

CHANGES FOR WESTON COLLEGE

A review now underway is expected to result in substantial changes to the way recruits are instructed at the Australian Federal Police Training College at Weston in Canberra.

'We are trying to train for two disparate functions at present,' the officer in charge of recruit training at Weston, Inspector Ric Kerrison, said.

'There is working in ACT policing and working as investigators elsewhere in Australia and both jobs are equally important.'

'We could do a better job by changing some of the subjects. A person for example, who will be an investigator doesn't need the skills required for community policing.'

'There's a tendency for people in training to think they know best, but we are training for the skills of six or seven years ago and the role of the AFP has changed,' he said.

Inspector Kerrison has been in charge of recruit training at Weston for 12 months and is a police officer with 27 years experience.

He started with the Metropolitan Police in London where he spent 10 years and has served with the former Commonwealth Police, and now the AFP, for 17 years.

Training Vital

He stressed the importance of the purpose-built Weston College which has trained AFP recruits since the force was formed in 1979:

'A lot of people lose sight of the fact that to train these young men and women is the most important job in the AFP,' he said,

'If we don't have recruits we don't have police officers and we don't have detectives but that fact can be forgotten.'

'Recruits come to us with no frame of reference and we establish for them what the AFP is. Poor training can be reflected in the rest of a person's career.'

'If a policeman on the street does something poorly it reflects on the whole AFP.'

'You can't get away with having inefficient police on the street,' Inspector Kerrison said.

About 300 recruits pass through Weston each year. There are 12 courses a year, each catering for 24 or 25 recruits.

And the pace picked up from January: 'We will be exceedingly busy running eight courses in six months,' Inspector Kerrison said.

'From January 18 until July 31 there are four courses running back to back so we face a heavy workload.'

Inspector Kerrison said the initial training phase was designed to give recruits the basic knowledge and skills to survive on the street.

'If they follow what we teach them we don't expect them to get into too much trouble,' he said.

Inspector Kerrison went on to say that there had only been one drop-out from the past three courses whereas at the beginning of 1987 the College had been losing four a course. He said that some people had a misconception of what a police officer's duties were.

*AFP Training College - Weston
(inset) Insp. Ric Kerrison*

Instructors

'I'd back my instructors against any others anywhere,' Inspector Kerrison said.

'The educational instruction staff stands at 14 but given various factors we're usually running at about 10.'

'There's also a skills unit with five driver training instructors, three firearms instructors and two P.T. instructors,' he said.

All the instructors at Weston are serving police officers.

'Most of them are ex ACT police and have handled all aspects of policing in the Territory.'

Inspector Kerrison said he wanted to stress that recruits who remained in the ACT and those who went to work for the various commands elsewhere in Australia were all performing vital tasks.

'We must recognise that police who stay in the ACT and those who go into the regions are equally important. One area of operations should not be seen as being better than another,' he said.

