

Policing is a family affair



Many AFP families have long histories in law enforcement, often recommending a career in policing to their children and grandchildren.

Chief Police Officer Michael Phelan's family has been in policing since his great-great grandfather joined Victoria Police as a mounted police officer circa 1850. By 1867, he was a senior constable and was the first Officer-In-Charge of Toongabbie Station in East Gippsland.

Two generations later, Assistant Commissioner Phelan's paternal grandfather was a member of Victoria Police and, on the other side of the globe, his maternal grandfather was a member of the Dutch police.

For the McDevitt family it all began back in 1927, when Augustus Weiss, a NSW mounted police officer, was invited to join the ACT Police as one of its first 10 constables. He served in the ACT until 1948.

Augustus's son-in-law, Thomas McDevitt, became a member of

the Police Officer Guard in 1954 and was then appointed to the Commonwealth Police. Thomas and his wife had 10 children and five of them had careers in law enforcement.

One of the five, Federal Agent Chris McDevitt, is the AFP's Manager Intelligence Services. His son, Jason, after 10 years in the military, also decided to join the AFP and is a member of ACT Policing at Woden.

The Dahlstroms are just starting their family policing tradition, with three family members employed in very different roles.

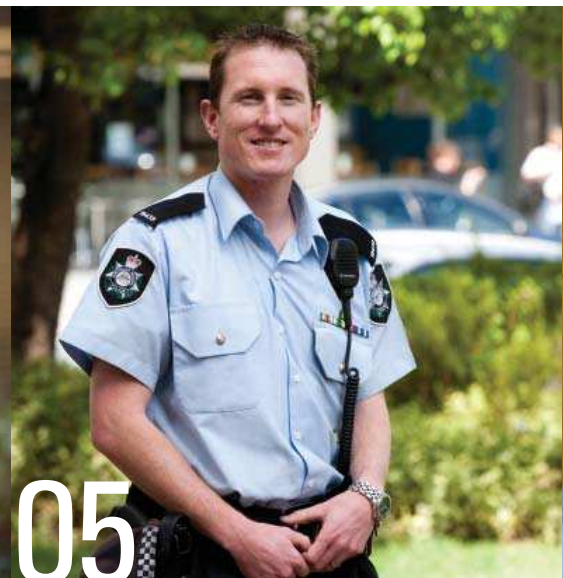
Superintendent Tim Dahlstrom is Coordinator Capacity Development Operations in the AFP's International Deployment Group (IDG). Superintendent Dahlstrom met his wife, Josie, in Sydney in 1981 and, in 2000, Josie joined the AFP's Information Technology

portfolio. Josie is now executive assistant to IDG Manager Planning and Development. Their son, Robert, joined the AFP in 2006 as a member of the IDG logistics team, then decided to become a Protective Service Officer. He completed the recruitment program in August 2007 and is currently posted to Alice Springs, stationed at Pine Gap.

All three families agree that the opportunities offered by a career in the AFP are excellent, especially for women.

Assistant Commissioner Phelan's 10-year-old daughter wants to join the police force and aspires to become Commissioner one day. Assistant Commissioner Phelan would recommend the job to any of his children and would fully support them if they choose that path.

"There are so many opportunities in the AFP, and with family in the





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01: Assistant Commissioner Phelan **02:** The first ten ACT Police constables circa 1927. Augustus Weiss is in the back row, far right. **03:** Left to right: Josie, Robert and Tim Dahlstrom. **04:** Chris McDevitt **05:** Jason McDevitt **06:** Assistant Commissioner Phelan looking at a photo of his father that hangs in his office.

police force, you see both the good and bad sides of the job," Assistant Commissioner Phelan said.

Superintendent Dahlstrom said his family has immense pride in being part of such a professional organisation.

Federal Agent McDevitt has one grandchild and would like to see her join the AFP in the future.

"You wouldn't want to steer your children or grandchildren into something that wasn't the best, and the AFP is a stand-out organisation," Federal Agent McDevitt said.

Assistant Commissioner Phelan's father, also named Michael, joined the Commonwealth Police in Melbourne in 1965 and later participated in the Royal Commission on the Activities of the Federated Ship Painters and Dockers Union. Michael senior's second wife, Joyce, joined the Commonwealth Police in 1972 and, after the formation of the AFP in 1979 and promotion to Station Sergeant, became one of the three most senior women in the AFP.

Detective Superintendent Michael Phelan was deployed to Washington for three years as the AFP's Senior Liaison Officer, and was accompanied by Joyce who was the AFP's Liaison Officer. They both retired in 1996. As well, Assistant Commissioner Phelan's stepfather was a member of Victoria Police.

And this tradition of policing in the Phelan family continues. Superintendent Melinda Phelan, Assistant Commissioner Phelan's wife, works in the AFP's Counter Terrorism portfolio.

Like other teenage boys, Assistant Commissioner Phelan dreamed of becoming a fighter pilot, but that dream didn't come to fruition. He liked the idea of being a police officer after seeing how much his father enjoyed the job and joined the AFP straight after leaving school in 1985. When he first graduated from the AFP College, his father told him to stay in the ACT and learn the basics of policing before moving on to other areas.

"I always looked to my father for mentoring and guidance," Assistant Commissioner Phelan said.

"I'd like to think I have modelled my behaviours on him. He was a great detective, and if I was half the people manager he was, I would be happy."

Detective Superintendent Michael Phelan was awarded the Australian Police Medal (APM) in 1988. By coincidence, Assistant Commissioner Michael Phelan was awarded the APM on the same day exactly 20 years later in recognition of distinguished service, particularly in the areas of national policing and human resource management.

Participation in the AFP is just as widespread in the McDevitt family. Federal Agent Chris McDevitt's siblings Kathleen and Vince worked in the Australian Protective Service. Their brother Ben joined the AFP in 1983 and is now the Chief Executive Officer of CrimTrac. Ben's wife, Karen, works at Tuggeranong Police Station. Another brother, Steve McDevitt, is Team Leader Human Sources, ACT Intelligence.

"Policing is exciting because you never know what to expect when you go to work each day," Federal Agent Chris McDevitt said.

"It's rewarding to help people, and to know you are making a real difference in their lives."

Superintendent Dahlstrom says the best thing about the AFP is the opportunity it provides to its members. He has managed and deployed to United Nations missions, including those in Cyprus, Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands. He has been seconded to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and, in 2007, was the inaugural secondee to the Department of Defence School of Strategic Studies where he earned a Masters degree in Strategic Studies.

Tim and Josie Dahlstrom will soon be leaving for Jakarta as Tim is taking up the AFP Senior Liaison Officer posting in January 2010.

"I'm not sure that people outside of the AFP understand the diversity and challenges being in the AFP brings," Superintendent Dahlstrom said.

All three families are proud of their achievements, and hope their law enforcement tradition continues into the future.



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