



THE Australian Federal Police Overseas Liaison Office in the Philippines opened on 10 September 1984.

A simple, straight-forward statement, but for Denis Craft, there's a lot more to it than that.

Denis is the AFP Liaison Officer in Manila and he's had the task of establishing the office and building up the rapport and goodwill necessary to be able to work with the multitude of enforcement agencies located in such a centre.

But in just over 12 months, he has managed to make big progress on that score.

"But it wasn't too good to start with," he says.

Because of renovations under way at the Australian Embassy at the time, the AFP office could not be occupied until mid-October. Denis was forced to operate from hotel accommodation near the Embassy.

"In the midst of this frustration came the search for suitable residential accommodation for the family," Denis said.

In all, the Craft family — Trish, daughters Jaci (17) and Dale (15), and son David (12) — spent 10 weeks in the hotel until suitable accommodation could be found.

"The search was exhaustive and entailed inspecting more than 90 houses," Denis said.

Their new home is located in the village of Dasmariñas, about 4km from the Embassy. Such 'villages' house most of the 40 Australia-based officers and their families. They are encircled by high walls and patrolled by security guards who also man the entrance gates.

The Australian Embassy occupies three floors in the China Banking Corporation Building in the commercial borough of Makati.

Other Australian Government departments represented in the Mission, apart from Foreign Affairs, include Immigration, Trade, Defence, Australian Information Service and the Australian Development Assistance Bureau. Excellent working relationships exist with all these departments.

Following the establishment of the Liaison Office, Denis set about forming liaison contacts with the many enforcement

The Philippines system of policing is loosely based on that adopted by the Americans, and there are many hundreds of local and provincial police forces.

The main enforcement arm of the nation is the Philippines Constabulary which is an element within the Armed Forces and has regional offices throughout the country.

Liaison links also have been established with officers of the National Bureau of Investigation, Commission on Immigration and Deportation, Customs, National Security, the Dangerous Drugs Board and the Philippines Coastguard. Few international enforcement agencies are represented in the Philippines at present, although the United States Drug Enforcement Administration has two officers based there. These officers also have liaison and enforcement responsibilities for the South Pacific area.

The Japanese National Police have one officer stationed in Manila with the New Zealand and Royal Canadian Mounted Police being represented by their liaison officers from Bangkok and Hong Kong respectively. Liaison links also are maintained with U.S. Armed Forces Police at their army, navy and air force bases in the Philippines.

Denis says his work in Manila has been helped considerably by the 18 months he spent in Malaysia. He was attached to the AFP Liaison Office in Kuala Lumpur, working with Chief Inspector David Schramm.

"The experience I gained at the post was invaluable when it came to setting up the new post in Manila," he said.

"Apart from being aware of the mechanics of AFP administration, I was able to get a sound knowledge of running an overseas post as it relates to the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Commonwealth Public Service.

"To have come to the Philippines without first having that experience and becoming used to the Asian way of life, I am sure would have meant a protracted period of settling in and frustrations," he said.

The Philippines lies north of the Equator and about 1,000km from the Asian mainland. The country is composed of about

7,000 islands, of which only about 1,000 are inhabited, and with a total population of about 50 million.

Its capital, Manila, is situated on the western side of the island of Luzon, in the northern sector of the archipelago.

The capital is home for some 8 million people. The actual metropolitan area, known as Metro Manila, comprises four cities and 13 boroughs.

The political scene in the Philippines, particularly since the assassination of former Senator Benigno Aquino in August 1983 is unsettled with frequent demonstrations.

Inflation during the 1984 calendar year was estimated at 60% but for 1985 is running at about 40%.

Because of the difficult economic conditions, prices of foodstuffs are generally higher than in Australia and certain lines may not always be available. To compensate for this the Embassy operates a commissariat which imports a range of groceries, frozen meat and liquor from Australia on a regular basis. It is run by the wives of two staff members and opens three afternoons a week.

On arrival at the post, officers are able to purchase debentures in the commissariat and profits are distributed on a six-monthly basis. Prices generally are higher than would be paid in Australia, apart from the range of liquor which is sold at duty free prices. A range of Australian wines also is available at times.

The Craft home comprises a three-bedroom bungalow with separate study, lounge, living and dining rooms, as well as a large verandah. A component of the local allowance paid to officers covers the employment of domestic staff.

Most Australian-based officers employ at least two staff to maintain the residence. The Crafts employ a cook, whose responsibilities also cover the cleaning of the kitchen and dining areas, and a lavandera who is responsible for the washing, ironing and cleaning of the remainder of the house.

Staff quarters are provided within the house with the staff working a six-day week. Household help is essential if officers are to meet their entertainment commitments.

Climatic conditions also support the need for assistance in the home. The annual temperature variation is between a minimum of 20 degrees and a maximum of 36 degrees Celsius, with high humidity.

With the onset of the dry season, from February to June, breakdowns in power and water supplies occur. Each Embassy house is equipped with a large storage tank containing sufficient water to last one or two days. A number of large plastic bins also are kept full of water in shower recesses to assist with personal hygiene during the times the water supply is cut.

The Philippines has a large expatriate Australian business community which sponsors two groups open to members of the Embassy. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and the Sundowners Club offer the opportunity to mix with other Australians outside the Embassy environment and create both friendships and liaison contacts which would not normally be presented. Various social and sporting functions are organised.

Both Denis and Trish have found driving in Manila very difficult, with traffic travelling on the right hand side of the road.

"Even though I have been driving for about 20 years and was used to driving in Malaysia, I found I was unable to cope with the sheer volume of traffic in Manila," Trish said. She restricts herself to driving in and around the village.

Apart from shopping and other social functions, she has found ample opportunity to involve herself in various forms of recreation and other projects. She has taken to playing golf and although she finds the weather conditions very tiring she enjoys mixing with the wives of other officers.

A group called the Australian Women's Group consisting of wives of members of the Australian business community and the Embassy, meets each month and works to support a number of charitable institutions and organisations. Trish is a member of the committee this year.

"Being able to see the worthy uses to which money raised by the group is put makes you feel very humble but gives you a good feeling in being able to do something to help the less fortunate," she said.

While in Malaysia and initially on arrival in the Philippines, the three Craft children attended International schools which are run on the U.S. system of education. The International School in Manila has more than 2,000 pupils and caters for children from primary school age to Year 12.

"However, due to the fact that qualifications obtained in the Philippines are unlikely to be recognised by the majority of universities in Australia, we decided the two girls should return to boarding school in Canberra," Denis said.

"Even though the family was split, Trish and I firmly believe this was the correct decision."

The girls travel to the Philippines on reunion visits during school vacations in Australia.

"We believe the long-term benefits of continuing their education in Australia far outweigh the initial trauma of splitting the family unit," Denis said.

The Australian Embassy, to give families a change from Manila's climate, leases an apartment in the mountains of northern Luzon where year round temperatures range from 12

to 28 degrees. Families are rostered for a week's stay at a time. Outside working hours, ample opportunities exist for most kinds of sport.

Exploring the Philippines can be a rewarding experience. Roads vary from fair to dangerous but they do offer those willing to use them many worthwhile ventures in sightseeing.

A number of seaside resorts are within 2 to 5 hours' drive from Manila and offer a wide range of facilities from fishing to skin diving and sailboard riding.

Denis sums up the posting as offering the whole family a relaxed lifestyle among a very congenial and talented people.

Detective Inspector Denis Craft, right, AFP Liaison Officer in the Philippines, discusses intelligence information with, left, Brigadier-General Ramon Montana, Commanding General of the Philippines Narcotics Command, and Detective Inspector Ed Tyrie.

