

Drug Operations Branch

Challenging work in tough country

DUE to the number of international sea and air ports, and the vast coastline to be policed, Northern Region Drug Operations Branch members often have work in remote and unusual locations during investigations.

Seizures have been made from international cargo vessels and from vessels shipping bulk cannabis into Australia from South East Asia. These operations require a high level of co-operation and co-ordination with other law enforcement agencies.

These operations often extend over lengthy periods and require high level support in maintaining control over the movements of suspect people and vessels and the ability to interdict at sea, should the situation demand. A number of operations conducted at sea in the Region have presented interesting and challenging working condi-

tions, at times in treacherous high seas.

In a recent operation it was necessary to survey a ship container for a long distance over remote roads in south east Queensland and Northern New South Wales. This operation evidenced the high level working arrangements between the various law enforcement agencies in the Region and successfully culminated in the arrest of several people on serious narcotic related charges.

In each area where there is an AFP presence, members remain alert to respond to seizures at the customs barrier, including parcels post seizures. Long-term operations are often developed as a result of raw information being received and processed by the Regional Intelligence Branch which develops narcotic related targets in each of the areas. At any given

time the Region can be involved in operations extending from the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales to the North West Kimberley area of Western Australia. This requires high level coordination both nationally, and linked internationally through our overseas liaison networks.

The Region maintains a drug enforcement capability at the Gold Coast, Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns and Darwin. Members involved in drug operations are required to respond to major drug investigations within the major populated areas, which has resulted in a number of significant seizures and prosecutions.

Superintendent Andre Legosz, Officer-in-Charge, Drug Operations Branch said, "The emphasis on our drug enforcement efforts must be directed toward the importers and large scale traffickers. This requires

"The system works"

By Philip Castle

CONSTABLE Bede (Bluey) Pond is one of those quiet achievers who, as the Transport and Welfare Officer based in Brisbane, helps the Region function.

While born and raised in Paramatta, he now counts himself a Queenslander having moved here after invalidity retirement from the AFP in 1982. He joined the Commonwealth Police in 1971 working in Sydney performing uniform duties and then investigational work spending a number of years at Sydney's International Airport. In 1980, he was appointed Eastern Region welfare officer.

During the early 1980s he suffered a set back with arthritis in his legs and was invalided out in 1982. He and his wife, Carole, moved to Queensland in 1984 where they ran a take-away food shop on the

Sunshine Coast. But his heart was still with the AFP.

Much to his delight he was accepted back under the new policies in 1987 as a Senior Constable in Northern Region where he administers the Region's 60 vehicles and provides the welfare support for members, staff members and their families irrespective of rank and he is the link between former members and the AFP.

"I think my situation is a good example of the system working. When I became ill I left work and then was able to come back when I was fit," he said.

"It took legislation to change the thinking and showed that people are the most important asset to any organisation.

"I have been through the system



Constable Bede (Bluey) Pond

as a member and looked at the AFP from a number of angles. A lot has to do with a person's attitude and to be willing to accept help if that's what is wanted.

"Well there are times when everyone faces a tough time and that needs to be understood. The welfare system is there and it can work if people want it to."