups of 8-10 for an entire day of assessment.

## Better Idea

The selection board consists of five people, including a psychologist.

Applicants are put through a variety of assessment centre situations, including group discussions, individual oral presentations, written exercises, rating exercises and individual interview. By the end of the day, selection board members have a reasonable indication — and certainly a better idea than could be obtained in a one-hour interview — of an applicant's capabilities.

Changes also have been needed to keep pace with equal employment and anti-discrimination requirements.

For instance, there is now no set standard for height; all that is required is a suitable height-to-weight ratio. As far as age goes, although 18 years remains the minimum, there is no upper age. Eyesight standard is 6/12.

No quota is set as far as the male-to-female ratio is concerned. The concept of the unified workforce is furthered by the fact that the AFP proportionately recruits more females than other Police Forces.

Efforts also are being made to increase the number of Aboriginal appli-

cants.

In the past two years, the need to recruit graduates has again assumed increased importance. This was highlighted by the Minister for Justice in December 1988 when he said:

"The effective pursuit of organised crime now requires the use of skills drawn from a multitude of disciplines including law, accountancy, data processing and intelligence analysis.... it means recruiting and developing specialists.... attracting more highly qualified recruits, particularly those with tertiary qualifications."

Recruiting staff now visit most Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education in the eastern States to talk to undergraduates. Next year, an AFP Police Studies Scheme will enable suitable applicants to be granted a position on an Associate Diploma in Police Studies two-year course at Chisholm Institute of Technology or on the three-year Bachelor of Arts (Criminal Justice Administration) course at Phillip Institute of Technology.

Before starting the course, applicants will be fully tested and interviewed by the AFP. They will be guaranteed entry to the AFP on successful completion of the tertiary studies course, subject to remaining of good conduct and being medically fit.

This will ensure that, despite the changes over the years, and especially in the increased drive for higher academic qualifications, new members will continue to have the attributes that have always been the hallmark of good police officers and investigators: judgment, maturity, commonsense and good conduct, which rate as highly as ever.