

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE



SHORTLY after I joined the South Australia Police as a cadet, these many years ago, I remember sitting in the recreation room at Police Headquarters in Adelaide waiting my turn to play billiards. Near me there was a group of officers who were playing in the competition. They represented teams from the Traffic Police, CIB, and, what we would now call, the General Duties area.

There was some light-hearted banter about the relative importance of the groups which they represented, but after a time it developed into a quite heated argument.

Many times since then I have had reason to reflect on the validity of some of the arguments which were put forward on that occasion. I am sure that similar debates have taken place in numerous places since then and I speculate that the issues, and the arguments in support of those issues, have not changed all that much. Certainly many of them have been put to me as a senior officer from time to time.

Whilst pride in one's own section of the service is good for esprit de corps and therefore good for the organisation as a whole, if it reaches the point of unreasonable elitism it is a corrosive influence.

I am also aware that many of our operatives have a perception that if less resources were put into administration, more resources would be applied to the "sharp end" of our operations. There is no doubt in my mind that the administration of a service such as ours exists for no other reason than to support our operational capacity. Therefore it is critical for operational effectiveness that we have a strong and effective administration. The problem has always been in deciding on a proper balance between the two. It may be that because of the complexities involved

in making that sort of a decision, the balance is sometimes wrong. But that does not alter the fact that if we are to be successful operationally, we must have that administrative support. I am sure that when you think about this for a while you will agree with me. For example, if it were not for the efficiency of those sections of the service which deal with the preparation of our budget bids, we would fail to achieve the level of appropriations which are necessary to maintain our operations at an effective level. I have long since concluded that every unit in this Department is important. It may well be that on any particular day some tasks which are being performed are more important than others, but nevertheless in the continuum the "small cogs" are just as important as the "big wheels".

Sometimes we, as sworn officers, fail to appreciate the excellent and dedicated support which we receive, particularly from our Public Service staff — a staff for whom I have developed a considerable degree of admiration in the short period I have been Commissioner. Quite frankly if it were not for their support, I have no doubt that as an operational organisation we would very soon grind to a halt. I know that in a very personalised way each and every one of you has frequent occasion to be grateful for that support. From time to time, I think we should all reach out to shake a hand and say, "Thanks, Mate".

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. McAulay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

R. (Peter) McAulay
Commissioner of Police