

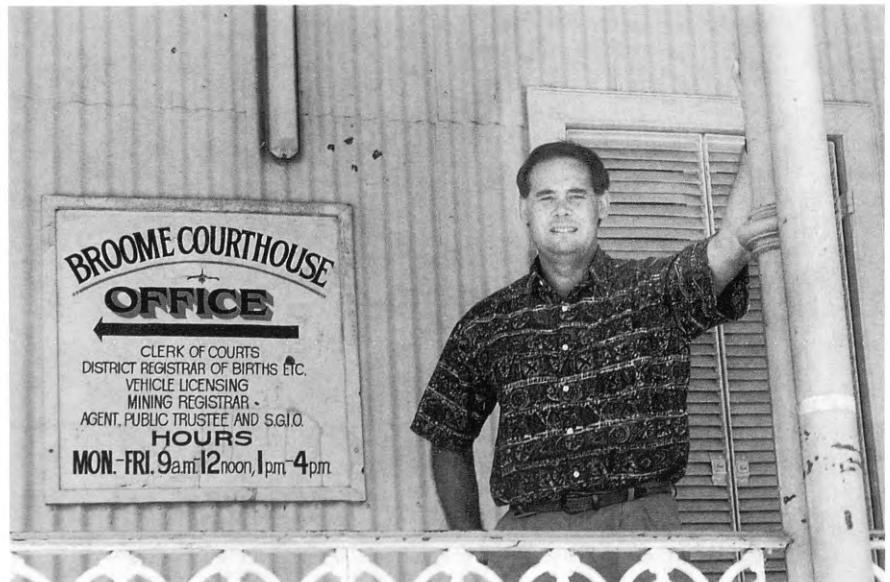
Permanent 'Resident Agent' for the Kimberley

As the first AFP resident agent into the Kimberley region of north-west Australia, Detective Sergeant Peter Sullivan found that he was responsible for enforcing Commonwealth law in an area larger than the state of Victoria.

Equipped with a four-wheel-drive vehicle, a radio, a swag and satellite navigation, Detective Sergeant Sullivan is rarely office bound. In fact he said that he has spent the past 12 months "pressing a lot of flesh".

Detective Sergeant Sullivan was sent to Broome by Commander Rod Leffers in April 1993 to assess the need for a permanently based officer in the region. The trial period was successful and Broome became the first permanent location for an AFP office under the *resident agent* program.

Under the program, an AFP office also will be located at Port Hedland, Geraldton and Albany. Currently Detective Sergeant Nigel Spitz is located at Port Hedland assessing the need for a permanent AFP presence.



Detective Sergeant Peter Sullivan, the AFP's 'resident agent' for the Kimberley Region

With the frequency of AFP investigations gradually increasing in the north-west, the *resident agent* program promises to make investigations in remote areas more cost effective and to uncover previously unreported activities of interest to the AFP.

Before the establishment of an

office in Broome, investigations were accumulated until their number justified the expense of sending an investigative team, meaning that at times the trail could get very cold on some investigations.

Detective Sergeant Sullivan, on the other hand is finding that as the communities of the north west have become aware of his existence, he is getting referrals that in the past would have gone unreported.

Commander Leffers, said he is not surprised that referrals have increased since Detective Sergeant Sullivan was located in Broome.

"Peter has done a wonderful job in becoming well known in the area," he said.

Rather than wait for referrals, Detective Sergeant Sullivan has established a routine of visiting the far flung communities of the region.

Part of his brief is to attempt to find out what fraud against the Commonwealth is taking place.



From Broome its a long trip to anywhere

Detecting fraud in remote communities is made difficult by cultural differences and often the lack of written records. Frequently, the first indication Detective Sergeant Sullivan has of something wrong will be a word-of-mouth enquiry about how a Commonwealth grant was supposed to be used.

Following through on such an enquiry may reveal a legitimate redirection of funds or the fact that money or property has gone missing.

"The problem is that once a Commonwealth grant has been made to an incorporated body the title in that money passes to that incorporated body. Any fraud that takes place becomes a matter for the state police to investigate," Detective Sergeant Sullivan said.

"Unfortunately remote communities are susceptible to being exploited by the unscrupulous.

Last year through a Passenger Automatic Selection System (PASS) alert people were stopped at Brisbane airport attempting to fly to New Zealand with money salted off from an Aboriginal community store.

Again, through word-of-mouth, an illegal immigrant, formerly from East Germany, was removed from a community located 200kms from Halls Creek.

Shared resources

Detective Sergeant Sullivan said that Broome's isolation means that all the government agencies tend to work together to share resources, a situation that benefits everyone.

Each month he attends a Regional Operations and Advisory Committee meeting where officers from such organisations as Customs, Defence, Immigration, and WA Conservation and Land Management review their current operations and co-ordinate visits to outlying areas.

Visits to outlying areas are co-ordinated to reduce the risk of being stranded and to avoid irritating isolated communities with a constant stream of government visitors asking similar questions.

"The safety advantage of being able to travel with at least one other vehicle in remote areas can't be understated," Detective Sergeant Sullivan said.

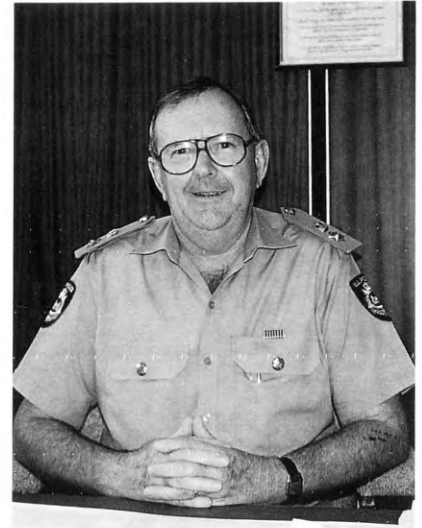
Never-the-less there have been occasions when he has had to break away from a convoy to pursue specific AFP business to rejoin the group latter on.

Born in Perth, Detective Sergeant Sullivan said he had not spent much time in the north-west prior to being sent there by the AFP, but now enjoys the region very much.

As the first *resident agent* in Broome he has had to forge his own links with the local community and the law enforcement community.

Local policing

Having served two years with the WA Police prior to joining the AFP has made it easier for him to relate to the local police headed by Superintendent Mal Gray.



WA Police Superintendent Mal Gray

Sergeant Sullivan said that he has a good working relationship with the local WA Police and that often there are federal implications in state investigations. These have, in the past, received low priority from state investigators whose efforts have been directed to the demands of day-to-day community policing.

Superintendent Gray is the WA Police Regional Officer for the Broome Region and has 113 people in his command at seven locations including a school-based officer at Halls Creek.

His area of responsibility has a large Aboriginal population as well as the multicultural society which makes up the population of Broome. In addition to this in the tourist season the population of Broome escalates from 9800 to 30,000 at the end of May and will stay that way for five months mainly as a result of domestic tourism.

Superintendent Gray said that the frontier quality of the region is



Ansett Airlines provides the regular domestic air service to Broome. From Broome it is a two hour flight to Perth or a two day trip by road.

changing. Broome is now starting to exhibit its share of urban problems with its associated crime.

He said that police officers who can't work in with the needs of the community don't last long.

The local Police and Citizens Youth Club has been successful providing a link between the police and the community to the extent that it has the largest membership in the state.

He said that it is common that federal crime often goes hand-in-hand with state offenses and now that the AFP has a permanent presence in the region, Commonwealth matters can be dealt with in a more timely manner.

Long Customs presence

The Australian Customs Service has had a presence in Broome for over 100 years because of the town's connection with the pearling industry. A major task today is overseeing the Coastwatch program for the surrounding area as well as the more routine Customs activities.

The establishment of an AFP *resident agent* in Broome was made possible when Customs made available office space.

Customs Sub-Collector, Bob Mar-



Above: With Peter Sullivan studying the plans of the Broome international airport are Customs officers (l to r) Steve Balsdon, Bob Martin and Fiona Powell.

tin said that the government agencies in Broome work well together and this was the case between Customs and the AFP.

"Peter's police expertise is appreciated by this office and our organisations have many goals in common," he said.

Mr Martin said that the recent review of Customs activities and procedures had restricted the use of Custom's schedule 4 warrants.

"We have already called on Peter's expertise in drawing up section 10 Crimes Act warrants in connection with an illicit still, he said.

As Sub Collector for the region, Mr Martin also has responsibility for processing international arrivals and departures. This is a task that is expected to escalate with the growing popularity of Broome with Asian tourists.

Broome airport was remodelled and opened for international traffic on April 8 and is now capable of processing 300 passengers each hour.

Currently all international arrivals are chartered flights and prior to the remodelling of the airport, international passengers were bused to the Cable Beach Club for processing.

"Broome is a private airport and is not yet open to RPT (Regular Passenger Ticketing) so is not on a

regular commercial route, but it has been discovered by international agents who organise package tours during the dry season," Mr Martin said.

Mr Martin said that Broome looks set to develop under tourism the way Cairns and Townsville have and with that will come an increase in activities that are of interest to Customs and the AFP.

Broome time

While aircraft arrivals and departures and passenger processing may go like clockwork, most of Detective Sergeant Sullivan's other activities are



Broome's cemeteries provide evidence of the town's long-time multicultural tradition





The isolation of the north-west coastline is just one factor that Detective Sergeant Sullivan has to deal with as a 'resident agent'.

subject to an effect known in the region as 'Broome time' - meaning things happen at their own pace.

"It took me about a month to get used to the concept, but it's no use trying to fight it," Detective Sergeant Sullivan said.

"As an example, last year I drove to Newman to do a controlled drug delivery and met officers who came from Perth.

"We were four officers in two cars in 40 degree heat waiting for the suspect to collect a parcel from the local post office.

"The suspect decided to work overtime so we had to wait an

extra day. In the end we got him, but what we anticipated happening didn't happen in the time-frame envisaged," he said.

Even a simple request from headquarters to check out an address can get complicated.

In Broome everyone gets their mail from the post office, so few people bother displaying street numbers. To drive past a house to see who lives there can't be done unless the lot number is known.

There is a huge volume of mail going through Broome. The post office boasts more than 3000 boxes.

"The postal staff here are pretty good at picking suspect parcels, but unless you've got a Customs dog on hand it can be difficult to handle such a huge volume of mail.

"Apart from drugs, we've had live lizards, fossils and Aboriginal artifacts concealed in mail destined for overseas. Attempted live animal exports can be a particularly cruel business," he said.

Other complications

There are five justices of the peace in Broome and the Kimberley has one magistrate who does the circuit, so two weeks out of four he is not available. Many Kimberley settlements have JPs who perform the court function and are quite entitled to sign warrants.

One of the biggest problems faced by Detective Sergeant Sullivan is remanding defendants to a magistrates court.

"I had a matter of a voting irregularity in Onslow last year. It was getting close to Christmas, and whereas in Perth you can put someone before a court the next day, here it can take months to get before a magistrate. If the magistrate is not available you can't do anything except go through a series of remands until a magistrate comes to town," he said.

"Fortunately I can communicate electronically with Perth and Canberra quite effectively through my computer, so administratively I'm okay," he said.

He also said that he has *Watson and Watson* handy as his law reference and the DPP gives him good advice in a timely manner when required.

The one thing Detective Sergeant Sullivan made very clear was that the effort that the AFP has put into establishing the *resident agent* program means that the AFP is not in the region for the short term.

"It must be realised that we are in for the long haul," he said. □



Tourists enjoying an 'outback' sunset at Cable Beach