

Time well spent in the AFP



More than 23 years in the AFP has proved to be a rewarding and satisfying career for this dedicated female police officer.

Imagine the mid 1980s when disco was all the rage, shoulder pads were huge and hair was dyed every colour of the rainbow. Most people wouldn't have wanted to swap their trendy civilian clothes and nightclub outings for a dull uniform and a tiny bedroom at the AFP College.

But one Canberra teenager happily donned the blue suit, and hasn't regretted that choice for a moment. Since her first day in uniform, Assistant Commissioner Leanne Close has worked her way up through the ranks to achieve her ambition of being a successful police officer. She moved to AFP Headquarters in February to act as National Manager Protection and, on 10 July, was promoted to the rank of Assistant Commissioner and is now permanently in the role.

Leanne's interest in a policing career began during justice studies classes in high school, and was further influenced by family friends who were police officers. After leaving school she worked in the Reserve Bank in Canberra for 12 months, then decided to follow her dream of becoming a police officer and enrolled in the AFP as a 19-year-old recruit in March 1986.

While becoming a recruit was the first step to realising her career ambitions, there was one thing Leanne wasn't fond of – the female police uniform at the time. It was impractical, uncomfortable and the 40-denier stockings were not flattering to even the best pair of legs.

After graduation, Leanne was posted to the AFP Sydney office

where she spent 11 years working in several areas including intelligence and fraud and drug investigations. She recalls attending one search warrant where the suspect was a man who had a penchant for dressing up in religious robes.

"The man lived in a large presbytery-style house," Assistant Commissioner Close said.

"When my colleagues and I entered the house to execute the search warrant, we found a large, very dark room that smelled really bad, so we had sudden fears of finding much more than we expected – possibly dead bodies.

"This happened at the time the movie *Silence of the Lambs* was very popular, so it was really quite eerie.

"Fortunately, we didn't find any bodies, so we were all very relieved. The room that had us so worried was an old meat locker, and the smell was residual. The man was eventually charged with multiple fraud offences."

After being posted back to her home town, Canberra, Leanne worked at the AFP College in Barton for six years. While working full-time, she raised her young child and also successfully completed two graduate certificates and a Masters Degree in Education Leadership.

Leanne next transferred to ACT Policing as Coordinator Intelligence, went on to the role of Detective Superintendent Investigations, and then spent two and a half years

as Deputy Chief Police Officer – Commander Response.

When Leanne first started with the AFP, there were five other women in her recruit class who all graduated successfully, but Leanne is the only one who remains in the AFP.

One thing that has particularly impressed Leanne is the way AFP members adhere to and promote the core values of the organisation, and the professionalism they demonstrate every day.

"I have had many role models throughout my career," Assistant Commissioner Close said.

"Some have led by example, others have taught me how not to go about things. But they have all helped me achieve my goals and get to where I am today."



01: Assistant Commissioner Leanne Close **02:** Assistant Commissioner Leanne Close