

The Branch with the crystal ball

IN 1990 when it was recognised that a need had evolved for a better understanding of the patterns of criminal activity in the Canberra region, the ACT Strategic Intelligence Branch was established.

This need concerned aspects of crime, or suspected crime, which had not been studied before in Canberra. This major function is now performed by the Research and Assessments Section of the Branch.

Other functions which the Branch undertook included regional collation and dissemination, security, missing persons and operational response. Jack L'Epagniol commands the Branch's 13 members.

The Research and Assessments Section, comprising a level 3 officer and two constables, has achieved a lot in a relatively short time. Major studies have been undertaken into Asian crime in the ACT, the X-rated video industry, suspected organised crime involvement in the development of Canberra's Chinatown, youth gangs, stolen motor vehicles, armed hold-ups, computer theft, satanism, 'skinhead' and neo-nazi activities, and the currently growing 'dance party' craze.

Detective Constables Ulla McCarthy and Ray Johnson are fully occupied trying to meet all of these requirements. Ulla McCarthy attended a seminar in Victoria in September last year and presented a paper on Asian crime in the ACT Region. Ray Johnson is flying the Strategic Intelligence banner part-time as an intelligence officer with the Regional Special Operations Team and is on call for training and operations with that team.

The Regional Collation and Dissemination Section is comprised of Detective Sergeant Dale Griffiths and Constable Robin Stephenson. Dale Griffiths recently completed a study of the collation and dissemi-



Missing German couple Anja Habschied and Gabor Neugebauer continue to be the subject of inquiries following their disappearance while holidaying in Australia

nation system within the Region and is preparing systems for improved information reporting and dissemination once the regional LAN is fully operational. A key figure in the field of dissemination is Bob Stephenson who produced 75 standard Intelligence Circulars and 24 Special Circulars during 1992. These circulars have attracted a great deal of interest among other police services particularly in the regions surrounding Canberra.

The Missing Persons Section is currently a one person show. Constable Wayne Smith processes the numerous missing persons reports in the ACT Region. During 1992, 541 people were reported missing of whom 533 have so far been located. Of this number, 60 per cent are women. The Section also handles enquiries by other police services (87 persons in 1992) and from overseas (50). As part of its national responsibilities the Section also co-ordinates national missing persons enquiries where the last

place of sighting is not known or is confused. A major case in 1992 involved the two missing German tourists Anja Habschied and Gabor Neugebauer. They were last seen in Kings Cross, but subsequent sightings placed them in almost every other State and Territory. The section co-ordinated the national enquiries and follow-up action which involved arranging publicity through all major print and electronic media networks. The German pair remain listed as missing.

The District Intelligence Section has two District Intelligence Officers (DIOs) located in each district of the Region. Their work involves responding to operational requests for local information and intelligence, processing field reports received from all units in their district, gathering information to meet collection requirements for Branch intelligence probes, and preparing weekly intelligence reports to brief their district and branch staff on local trends.

At present Constable Bob Corrigan from Woden District is serving in Cyprus leaving Constable Linda Sullivan to handle district matters on her own. Joe Bauer in Belconnen District is also coping alone because of the temporary absence of Constable Adrian Selkirk in Cambodia. City Station is currently fully staffed with Constables Jonelle Lancashire and Kevin Lonergan handling all the City District's requirements.

In performing its diverse functions, the ACT Strategic Intelligence Branch liaises with Headquarters branches, other agencies and state police services. The most significant of these are the NSW Police Service at Queanbeyan and Yass, the Australian Customs Service, Interpol, various sections of the ACT Administration, and community liaison groups.