

# Self scrutiny gives rise to new culture

By Acting Superintendent Mandy Newton



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Acting Superintendent Mandy Newton

**T**he 1994 AFP 'Women, Police and Management Conference' recommended to Commissioner Palmer an external review of the 1992-95 Equal Employment Opportunity Program.

Commissioner Palmer agreed with the recommendation and incorporated the values of equity and diversity into the outcomes of the 1994 Mollymook executive conference.

A major paper on ethos accepted at the executive conference states:

"Integral to the ethos of the AFP is the recognition by its people, of the personal qualities and values needed to ensure that it is regarded as successful; made up of professional individuals empowered to achieve their full potential; and in so doing, enabling the organisation to achieve its organisational goals and be recognised accordingly.



T. Dickerson

Delegates from the August 1994 AFP 'Women, Police and Management Conference' recommended to the Commissioner that an external EEO audit be done to determine the AFP's performance compared with that of the Australian Public Service.

As a result of the conference, valuing equity and diversity will become inherent qualities of the AFP's change process. The initial step to effecting these changes commenced with the contracting by the AFP of Carmel Niland and Associates to undertake an audit of the 1992-95 EEO program. Carmel Niland is considered expert in the field of EEO research and was formerly the President of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board.

The review was commissioned to audit the current 1992-95 EEO program incorporating:

- an assessment of the AFP's culture;
- an effective training program for staff to improve their understanding and application of equity and diversity;
- the appropriate budget and staffing requirements for EEO; and
- effective target strategies for different levels of the AFP.

The audit assessed EEO performance for all groups and made recommendations and devised strategies to increase the effectiveness of a future EEO program.

Commenting on the AFP's 1992-95 EEO program, the Niland report described it as "excellent", focusing on training, the elimination of sexual and racial harassment and special programs for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, people with disabilities and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Although the program in layout was excellent, the AFP's ability to meet the objectives was poor.

As part of the audit, the consultancy conducted a survey of 180 employees divided into 20 focus groups and conducted individual interviews with a number of employees and with Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) officials.



Ms Carmel Niland

R. W. Crothers

workplace sexual harassment was poorly understood. It also found that within the prevailing culture, all women as well as people from other cultural backgrounds had to become acculturated to be accepted.

The report concluded that the AFP's culture produced "a climate conducive to sexual and racial harassment".

The recent investigation of sexual harassment allegations in ACT Region led to a number of personnel having their appointments ended early pursuant to section 26E of the *Australian Federal Police Act*. The Commissioner has stated that sexual or racial harassment will not be tolerated in the AFP. The AFP executive will fully support staff who are sexually or racially harassed and encourage personnel to report incidents of harassment to an EEO contact officer or the EEO Section, Personnel and Industrial Relations Division.

#### **Conflict handling and grievance management**

The focus groups were asked to report on how conflicts and grievances were handled within the AFP. The results of this part of the survey showed:

- supervisors did not have the skills to handle grievances and conflicts adequately;
- conflict was handled poorly by "sweeping it under the carpet" or by transferring personnel;
- the formal grievance system had no support and is seen as cumbersome, lacking privacy and open to bias; and
- there were concerns that the complainant would be stigmatised.

The AFP acknowledges that the current grievance handling procedures are not as effective as they could be. New draft procedures have been prepared in consultation with Carmel Niland and the AFPA to improve the grievance process to achieve best practice. A strong emphasis has been placed on informal resolution prior to the formal process where a 'win - win' situation is more likely to be attained.

#### **Future EEO plans**

Of the 20 objectives specified in the AFP's 1992-95 EEO Program, four had been met fully, six had been met partially and 10 had not been met at all.

Overall, the report concluded the current program had not been successful in meeting its objectives for the following reasons:

- non-commitment of managers;
- lack of corporate funding;
- absence of awareness training about EEO and harassment;
- EEO statistics to track to program were difficult to retrieve and compile;
- evaluation of the program was poor because quantitative data was not available;
- lack of integration of the program into the AFP's objectives and mainstream activities;
- the program was not given appropriate profile or importance; and
- there was no formal internal advocacy in the program.

A new Equity and Diversity Program has been recommended by the consultant and is currently being considered by the Public Service Commission and Commissioner Palmer.

When adopted the program will be administered by an equity and diversity co-ordinator to ensure effectiveness within the AFP and will have appropriate human and financial resources allocated to ensure its objectives are achieved. The program should have clear lines of accountability and evaluation measures.

The program will be sponsored by an Equity and Diversity Council, chaired by the Commissioner in its first year and in subsequent years by the Deputy Commissioner who will advocate and evaluate the program.

The draft program currently under review is set out on in chart form on the following pages.

#### **EEO program**

Although AFP policy on EEO was supposed to be widely known throughout the organisation, the survey found that knowledge of the program was poor at all levels and there was a considerable misunderstanding about the concepts and principles that underpin EEO.

To address the current poor level of understanding and knowledge of EEO and the program, \$40,000 has been allocated in the 1995-96 financial year to the EEO Section to educate staff across the AFP on issues relating to equity and diversity.

#### **Family-friendly workplace**

Results of the survey of AFP focus groups showed that family-friendly policies were perceived as beneficial as long as others did not have to carry a heavier workload. A family-friendly workplace is one where flexible work practices allow staff to care for their children and aged relatives easily without work requirements suffering.

In community policing, shift work makes family responsibilities difficult and it was indicated that this area, in particular, had to be explored further.

#### **Sexual harassment**

The survey found that the AFP's legal obligation to eliminate

# Proposed AFP equity and diversity program

## Issue.

### Awareness of equity and diversity principles

### Harassment

## The key result required.

All AFP staff apply equity and diversity principles, demonstrate sensitivity to cultural diversity and treat one another and our clients with respect and dignity.

Eliminate all harassment in AFP.

## We will know we have done a good job when...

- AFP staff, at all levels, treat one another and especially those below them, with respect and dignity.
- AFP staff, especially managers and supervisors, value equity and diversity principles and appreciate the contribution that all staff from the special emphasis groups make to the AFP.
- The Equity and Diversity Program is publicly endorsed by the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner and the unions regularly throughout the life of the program.
- Equity and diversity performance indicators are included in determining the 'performance contracts' of all AFP managers.
- All AFP staff have a copy of the Equity and Diversity Program and have the opportunity to access the assistance of Equity and Diversity Contact Officers.
- Employee Attitudes Survey shows that AFP is continuously improving and at the end of the program is the top police organisation in Australia on equity and diversity issues.

- The rate of formal and informal complaints of sexual, racial and other forms of harassment initially increases, then decreases and continues to decrease to a level comparable with that of a best practice organisation.
- All harassment complaints are treated promptly and appropriately.
- All staff are aware of AFP's code of conduct and its consequence for non-compliance.
- All managers, superintendents, commanders and assistant commissioners are trained to identify, and to accept responsibility for resolving and preventing harassment in their workplaces.

## Who will benefit?

All AFP staff and special emphasis groups.

All AFP staff and special emphasis groups.

**Editor's note**

This program has not been approved yet and is currently under review by the Public Service Commission and Commissioner Palmer. The program was recommended in the *Niland Report* but may undergo modification before being adopted by the AFP.

**Balancing work, family and cultural responsibilities**

The AFP assists all staff with family and cultural responsibilities.

- The AFP has in place and promotes flexible work arrangements for staff with family, carer or cultural responsibilities.
- Supervisors and managers are supportive of staff who want to use their leave entitlements for legitimate family purposes.
- A Family Care Needs Assessment has been undertaken in community policing and an AFP Family Friendly Policy developed.
- AFP's work environment complies with International Labour Conventions III and 156.
- Three per cent of staff are working in permanent part-time work.
- Twenty per cent of staff in part-time work are male.
- All staff are aware of the family-friendly policy and its benefits.

All AFP staff with family responsibilities, staff from NESB or ATSI backgrounds, and staff affected by workplace injuries.

**Promotion and lateral recruitment of women into middle and senior management**

An increase in the proportion of women at management levels.

- Women are made aware and they take advantage of, the opportunities to reach management and supervisory levels.
- The representation of women at management levels is in proportion to their overall representation in the level below. For staff members at level three, 50 per cent and for police members at level two, 20 per cent.
- Women are provided with a range of opportunities to enhance their career prospects.

Woman and all AFP staff.

**Members of special emphasis groups**

Increased proportion of staff from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-English speaking background and of staff with physical and intellectual disabilities.

- The AFP meets the equivalent community standard for the employment of all special emphasis groups.
- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is 2 per cent across the AFP.
- The proportion of staff from a non-English speaking background is 20 per cent across the AFP.
- The proportion of staff with physical disability is 5 per cent across the AFP.
- The proportion of female members is at least 20 per cent.
- The AFP complies with local buildings codes for access for people with disability.
- The proportion of female recruits is at least 35 per cent in each intake.
- The attrition rate for all female members is equal to the attrition rate for males members over the life of the program.

Special emphasis groups and other other AFP staff.

**Equity and Diversity statistical data.**

Accurate and up-to-date data available for monitoring, statistical analysis and reporting on AFP Equity and Diversity performance.

- Data is regularly collected and collated.
- AFP's managers have reliable data which indicates the success of their Equity and Diversity Programs.
- Information is easily retrieved and accessible and available in quarterly reports for the Equity and Diversity Council.

All AFP staff and the organisation.