



AFP Training Advance

July 5, 1989, was a milestone for the Australian Federal Police. The first new members graduated under a training system which places more emphasis on the AFP's investigatory role. The force's Training and Education Adviser, Trevor Watkins, reports.

In a keynote address recently to an Australian Police Staff College workshop on police professionalism, the Minister for Justice, Senator Michael Tate, said, "... the police officer is faced with an increasingly complex role in a society that is undergoing continuing change. Correspondingly, the knowledge required to discharge that role effectively is increasing, both in range and complexity.

"An officer's ability to deploy that knowledge is directly related to his capacity to be effective... This means that they (police forces) must recruit, train and develop officers who have the capacity to discharge the complex, but vital, function society asks of them.

"It means recruiting and developing specialists, and acquiring the skills necessary to manage different specialists in pursuit of common enforcement goals."

The first significant step towards developing specialists in the AFP occurred in July 1989 with the deployment of 45 new members who completed their basic training.

For the majority the next three years are directed at ensuring they are operationally competent to handle complex and major investigations into drug importation, fraud, or organised crime. They will be undertaking a training programme much different from past practice.

Task Force

Early in 1988 a task force of Training Division quality controllers and specialists reviewed new member training. Feedback from graduates and supervisors indicated problems with the match of skills for common policing tasks. More worrying, there was also a perception that the AFP was losing too many good people early in their careers.

A thorough occupational analysis of the constable level in both national and community-based policing revealed what a new constable was expected to do in key work situations. The analysis



Mr Trevor Watkins.

also showed the deployment patterns of new members after basic training and before they took up investigative positions.

In essence, the task force found the AFP was continuing the traditional general approach to training and deployment but that investigative functions stressed the need for specialisation.

It showed the way ahead was to abandon the generalist approach and adopt the specialist approach for the recruitment, training and deployment of new members.

Accordingly, a revised new member training system was designed and implemented early this year.

An Overview

The revised system recognizes a need to train constables — particularly those destined for national policing — progressively over three years.

Constables employed in community policing will take longer to take up CIB functions.

Regardless of eventual deployment, each step in the training process is restricted to developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes to

perform tasks commonly encountered soon after training.

The diversity of jobs within the AFP means that to train otherwise would waste resources and create the possibility of inadequate performance when the skill was needed.

Training

The training of new members starts with a five days orientation at an AFP centre near their home bases before they assemble in Canberra for basic core skills training at the AFP College, Barton. The course runs for 80 working days and concentrates on providing the new members with the key professional skills for any region.

The major themes of instruction are legal studies, investigations and practice, police operations, and occupational health and safety.

The new members are told their regional posting and the probable unit where they will work.

Postings

This year, new members are going to general duties in the ACT, fraud and general crime units in Melbourne, and drug and fraud units in Sydney.

Future deployments may be made to other centres throughout Australia. The deployment decisions are done in consultation between the member, the Training and Personnel Department, and the regions.

Local Procedures

In the regions, the members immediately do a local procedures training course which varies between 35 working days for ACT members and 15 working days in other regions. This training is done by regional training staff and is supervised from Canberra. The new member is then allocated to the appropriate unit and begins a unit specific training programme.

This training for national policing comprises either self-learning packages (for fraud units) or formal training over five working days (drug units).

The intention is to do all unit specific training through self-learning approaches supported by computer management from Canberra.

Unit specific training also has a practical component drawing on unit



“buddies” and task books. Such training continues for the rest of the new members’ probationary year.

When confirmed by the unit OIC, the member remains in the specific employment area, gaining job experience under close supervision. In the years after confirmation, the members progress by being given wider experience in tasks relevant to their rank.

At least two years of investigative experience is necessary before the member returns to formal training to complete the “apprenticeship”.

In the case of national policing members, their initial professional development ends when they do advanced core training — a detective course in Canberra.

This is to prepare them for more difficult or complex duties in community policing or criminal investigations at regional level.

Features

The new system allows for cross-training and is flexible, allowing for changes to deployment decisions. Each module in the system is designed to provide job skills in a way so they can be applied immediately. The teaching strategies draw heavily on the principles of adult education and training. The training is aimed at helping new members to become independent, rather than dependent, to make them ... learners who can ... readily adapt on their own to the changing technology and environment of policing throughout their careers.

New members no longer wear uniforms during basic training.

Members who go to community policing get their uniforms during ACT local procedures training.

The traditional drill square training and the subsequent graduation parades have been dropped. Instead, new members get a measure of discipline training through physical training and officer survival sessions. Graduation from basic training is a ceremony along tertiary lines for conferring an award.

Staff

The changed approach to training new members has meant the teaching staff and training course administrators must undertake extensive instructor development with emphasis on skills for teaching adults.

Key staff in the Training Division began studies last year in adult

education at the Canberra College of Advanced Education, the Sydney College of Advanced Education and the Hawthorne Institute of Education.

The organisation of staff in Training Division has been changed under Commander Arthur Brown to support the general thrust towards specialisation. The Division has a matrix structure to cater for specialisation in either teaching or programme administration.

An instructor is responsible to both the programme co-ordinator and the team leader of the specialised teaching faculty. This two-directional structure brings specialised teaching skills to bear on training and does so with maximum efficiency. One immediate result has been a gain in productivity from the Division.

The co-ordination of academic

matters is handled by a Board of Studies chaired in rotation by the Division’s superintendents. The Board of Studies co-ordinates and oversees the quality of course content, assessment strategies and teaching strategies leading to the endorsement of AFP syllabuses of training.

Conclusion

The changes to new member training are at a time when the AFP is experiencing wide change resulting from a review of Commonwealth law enforcement policy. They are in harmony with the intent of the overall changes for the era of specialisation.

The training system has moved to lend its support to the emergence of a more professional force equipped to meet the needs of the 21st century.

Teamwork the key

The duxes of New Member Training Courses 1 and 2/69 both paid tribute to their classmates when interviewed by the media after graduation.

“It was real team work,” Constables Ronald Weekes (1/89) and Janet Moore (2/89) said.

“The one object was to get everybody through and we were only one or two percent in front of our classmates.”

Janet said the level of camaraderie was demonstrated when she broke a wrist during the course.

“Everybody — instructors included — rallied around to help me through. Classmates gave me their course notes until I was able to write again.”

Ron, 27, from Sydney, formerly a leading seaman quartermaster gunner in the Royal Australian Navy, has been posted to his home city. Janet, 33, from Perth, formerly a public servant, has been posted to Melbourne. Janet was one of 13 women who graduated.

Ron told reporters that the murder of Assistant Commissioner (ACT

Region) Colin Winchester had made all course members all the more determined to pass.

“The killing was a shock. There was concern but no real fear — what really came out of Mr Winchester’s death was that determination to pass.”

He said he would like eventually to get into intelligence work but first wanted to gain as much experience as possible in Eastern Region.

Janet said she wanted to get into the fraud and computer crime areas.

“The AFP is the most honest police force in Australia and there is nothing unusual in being a policewoman,” she said.

“I can recommend the police force to other young women. The work is so varied; no day is ever the same. The only problems are minor physical ones in not being the same size as a male but those problems can be overcome.”

Asked how she felt the war against crime was going she replied: “We are fighting a winning battle” — a sentiment no doubt shared by the other graduates under the AFP’s new training system.