

# Closer ties needed for law agencies

By Frank Cranston



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as elsewhere, depends on the personal contacts made by our officers with their counterparts in the various policing levels at which they operate.

"It was a lot easier to deal with people whom we had met rather than have to call up cold," Karen said. "That's when you would meet the hesitation."

The volume of work for the AFP liaison offices abroad is increasing, with narcotics still by far the heaviest element of the workload. The Los Angeles Police Department has been quoted as claiming that some 85 per cent of its workload is narcotics-related.

From conversations with police in California, Washington State and Oregon she gathered that most of their work involved drugs and most of that was gang-related.

The pace of life in the United States is one of the major personal impressions Karen gained from her three years there. Fewer Australians are likely to get ulcers than their US counterparts, she says.

Karen is not new to drug law enforcement. After joining the ACT Police in 1973 she was assigned to the Women's Police section but moved to the Drug Squad in 1975 with which she spent seven years. She later worked in uniformed general duties, the National

Medifraud Task Force and as a recruit training instructor before being re-assigned to the Drug Squad.

She transferred to Internal Investigations Division in 1985 and then International Division a year later pending her assignment to Los Angeles.

During her time at Los Angeles, Karen managed to see much of the United States on leave and through attendance at conferences which took her to New York, Fort Lauderdale, Knoxville (Tennessee) and Montreal.

Three years viewing the scene from somebody else's backyard has convinced Karen of the critical importance of police continuing to attack two areas in the future —intelligence and co-operation. This will be increasingly so with the development of the growing degree of sophistication on the other side and also as a result of the growing number of enforcement agencies, she believes.

The lessons Karen learned in Los Angeles will help secure our "frontiers" against the spread of international crime. But there is a message, too, concerning the backyard.

"Inter-agency co-operation is very important, not only from the foreign point of view, but inter-agency collaboration within Australia as well," she said.

**The need for closer liaison between law enforcement agencies is one thing Sergeant Karen Beck came to appreciate in three years at the AFP's Los Angeles liaison office.**

The view was reinforced by knowledge of the number of law enforcement agencies in the United States alone — some 135 of them in the greater Los Angeles area.

Karen returned to Australia last month, the first female AFP member to be posted to an overseas liaison post.

The Los Angeles liaison office, which operates from the Australian Consulate, is one of three the AFP maintains in the United States. The others are in Washington DC and Honolulu, Hawaii.

The AFP's "patch" out of the Los Angeles office is geographically impressive - enough to make tales of some of the legendary patrol beats of the Northern Territory Police shrink into insignificance.

"In theory we have split the country in half, and Canada as well," Karen said. Everything east of the "dividing line" is looked after from Washington and everything to the west from Los Angeles. Honolulu handles the Rim of the Pacific.

The AFP liaison offices enjoy the advantage of information generated by the extremely sophisticated intelligence apparatus which US law enforcement agencies deploy but she believes our own systems are their equal.

"I think we are fairly much on a par with the way that we have our computer systems set up," she said. "Sure they have other systems of which I have no knowledge, and no need to know, but with day-to-day criminal retrieval systems we are pretty much on a par."

The principal areas of interest in which Karen was engaged were anti-narcotics operations and the ramifications of white collar crime.

Parental kidnapping, she says, is another area in which Australian police have become involved.

She believes a large part of the success of the AFP agencies in the United States,