

Combatting Counterfeiters



The A.F.P. Currency Branch has its roots in the famous "dud tenners" case in 1966 which produced the first evidence of counterfeiting on an organised scale in Australia.

Following the appearance of fake \$10 notes, officers from the Reserve Bank, Treasury, Attorney-General's Department and the former Compol met in Canberra to review the existing system of enforcing the Commonwealth currency laws which largely was carried out by State Police with only a minor role for Compol.

They agreed that the "dud tenners" episode had shown up some areas of concern and that there was a real and pressing need to achieve a greater degree of effectiveness under Commonwealth direction.

The meeting decided on proposals to establish a small, mobile team of experts who could move quickly to the focal point of any outbreak and provide skilled, scientific assistance and investigatory direction.

The then Attorney-General, Mr Nigel Bowen, announced the Currency Branch's creation on December 8, 1967, with an initial staff of a Compol Chief Inspector and Sergeant, and two Detective Senior Constables from the Victoria Police.

It is now staffed by four A.F.P. detectives, headed by Senior Sergeant Mike (Hughie) Phelan with Sergeant Jim Parsons, Senior Constable Ron Clarke and First Constable Maureen Hayn making up the team. The Reserve Bank Note Issue Department's Mr John Kieni is the scientific officer attached to the branch.

The main function of the Currency Branch is, of course, to investigate offences against the National Currency, but in recent times most of the investigations conducted have been in relation to counterfeit foreign currency, travellers' cheques, letters of credit and bank drafts together with some foreign exchange enquiries.

Counterfeiting is on the increase, with about \$390,000 in counterfeit US currency being recovered in Australia in the past year. Two completely new series of counterfeit notes appeared in Australia before anywhere else in the world, in one case leading the Branch to believe they were being counterfeited in Australia. The new series were US \$20 notes and a West German 100 Deutschmark.

There is a close link between State Police forces, particularly Victoria,

New South Wales and Queensland with the Currency Branch and officers from the Branch have conducted a number of large scale investigations with officers from those Forces.

The Currency Branch is also the national Central office for suppression of counterfeit currency within the auspice of the International Criminal Police Organisation, National Central Bureau of Australia, Canberra (Interpol), with the duty of recording and disseminating information regarding currency, travellers' cheques and other negotiable documents, counterfeit or stolen, throughout the world and to conduct or assist investigations in Australia.

The activities of organised criminal groups dealing in such documents, whether in Australia or overseas, are also recorded.

Consequently the filing system at the Branch has become quite extensive and the vast amount of useful information which it contains is constantly being used as a source of reference in relation to questions arising from National and International enquiries.

The Branch also maintains US Secret Service Circulars in relation to counterfeit US currency and



Members of the Currency Branch (from left): Ron Clarke, Maureen Hayn, Jim Parsons, John Kieni (Reserve Bank) and Mike Phelan (seated).



Maureen Hayn works conscientiously, oblivious to **Platypus'** roaming photographer who, for once, got the focus right.

receives a computer print-out of current counterfeits and new series at the same time as US Secret Service Field Offices. Interpol publications are also on record and upgraded each month.

There is an excellent liaison with the US Secret Service and a Special Agent from the Honolulu Field Office visits the Branch about every three months to help bring the Branch up to date with current counterfeit trends and the situation in South-East Asia and other areas which could affect Australia.

Regular lectures on counterfeiting are given by the Branch to the A.F.P. Detectives Course, the Victoria Police Detective Training School and

other Police Forces, Banks, Schools and Rotary as requested.

Members of the Branch have undergone a course of instruction in counterfeit techniques at the Reserve Bank, Note Issue Department, and last year the first counterfeit course for A.P.F. members outside the Branch was conducted.

The course covered such topics as counterfeit identification and recognition, printing techniques, investigation techniques regarding counterfeit documents, different types of counterfeit documents, water marks, paper analysis and evidence pertaining to counterfeiting.

Special Agent Jim Highett from the US Secret Service, Honolulu

Field Office lectured on counterfeit US currency.

Currency offences in Australia lately have been associated with organised criminal groups and narcotics. It is a unique and interesting type of investigation and one enquiry can take years to complete with the main aim being to establish the source of the counterfeit and identify and convict the printer.

The Currency Branch will shortly be moving with the Note Issue Department from Fitzroy to Craigieburn, approximately 25 kilometres from the centre of Melbourne, along the Hume Highway.



EMERGENCY EXERCISE IN WESTERN DIVISION

by P.S. Constable Dani Rogers.

Amid the blaze of colour of wildflowers at Perth Airport, there was a blaze of a more serious nature.

The Captain of VH-RFF, a Boeing 727 with 172 passengers on board had informed the Tower that a fire in the port engine had necessitated a shut-down. On approach, the aircraft was unable to maintain altitude and crashed 300 metres short of Runway 24.

This was the scene set for the annual emergency exercise at Perth Airport. The exercise is in accordance with an international agreement which requires major international airports to conduct such an exercise each year.

Like other exercises of this type, the main aim was to set up a mock drama to involve those services which would be required to assist in

a similar real situation.

Once the situation had been ascertained, emergency services swung into action.

Airport fire services using a specially formulated foam (A Triple F) extinguished the fire caused by the impact of the crash, and then search and rescue teams moved in.

Australian Federal Police, Western Australia Police, Department of Transport and airline officials, along with members of the medical services, worked tirelessly at their appointed tasks.

"Dead" and "injured" passengers were transported to the main terminal building while a search of the surrounding area continued.

Superintendent Humphries, the Officer-in-Charge, Western Division, commented after the exercise: "The

exercise was most successful. All Police and support services worked harmoniously and successfully during the exercise. It is difficult to stage an exercise of this kind, but judging by the reactions of the official umpires here it would appear that all areas were adequately covered and the services and organisations involved carried out their duties most competently."

Observers at the exercise (including media, Police and airline personnel) were impressed with the organisation and smooth running of the exercise (and were especially grateful for the umbrellas provided by the airlines to shade them in the soaring 40 degree heat).

