

HEALTH SURVEY UNDERWAY



AFP police surgeon, Dr Louis Pilotto (left) with AFP psychologist, Mr Len Backhouse

A health profile of AFP members nationally is expected to result from work initiated by AFP Canberra-based police surgeon, Dr Louis Pilotto.

The study — the first ever undertaken within the AFP — is drawing on the services of officers attending the AFP College, Barton.

“AFP psychologist, Mr Len Backhouse, and I are working on the programme and we have the co-operation of the National Heart Foundation,” Dr Pilotto said.

“The survey — which began in September and will take about 18 months to complete — will take in 500 members or about 25 percent of the force. In the first instance we are concentrating on the courses going

through Barton but we are also devising a programme for AFP people who don't do courses.

“I want to stress that all our work is being done on a voluntary and anonymous basis. The information collected won't go any further than medical files. We are looking to improve the general health and well-being of AFP members and I am committed to that.

“It would be most helpful and appreciated if officers continued to cooperate, as they have done to date.”

Dr Pilotto said it was very fortunate for the survey that the AFP's Director of Medical Services, Dr Mike Dwyer, and Mr Backhouse had already been looking at stress management and post critical incident stress counselling.

“The survey is looking at lifestyle factors and personality traits which

because of their commitments overseas.

They are Chief Inspector J.M. Jamieson (Cyprus), Inspector E. J. Curtis (Liaison Officer, Honolulu), Inspector B.A. Smith (Christmas Island), Detective Senior Sergeant J.A. Phelan (Liaison Officer, Washington) and Sergeant C.W. Webster (Cyprus).

The other officers to get the awards are: Station Sergeant Alex Fyfe (Special Projects), Station Sergeant J.C. Hillier (Special Intelligence), Detective Senior Sergeant Peter Cole (Special Intelligence), Senior Sergeant

add to the risk of heart disease. We want to know about smoking, drinking and exercise habits, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

“We hope the survey will form a base line for future health promotion programmes.”

Similar surveys have been undertaken in Australian state police forces and although it's too early to draw conclusions from the AFP survey, Dr Pilotto thinks the final results may point to differences in health levels and illness danger areas between the two groups.

“The AFP is different from the state forces in that there is a higher element of investigative-type work in the AFP and not so much of what one could term the ‘hard core’ street policing,” he said.

Dr Pilotto graduated with an honours degree in medicine from Sydney University and has been in practice for 10 years. He passed the fellowship examination for the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners earlier this year and was recently made a member of the Australian College of Nutritional Medicine.

He has wide experience in areas relevant to police work — especially crisis intervention, mental health and stress management.

And Dr Pilotto is equipped to handle all those statistics that are a part of any survey. “I have a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in mathematics and statistics from the University of New South Wales,” he said. “I was a teacher for three years before I decided to go back to university for my medical degree.”

“My initial impression of the AFP is that it is a very professional organisation and most people in it put high standards on themselves. Stress factors are inherent in that situation,” he said.

NATIONAL MEDAL AWARDS

NINE officers from the Investigations Division have been awarded the National Medal for service and four the clasp to the medal.

Five of the officers could not attend the presentation by Assistant Commissioner (Investigations) Peter Lamb, in Canberra on September 7,

Peter Donovan (International Branch), Senior Sergeant K.C. Inwood (Interpol), Senior Constable J.B. Carroll (Special Projects), Senior Constable P.J. Laffan (International Branch) and Senior Constable M.J. Moore (Special Intelligence).

Mr Lamb told the colleagues and friends gathered for the presentation at headquarters that the awards represented more than a formality and were given only after due process.

“They are an acknowledgement from the Commissioner that these officers have served for a lengthy time with some distinction,” he said.

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