

The Pursuit of Police Professionalism

THE professional standing of police is being urged by individual police officers throughout Australia, police unions through the Australian Police Federation, police administrations and Commonwealth and State Governments through the Australian Police Ministers Council.

To many "professionalism" is about tertiary qualifications in the practice of policing, a code of ethics and self esteem. There is however more to professionalism than these important elements.

"Imagine this" says one commentator on this subject, Assistant Commissioner Peter Dawson head of Personnel and Training, "it is the year 2015 and police officers have joined the professional ranks of lawyers, accountants, doctors, nurses etc."

"Our professional association is a national body. It recognises accredited education and training qualifications in policing by granting a license, which together with taking the 'Oath of Office of Constable' and acknowledging the profession's Code of Conduct, empowers a police officer to practice his or her profession".

"Some of us will recall the police bureaucracy of the 20th Century. Where authority once existed in the hierarchy, authority is now vested in the professional police officer. Co-ordination, facilitation and teamwork have replaced a structure of "top-down" direction and control from one boss. Where administration had line authority over operations, now administration has a servicing role to the profession."

"Rank, subordination, rules and regulations of that era have been replaced with levels of professional standing, autonomy and a code of conduct".

"Our duty and loyalty is now to our profession and the community we serve. Mobility has replaced career for life employment with a single police organisation".

"Performance has replaced conformance. Creativity and challenge have replaced compliance and standardisation of work. Negotiable salaries and packages have replaced set salaries and rewards".

"Our Association promotes the interests of the profession and represents those interests in all forums and spheres of influence. The Association sets en-

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Assistant Commissioner Peter Dawson.

try standards and qualification requirements as well as overseeing the ongoing growth of learning and development of skills. It represents us in times of need. It ensures we are appropriately remunerated."

"This vision of the 21st century professional police officer may seem far fetched to many. It does however provide a sense of direction and some rationale for the changes we are currently experiencing in the AFP. The changes have been about setting in place a working environment and conditions that will better enable us to deal with the challenges of the next century".

"This preparedness is completed by addressing the professional needs of the police officer; officers who in time, will replace us at the 'sharp end' of policing".

In 1991, the AFP will take a new step in its progress towards a highly professional national police force with the launching of a multi-faceted recruitment program aimed at maintaining an already-high standing among its counterparts in other countries. The program has been developed by

Assistant Commissioner Peter Dawson, who sees it as a logical development in the philosophy of achieving a professional AFP workforce. He has vested the success of the program in six strategies which will achieve the AFP objective of a 50% graduate workforce by the year 2001. The mainspring of the program, he asserts, is an Undergraduate Sponsorship Program (USP).

Undergraduate Sponsorship Program

The AFP will sponsor a minimum of 140 selected undergraduates each year, commencing in 1991, to undertake a Degree course majoring in police studies or criminal justice administration at Universities in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Sponsorship will entail a reasonable assurance of appointment as a member on completing the professional degree, student support and mentor services and a 10 week summer school on skills training at AFP College on completing the second year of full time studies.

Mr Dawson anticipates that the 'mainstream' source of entrants for the AFP



Recent Graduates from Canberra University with the Diploma of Adult Education (l to r) D/Sgt Gordon Williamson, Sgt Steve Samuals, Sgt Paul Fyfe, and Sgt Mark Andrews came under the 'Job Specific' Tertiary Studies Program.

beginning in 1994 will comprise graduates from this program.

Graduate Entrant Program

The program's second strategy is a Graduate Entrant Program (GEP). Mr Dawson believes adoption of this program is an important step in the achievement of a professional workforce.

Our objectives for graduate entry as new members of the AFP under the program have been set at 50 per cent for the financial year 1990-91, rising to over 70% by 1992-93.

The AFP will immediately accelerate its recruitment emphasis for graduate entrants by offering flexible starting salaries within the Constable salary range.

Salary entry points will depend on qualifications and experience, while subsequent incremental advancement will depend on performance in accordance with the requirements of the AFP's Performance Management Program.

All GEP entrants will be required to undertake the AFP's New Member Program.

Studies Assistance

The third strategy is a Studies Assistance Program (SAP), which provides for up to five per cent of the member and a similar percentage of the staff member workforce to receive support while undertaking relevant tertiary studies.

This strategy means up to 170 AFP employees could be undertaking tertiary studies under SAP at any one time.

Training Accreditation

The fourth strategy relates to the accreditation of AFP training programs. Through the Board of Studies of the

AFP's Training Division, the AFP will seek accreditation of its training programs for tertiary courses being undertaken by members and staff members.

This strategy proved successful for training staff members undertaking a Diploma in Adult Education when accreditation resulted in a two-year full-time course being completed in 18 months.

Job Specific Tertiary Studies Program

Strategy five relates to a 'Job Specific' Tertiary Studies Program (JSTS).

The AFP will make use of TAFE and University programs to provide members and staff members with the education, skills and qualifications they are required to possess to discharge the duties of their positions.

JSTS is fully funded by the AFP, including Higher Education Charges and other costs associated with the courses.

The strategy is currently being applied to training staff undertaking a diploma course in Adult Education as

part of their duties at the University of Canberra.

Beginning this year, forensic staff of the Services Department will be undertaking an Associate Diploma Course in Applied Science (Forensic Science) through the Australian TAFE system under the JSTS program. (See Story, Page 5).

Tertiary studies in languages also is being considered for staff who will be required to use a second language in their work.

Recruitment Agent

Strategy six involves recruitment and the promotion of the AFP. The AFP has engaged Burson-Marsteller one of Australia's leading recruitment consultancy firms, to undertake all member and staff member recruitment as well as market the AFP as an attractive and worthy employer.

The engagement of professional recruitment and marketing services is regarded as a key element in achieving the objective of a 50 per cent graduate workforce by 2001.



Students under the Undergraduate Sponsorship Scheme recently spent time in Canberra acquainting themselves with the AFP. Full story page 6.

The Studies Assistance Program

THE Studies Assistance Program is available to all members and staff members subject to approval, and results in the student being granted paid leave to attend classes for up to 5 hours during working hours.

Further paid leave is available for compulsory excursions and exam requirements.

Currently around one in 20 AFP employees are making use of the scheme. The areas of study include: law, administration, computer science, economics, and accounting.

Michael Braund, of Staff Develop-

ment, warns that being a part-time student is not easy. Apart from the appropriate level of academic ability, part-time study requires a high level of organisation and determination.

Simon Jacobs, of Southern Region, agrees. He is the Administration Officer in charge of accounts and travel, and the EEO contact officer. At 28, he is in his ninth year of part-time study, which includes two years for the Higher School Certificate, six years for the Bachelor of Arts, and now he is in the first year of the two-year Graduate Diploma in Applied Psychology.

"It gets easy after a while, once you've established a pattern of study that works for you," he said. He finds part-time study is a test of commitment and is proud of the fact he has missed only two classes in nine years.

Married with "1.5 children" (the second is due in September), Mr Jacobs says the support of his family is important. "It's a great juggling act doing the work required and finding the time for family and social life," he said.

His lectures usually take up two evenings per week, with the rest of the weeknights spent with his wife and daughter. The weekends are for study.

He is convinced that his studies have