



# A Concession from our Correspondent

**I have to admit to some initial scepticism about the AFP's invitation to enter a women's team in the Dragon Boat Festival, but events proved me wrong.**

What if we had accepted the invitation, and particularly a match race against the Singaporeans, and for whatever reason, we had to withdraw? Bad public relations.

But nothing was a problem. The AFP Sports Association quickly canvassed interest among the Eastern Region women officers. Of 120 women in the Region more than 40 said they were interested. Even at that initial stage they had chosen a team manager, Constable Paddy Donnan. The entry was lodged; the commitment was made. Now the hard part started.



How do you mould a group of women, most of whom had never seen a dragon boat, into a competitive team in two months? How do you organise a training schedule when everyone has work, family and other commitments? Where do you get the \$380 needed to buy the set of 20 paddles? And what about uniforms?

Firstly contact was made with a member of the Australian women's champion dragon boat team, Manly Warringah, who gave our team some basic coaching at the beginning of their training regimen. After that, it was a case of learn as they went.

The money for the paddles was donated by a Sydney firm managed by the father of a crew member. In the interim the AFP side borrowed a set of paddles from the race organisers for training.

The uniforms were paid for from a raffle organised through the AFP Sports Association.

The really hard part was the training and the crew stabilised at about 23 members.

I experienced their resolve first hand when I promised to watch one of their evening training sessions. It



was bucketing down on the afternoon in question and I contacted the team captain, Constable Dianne James, to offer my apologies in the firm belief that the session would be called off anyway. After Constable James made several references to wimps and the like, I found myself at the harbour foreshore watching our team paddling

through the rain. And they were back there hard at it next morning.

In the space of two months they had transformed themselves into quite a competitive and smart looking team. Their determination illustrates the qualities found in the policing profession.