

AIDS:

AFP ACTION

The AFP has been concerned for some time about AIDS and other contagious diseases.

Last July, the Commissioner endorsed a proposal by the Commander, Industrial Relations Division, Chief Superintendent Alex Bunt, to establish an interim Occupational Health and Safety working party to examine the issue of communicable diseases within the AFP. The AFPA was then approached and agreed to be a member of a working party together with representatives of Medical Services, Industrial Relations, Personnel and Training, and Logistic Services Divisions.

An AFP programme for the prevention of communicable diseases has been approved by the Deputy Commissioner, Administration.

The working party reported, that within the AFP -

(a) the diseases causing most concern were hepatitis and AIDS;

(b) most members were at no greater risk than the rest of the community;

(c) the areas seen to be at a higher risk from infection were Drug Squads, Rescue Squad, and Accident Squad;

(d) specific policy on AIDS is not necessary or desirable, as this would infer that an AIDS victim should be treated differently to a victim of other contagious diseases, many of which are more contagious than AIDS;

(e) an employee who becomes an AIDS victim should be treated in the same manner as if he/she contracted any other disease of a similarly debilitating nature: That is, the welfare of the victim is of primary concern;

(f) responsibility on this issue is in three primary areas -

1. Education;
2. Information; and
3. Logistics.

Education

Education on AIDS has commenced, in that Drs Dwyer and Smyth have been conducting presentations to

operational members in the ACT for some months. Feedback from members indicated that these presentations have had a favourable effect. Those presentations will continue, particularly in those areas where members are at a higher risk. Outside the ACT there has been no formal AFP education. To overcome this shortcoming, a two day seminar will be conducted at the AFP College at Barton by Drs Dwyer and Smyth.

The objective of the proposed seminar will be to equip welfare officers with the knowledge and skills which would enable them to:

(a) advise members of the facts on Hepatitis and AIDS; and,

(b) conduct information sessions to members on Hepatitis and AIDS - the risks and precautionary measures.

These seminars will be attended by the Welfare advisor, welfare officers and relief welfare officers from the larger regions (ACT, Eastern and Southern Regions).

Information

There are a number of information booklets on AIDS already available. It is not necessary to duplicate these resources within the AFP. Information material will be obtained and distributed.

Dr Dwyer has already written an article in the previous issue of "Platypus".

Logistics

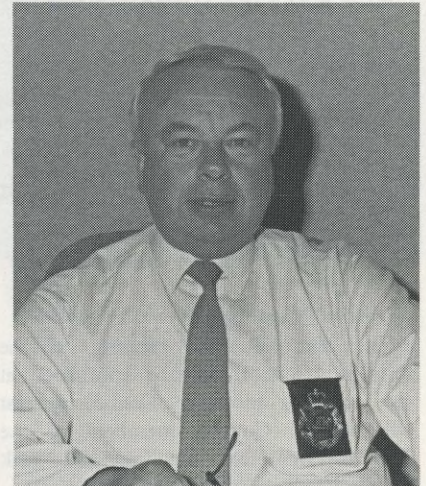
Medical kits will be supplied for issue to members on operational duties. Purchase of these kits will be arranged centrally by Logistic Services, and distributed to regions.

The kits should be issued to patrols on a shift basis as an accountable item.

The medical kit will consist of:-

A kit container - perhaps a vinyl bag or similar;

One metal foil space blanket;



Chief Superintendent Alex Bunt

One resuscitator of construction similar to the Laerdal mask, with a one way valve;

Gloves of a strong vinyl material;

Gloves of a leather or similar material;

An antiseptic cleansing solution (Hexifoam or similar);

Clear plastic safety glasses sufficiently enclosed to give eye protection from body fluids; and a hard case container for storage of needles.

These items should be sterilised or disposed of after use.

Storage and Disposal of Needles

Needles, implements and materials which may be infectious should be stored in hard case containers (preferably clear plastic) and should be disposed of by incineration. This type of disposal may be arranged through local health authorities.

Contact with Infectious Persons

Any member who is concerned about contact with a person suspected to be infectious should seek advice from Medical Services.