



Constable Linda Paterson in action at Melbourne Headquarters new weapon range.

## NEW RANGE SETS THE STANDARD

By Keith Livingston

**Constable Linda Paterson hugs the ground, her .38 service handgun held firmly in her right hand, supported by her left arm.**

There is a quick movement in the dimly lit area of the concrete canyon in which she is lying. Her eyes strain to identify an outline approaching her in the gloom.

Her hands become moist and it's hard to maintain a steady 'ready' pressure on

the trigger.

The 'person' looming out of the shadows seems to be carrying something. The index finger of the Constable's right hand prepares to squeeze the trigger. She calls "Stop - Police!!"

The figure still moves towards her.

Suddenly Constable Paterson relaxes and lowers her weapon. In that brief moment she has decided there is no danger. The 'person' is a female carry-

ing a baby. She is relieved. No shot has been fired. No 'innocent' has been harmed.

Constable Paterson had been facing the targets in Lane 3 of the new four-lane Australian Federal Police weapons range located in the Southern Region headquarters building.

When she was ordered by rangemaster Sergeant Eric Riley to adopt the prone position, Constable Paterson had no idea what would confront her.

The exercise was designed to test her reactions in a confrontation which could be either a 'hostile' or a 'friendly'. Her task was to make a split-second decision whether to shoot or not to shoot.

Although Constable Paterson's ordeal is not a specified part of weapons proficiency testing undertaken by all members of the AFP, it serves to graphically illustrate what can be achieved with the recently-installed weapons range.

For training purposes, the new facilities are excellent. Sergeant Riley has total control over the range and its facilities. He can vary the amount of available light, change the distance at which a target will be set, and even decide whether the target presented to the firer will be a 'friendly' or a 'hostile'.

### Remote control

His control panel is a compact computer console which sends commands

---

## RILEY'S RANGE

**It has been a period of frustration, hard work and rewards for Range Controller Sergeant Eric Riley.**

After many years of maintaining firearms proficiency in Southern Region in less than ideal conditions, Eric was given the task of overseeing the installation of the most modern range in the Southern Hemisphere.

For his 'beyond the call of duty' efforts in ensuring everything during the preparation, transportation, installation and commissioning of the equipment, and for his past service to the AFP, Eric's name was put forward as a worthy recipient of the Australia Day Medallion.

At the presentation ceremony attended

by more than 100 commissioned officers, members and staff, Assistant Commissioner Walter Williams spoke of the high regard held for Eric, and his professionalism, and said how pleasing it was to see such an award to a hard-working conscientious member of the AFP.

Eric's wife, Elizabeth, was invited by Assistant Commissioner Williams to see Eric receive the medallion and heard her husband express his thanks to the Region's members and staff who had assisted him to achieve the successful installation of the range.

Incidentally, the range has been named officially 'Riley's Range' on a plaque. — Keith Livingston, MLO Southern Region.

to each of the four individual shooting positions and their associated equipment.

Although each member wears ear protection while firing a weapon, he is able to talk to them with the help of a sound system which operates through the ear protectors.

The cardboard targets move down the range on an overhead track system, propelled by a remotely-controlled motor. They can be a life-size picture of a person or a conventional oval-shaped target. They can be set at distances ranging from 3 to 25 metres.

As the firer takes up position, the target is edge-on. Sergeant Riley, with the aid of the computer-controlled program, makes the target pivot to right or left through 90 degrees to present a figure which poses a threat to the member or one which holds no danger.

He can vary the amount of available light inside the range through all stages from perfect to almost total darkness to suit the situation.

The new weapons range, which was commissioned for use by Assistant Commissioner Walter Williams, OIC Southern Region, early in December 1989, is a vast improvement over the old facilities.

The original site was a disused quarry in the city's northern suburbs. It had obvious disadvantages, including the weather and the time spent in transporting officers to and from the site.

The new range is the result of up-to-the-moment research on latest trends in firearms training and extensive forward-thinking by AFP officers.

The need for the new range was identified some time ago. Provision was made in the design of the new Southern Region headquarters building to house it on the top floor. The building was



*Assistant Commissioner Walter Williams, OIC Southern Region, left, accepts the key to the new weapons range from Mr William Brogdon, Director of the firm which supplied the equipment.*

completed late in 1987, but it was not until 1989 that it was possible to complete the range project.

### **Top equipment**

The initial task was to locate the best equipment to fit out the range. The AFP searched around Australia and the world for the best on offer, and finally the United States firm of Caswell International Corp. of Minneapolis was chosen as the successful tenderer.

Precise details of the AFP's requirements and detailed specifications of the proposed location were forwarded to the US where the range was prefabricated for its trip to Australia.

When the components were landed at Melbourne waterfront, three trucks were needed to transport the more than 15 tonnes of materials to the Regional headquarters. A heavy mobile crane hoisted the various sections up the five stories above ground level and lowered them through a hole cut in the ceiling of the shooting range. The 'hole', allowed for in the original roof design, required the

removal only of several panels.

Once all components were lowered into the concrete tunnel that would become the weapons range, the roof was sealed up with concrete.

The Melbourne-based firm Bullet Resistant Equipment Co. (BREC) Pty. Ltd., commissioned to install the equipment, completed the task in two weeks.

### **Maximum security**

The range is specially designed to ensure maximum safety and to facilitate the training of members. At one end, behind bullet resistant glass panels, is the control room, housing the rangemaster and his computer console and lighting control panel.

The room looks out onto the four firing positions, less than 3 metres away, and enables the rangemaster to constantly watch the progress of firing activities.

At the other end of the range, covering the entire wall, is the bullet trap, consisting of precisely angled pieces of 10mm thick high-tensile steel plate. Behind and below the trap are catching pans where spent bullets are collected for recycling.

Overhead, the target transporting equipment and the ceiling are fully protected from misfires. Again, steel plates are carefully angled to deflect any ricocheting bullet heading in the wrong direction.

Walls along each side of the range have been treated with a special sound-absorbing expanded foam material.

Weapons ranges are at a premium in Melbourne and a number of other agencies whose personnel are required to be proficient in weapons handling have already shown a keen interest in the AFP's latest acquisition.

Rangemaster Sergeant Eric Riley estimates, that, as the result of the saving in man-hours alone, the range will pay for itself in a relatively short time.



*Sergeant Eric Riley, centre, lends a hand as components for the range are lowered through the roof of the Melbourne HQ building.*