

Northern Territory Branch

State and Federal co-operation fights crime in the Territory

THE frontier spirit of co-operation still exists if the relationship between the Northern Territory Police and the AFP's Northern Territory Branch is anything to go by.

The NT Branch covers the Territory as well as providing logistic support into Western Australia as far as Broome when needed.

The Branch's biggest challenge is dealing with remote locations and the large number of aircraft and shipping movements on a huge, and largely isolated, coastline.

The Top End has a transient population and attracts a large number of tourists, factors which when combined with reported crimes on the Commonwealth serves to keep the Branch busy.

The Branch has 20 members and staff members and its OIC is Detective Superintendent Noel Caswell who has been there since September 1989.

Superintendent Caswell came from the Narcotics Bureau in 1979 having served with the NT Police from 1973 to 1978.

He said the Branch was looking to increase its intelligence role in the area, a function that would be assisted by the new Customs vessel commissioned in Darwin last month.

A particular feature of the AFP's role in the NT was the Combined Drug Enforcement Unit where six AFP officers and one staff member worked with the NT Police as Special Constables. Similarly, when AFP drug matters needed attention, the NT Police provided drug squad officers sworn in as Special Constables with the AFP.

The Unit operates under a Memorandum of Understanding signed by both Commissioners in August 1988. Day-to-day administration is vested with the Northern Territory Police Superintendent, in consulta-

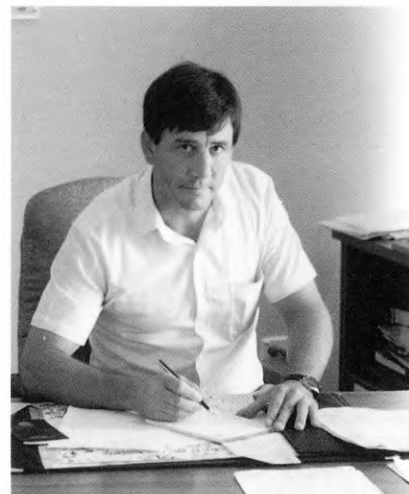
tion and agreement where necessary with the OIC of the AFP's NT Branch. It ensures the best use of each agency's limited resources.

Superintendent Caswell said, "This is a unique arrangement and it shows the level of goodwill and co-operation that can work and proves effective here. In a smaller Region there are significant advantages in both police bodies combining and using each others resources. The arrangement enhances the day-to-day workings of drug investigations and inquiries."

The Branch received a large number of referrals from other government agencies. He quoted a recent case where drunks hijacked an aircraft and forced the pilot to make unplanned landings and perform aerobatic manoeuvres.

Other unusual cases were corruption of an immigration officer, an alleged sexual harassment case in a NT hospital, an alleged racist crossword and the theft of \$50,000 from a Branch of the Commonwealth Bank on Bathurst Island. The Branch had also undertaken a number of politically sensitive inquiries.

Superintendent Caswell added, "The level of co-operation between



Detective Superintendent Noel Caswell

agencies in the Territory is excellent. Help is only a phone call away. We can resolve many things by our personal contacts.

"I'm extremely happy with the teamwork in our Branch. We have people who are dedicated, enthusiastic and competent, able to handle a range of unusual, diverse and complex inquiries and we all have networks that makes contact with like agencies very effective."

Superintendent Caswell said the situation is very much a case of, "If our team can't get it right here, then no one will."



Some of the members and staff of the Darwin office.