

'Teams' approach under new structure giving positive results in ACT Region

By Janice Jarrett and Eric Meyer

Significantly enhanced 'clear-up' rates in ACT Region are demonstrating the strong operational achievements which have resulted from the 'teams' approach introduced into the AFP as part of the organisational change process which began late last year.

Prominent among those achievements is that of the Regional Burglary Team which was formed after a new structure for ACT Region came into effect earlier this year bringing with it the 'teams' concept to achieve best practice.

The approach enables experienced and highly competent community policing officers, investigators and traffic enforcement officers to pass on their skills to other members and staff in team based operations.

It is part of the transformation underway within the AFP to move it from a largely traditional police service into a client-focused, results-oriented, modern investigative body. It targets change in five areas, that of core business, ethos, organisation, people and key relationships.

A major change to the structure of ACT Region's community policing under the process was the merging of the existing four police stations into two basic command units comprising the northern (City and Belconnen patrols) and southern (Woden and Tuggeranong patrols) geographical districts of the ACT. The resources of the four patrols were pooled to operate more closely with the four patrol superintendents who deploy staff to meet emerging problems. The Traffic Operations Team was retained to provide support to district traffic operations, investigate fatal and serious motor vehicle accidents, and to provide motorcycle services and technical traffic enforcement support.

The fraud and drug investigation units combined to form the Regional Investigations Team and provide a pool of experienced investigators from which multi-skilled investigational teams can be drawn to target criminal activity. A newly formed Regional Crime Area is responsible for special operations including surveillance, and to oversee the operations of the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse

Team (SACAT) and the Police Technical Team.

Under this new structure, the Regional Burglary Team in the three months since its inception in April, recovered more than \$150,000 worth of stolen property, much of which was returned to its owners, and laid more than 400 charges, in what was the single largest dedicated effort to combat burglaries in the ACT for many years.

Inter-agency co-operation has also benefited with the team uncovering offenders for 50 interstate burglaries and providing information for interstate police investigations.

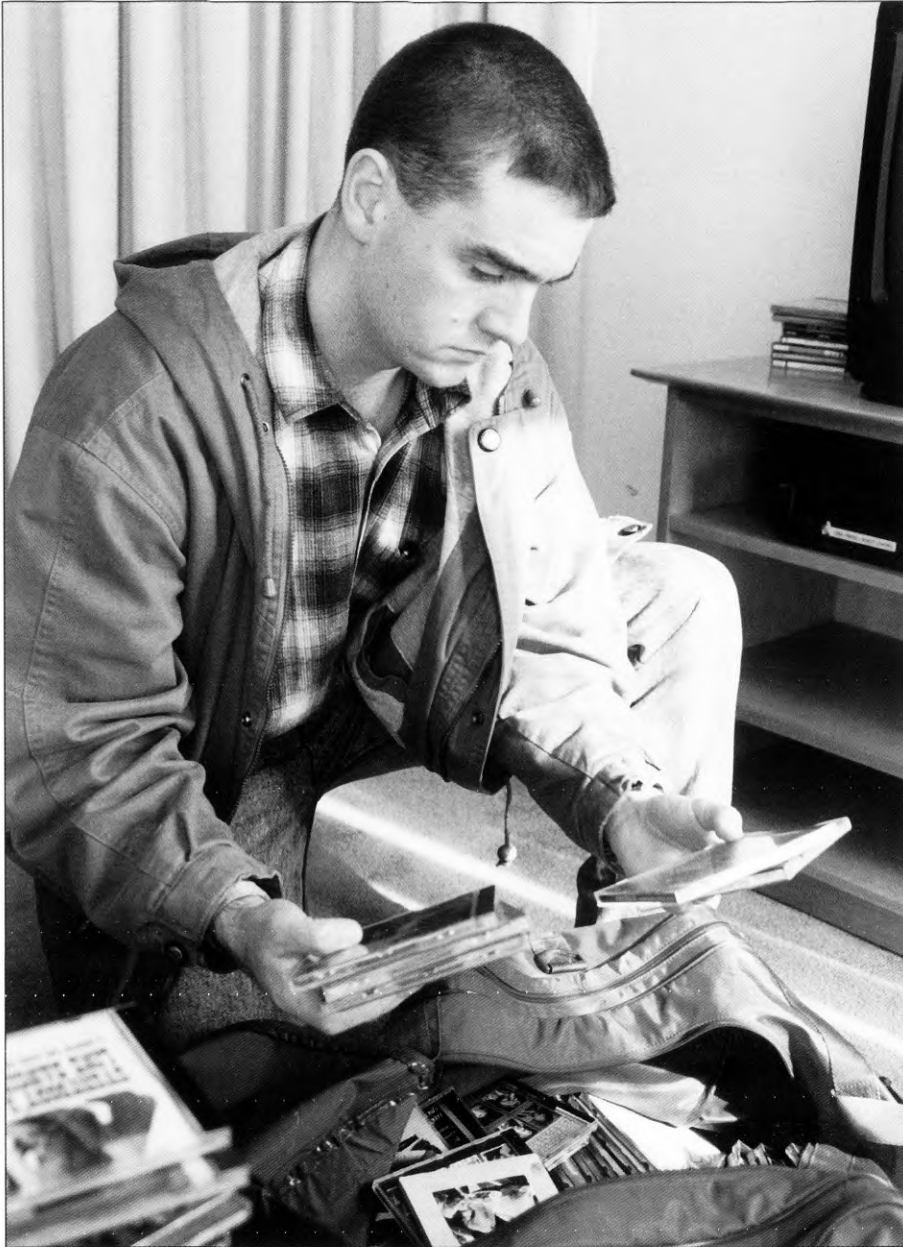
Team leader, Detective Acting Sergeant Michael Pearce, said that the team pursues professional criminals who prey on homes and businesses.

Computer theft from private homes had been identified as a strong trend in Canberra with personal computers and software targeted as keenly as video cassette recorders and television sets.

"It has specifically targeted multiple offenders and receivers of stolen property and dealt with a lot of people who make a living from breaking and entering," he said.

Computer theft from private homes had been identified as a strong trend in Canberra with personal computers and software targeted as keenly as video cassette recorders and television sets.

Former Regional Crime Co-ordinator Detective Superintendent Mike Lucas, said before leaving Canberra to take up a posting with Australian Civilian Police in Cyprus (AUSTCIVPOL), that the burglary task force had



Janice Jarrett

Constable Chris Sheehan of the Regional Burglary Team examines stolen property after executing a search warrant.

blended young enthusiastic patrol members to form a team led by an experienced detective to combat theft across the ACT.

"While crime teams still exist in the districts, we need to think regionally because of the mobility of these criminals," Detective Superintendent Lucas said.

"The formation of teams, such as the Regional Burglary Team, for regional tasks has proved to be one of the most effective ways of targeting burglars and receivers of stolen property who conduct their activities throughout the ACT and surrounding districts."

The early successes of the Regional Burglary Team had been beyond expectation, strongly

justifying its formation. While total burglaries from 1 July '95 to 31 May '96 had increased less than one per cent over the same period last financial year, the clear-up rate had risen a massive 88 per cent, making it one of the best results for many years.

"The results show that the flexible team-based approach to policing is being used effectively," Detective Superintendent Lucas said.

"The opportunity for young, highly motivated and committed members to concentrate on investigating the criminals who commit and profit from such perfidious activity, mostly against local residences, has proved highly productive.

"The members, loaned to the team by the four



Some of the stolen property seized by the Regional Burglary Team members. In the three months since its inception in April, the team recovered more than \$150,000 worth of stolen property . . . in what was the single largest dedicated effort to combat burglaries in the ACT for many years.

districts for set periods, have repaid their OICs by recovering large amounts of stolen property from their respective patrols and at the same time gaining valuable investigative experience.

“Partnerships between the AFP in the ACT Region and other law enforcement agencies are being strengthened also by Regional Burglary Team members who regularly become aware of ACT based burglars and receivers operating in NSW and vice versa.”

Superintendent Rex Saunders, who took over from Detective Superintendent Lucas as Regional Crime Co-ordinator said that NSW Police Service Intelligence officers from Queanbeyan, Yass and Goulburn now attend ACT Region Crime meetings where mutually beneficial intelligence on a wide range of criminal activities is exchanged.

Strong success has been achieved also by an anti-theft team in Woden which was established in mid-February this year and operates in a similar way to the Regional Burglary Team. It recovered more than \$100,000 worth of stolen property by mid-June, established an education program for second-hand dealers and caught 74 offenders for a total of 235 charges.

Teams have proved their value also in targeting localised crime problems with the City Special Projects Team created to focus on alcohol and drug related anti-social behaviour in the city patrol area. Members of the section use various

investigative techniques including surveillance and plain clothes operations. These methods are combined with routine uniform policing to target street offences in a proactive way rather than in a traditional reactive style.

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In other areas of ACT Region inter-agency co-operation has figured strongly with greater efficiency in road safety and traffic enforcement throughout the ACT and surrounding NSW areas.

One of the latest campaigns, ‘Snow Safe,’ promotes safe motoring to and from the snow fields using a co-operative cross-border team approach.

The operation is supported by an extensive advertising campaign funded by the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority and unites not only police from NSW and the ACT, but also state and territory wildlife officers.