



Teamwork = success

Constable Beck Wenham reaches new heights during her Basic Negotiator's Course.

Constable Beck Wenham wasn't expecting the Basic Negotiator's Course to be easy – but she wasn't expecting it to be the hardest course she has ever done either.

The former air force member also has a university degree in criminology, so she has a diverse experience on which to compare the demands of being a negotiator.

She graduated from recruit training in November 2011 and was looking for a new challenge to take her out of her comfort zone. The 11-day course did that just fine.

"Negotiations could range from 30 minutes to five hours," Constable Wenham says. "It pushes you to your limits – mentally, emotionally and psychologically."

Since completing the course in June, Constable Wenham has now joined the AFP's Police Negotiation Team (PNT) as one of its 29 part-time members.

Every five weeks she is on call to respond to a domestic negotiation task in the ACT as part of her general duties police role at Woden station.

Given the PNT responds to about 50 operational tasks each year, chances are that Constable Wenham will soon gain real-time experience as an operational negotiator.

The intensity and the demands of the Basic Negotiators Course is the perfect preparation for stepping into that space for real.

Training features a continuous stream of exercise scenarios that illustrate and enhance the theory.

Students are confronted with highly charged, complex and emotional situations – and may in fact, experience failure. They are expected face that failure, overcome it and deal with it to the satisfaction of the directing staff.

Constable Wenham says personal emotions were challenged "to a massive degree". A lengthy hostage scenario is one such training exercise that pushed her to the limit.

"It's like I pretty much had to put on the big straight face and be professional as much as you can," she says.

Ultimately, the training compels each student to look to and depend on their teammates for success. The frustrations, the stress, the emotions – they are too much for a lone individual.

"It's important to be professional during situations police negotiators are faced with," she says.

"In the back of your mind, you are constantly worried for people's safety, especially in that hostage situation. All you want to do is get those people out and a lot of hostage situations can last for hours on end."

"We all had our different ways of learning," Constable Wenham says, but adds "that's why you need a solid and grounded team assisting you to get through every situation".