

# Tributes to a true professional ... a gifted and talented friend

As the ACT's Chief Police Officer, Audrey Fagan was widely respected as a caring leader and an outstanding role model and mentor to women.

Close friends and colleagues have reflected on the unique qualities of a talented professional and the many gifts she brought to both the policing and greater communities.

**Elizabeth Montano, an independent member of the AFP's Executive Management Board remembers her friend fondly in this extract from her tribute delivered at St Christopher's Cathedral.**

"Audrey Fagan believed whole heartedly in diversity in policing. She believed that the contributions, perspectives and skills women can bring to the policing profession are essential to its future success.

"She was keenly aware that, as a senior woman in policing, she was in the position to do something about it – and Audrey, being Audrey, approached the issue the way she did all things, with energy, expertise and a wonderful personal style.

"Audrey worked at promoting this belief at every stage of her professional life. She was a highly effective and respected police officer in the field. She was an excellent manager and leader. She represented the AFP with distinction in a variety of forums promoting the value of women in policing. She did these things with courage, compassion, good humour and honesty.

"She was a long-standing and vigorous member of the Commissioners'



Photo by Brian Hartigan

Elizabeth Montano, the inaugural chair for Women in Law Enforcement Strategy (WILES), presented the Professional Tribute and highlighted how Assistant Commissioner Fagan represented the AFP in a variety of forums promoting the value of women in policing.

Australasian Women in Policing Advisory Committee which advises all Police Commissioners and the Australian Police Ministerial Council on mechanisms to support and retain women in policing.

"This committee has worked to promote mentoring programs to encourage women to take on leadership roles and family-friendly policies to the benefit of all members. "Audrey was an enthusiastic leader in the Women in Law Enforcement Strategy (WILES) which works to promote

women in the wider Commonwealth law enforcement and regulatory fields.

"In her time as Chair of WILES, Audrey ensured that WILES continued to run a large cross-agency mentoring program which was to be the first of its kind and remains the model for other mentoring programs.

"Inside the AFP, Audrey was instrumental in forming the National Women's Consultative Team providing support and guidance to women in the AFP. Outside the world of law enforcement,



Audrey was highly regarded in the wider public and private sectors of Canberra as an insightful and engaging speaker. She gave generously of her time, seeing these as important opportunities to foster understanding and cooperation between police and the community and demonstrate how effective women can be in that work.

“Audrey was a highly effective officer and manager who never failed to impress. She got results in the present and she built for the future. She loved being a member of the Australian Federal Police and was immensely proud of the organisation, its role and reputation. Audrey was admired by many – both professionally and personally.

“Audrey was always approachable and available when she was needed. She took the initiative to check how you were going and was generous with her ideas and insight. She wasn’t afraid to reveal that, just like Superman, Superwoman is a fictional character. She didn’t pretend it was easy and gloss over the difficulties. “Audrey’s love for her family – and the joy she took in them – was clear and strong. She wasn’t afraid that she would look less capable or professional if she talked about Clair or Chris or a sister or brother or even a much loved pet dog.

She didn’t deny how hard it can be to do the balancing that all people have to do to make both their professional and personal lives the best they can be.

“Audrey was her own hardest task master. She was driven to do things the best way because she believed it was the only way.

Much more than a colleague, Audrey was a wonderful and dear friend and we will miss her.”

**Acting Manager International Federal Agent Gerry Morris was recruited alongside Audrey. Here, she fondly remembers her former class mate.**

“When I first met Audrey she seemed quite timid, but over time her confidence evolved. Years later, I remember catching up with Audrey soon after the birth of her daughter Clair and she had clear ideas about what she wanted to do. I knew then that she was going places.

“What stood out about Audrey was her people focus – she wouldn’t see a crowd – she would see all the individuals. In 2003 when I was the Canberra-based Pacific Island Liaison and had started the Pacific Island Chiefs of Police Women’s Advisory Network (PICP WAN), I asked Audrey if she could assist. Without her support and her convincing members of the Senior Executive of the benefits, this network would never have been formed.

“When Audrey came to the inaugural Pacific Island Chiefs of Police Women’s Advisory Network (PICP WAN) held in Suva in 2003 she was a magnet to women from all over the Pacific. She would listen and talk with each woman about how it was possible to collectively achieve positive outcomes.

“Audrey had a wonderful relationship with her daughter Clair. They were like sisters, and they loved their music. Audrey would always pick up on the latest hits and I remember her repeatedly screening a

Robbie Williams DVD for her mother in an effort to convert her to his music. That was Audrey – carefree, fun loving and wanting those around her to share her experiences.

“Audrey had a strong work ethic and this was evident throughout her career. She contributed significantly to change, addressing diversity and showing the AFP could (and should) be a dynamic and progressive organisation.”

**Deputy Chief Police Officer Leanne Close remembers:**

“Audrey was extremely proud to be the Chief Police Officer for ACT Policing and her approach to community policing was highly regarded.”

“She was keen to ensure her officers also understood that they too were a part of the community. Audrey’s foremost objective was to focus on community needs, driving the Suburban Policing Strategy initiative, encouraging contributions by members in various areas of the organisation. Audrey recognised this was a key strategy to engage the community at the grass roots level, engendering a positive impact on community satisfaction of our police service.

“Audrey seized every opportunity to highlight the good work of all officers in ACT Policing and was particularly keen to ensure that the AFP as a whole becomes more diverse, capitalising on the strengths and diversity of views that naturally brings to any organisation.”

**Sergeant Erin Pobar, of AFP Canberra Women’s network (AFPCWN) recalled Audrey’s willingness to assist her**



Beginning her AFP career in 1981, Audrey Fagan served in the Australian Capital Territory, and in the national and international areas of the AFP before being appointed Chief Police Officer for the ACT in 2005.

**on an interview which was reported back to a recent WILES seminar.**

“Two key messages I recall from Audrey are: ‘you need to have your own personal view of success and strive for whatever that is’ and ‘take all the opportunities that arise, even the unpleasant jobs, as they are really opportunities – for challenge, learning and achievement’.”

Audrey was clearly an inspiration and role model to women in policing. Importantly, she was highly regarded for her leadership qualities, her compassion and commitment to the men and women of the AFP, particularly those she led in ACT Policing.

For the order of service booklet at Audrey’s funeral, the distinctive black and white colours of the police chequered band, known as the Sillitoe Tartan, were changed to purple and white which is representative of women’s suffrage.

Audrey was not only committed to the AFP and community policing but also to the local community. Community service groups and members of the Canberra community have acknowledged Audrey’s personal contributions in many tributes received by the AFP since her passing.

Audrey was the keynote speaker at the International Women’s Day breakfast held in Canberra in March of this year and joined a long list of highly regarded women who have addressed this event in past years, including actor Ruth Cracknell and comedian Julie McCrossan, who provided audiences



with a positive outlook of what women can achieve.

Audrey told the audience: “When I first arrived in the AFP, within ACT Policing women made up less than 10 per cent of the police force – now I’m pleased to see that, 26 years later, women comprise 30 per cent of its membership.

“There are a wide range of roles women can undertake and, essentially, there is no role in policing a woman can’t do.

“Women can find mentors other than someone they know. I was inspired by a number of people at different times throughout my career - in particular Eileen Collins who, in 1993, was the first female commander of a Space Shuttle mission.

“Another inspirational role model was my instructor in the 1980s – Sergeant Sandi Peisley. Sandi’s leadership, communication skills and knowledge were the qualities which allowed her to lead the second contingent to Solomon

Islands during the April 2006 riots and this achievement is inspirational for all women.”

Assistant Commissioner Fagan was also passionate about the Volunteers in Policing Program and valued their input to the AFP. Erin Pobar explained: “She knew them by name, who they were and always valued their assistance at policing events – whether it was the Canberra bush fires in 2003, the Royal Canberra Show or assisting at a front desk in a Canberra Station – they were all highly valued”.

**Detective Sergeant Sharan Slater, manager of the volunteers program said, “Ma’am Fagan was a huge supporter and she truly appreciated their dedication and commitment.**

“Whenever she met the volunteers, she would greet them by name, a friendly smile and more often than not, a kiss on the cheek. She took an interest in the task they were performing and appreciated the impact the volunteers had on ACT Policing and the wider AFP.”