

for me, but I am enjoying working here.” she said.

Hunter instinct

Detective Sergeant Kim Scantlebury, who recently returned to Drug Operations after two years with Airport Intelligence, said that he has always been attracted by drug investigations. “I suppose it is the hunter instinct,” he said.

“With other crimes, investigations take place after the crime has been committed, but drug investigations often involve prior knowledge of a potential offence and there’s an adrenaline rush involved in making a good drug bust that’s missing in other investigations.”

He said cultivating informants was a routine activity for drug investigators, but one of the hardest things to do is to get an informant who can supply good information that leads to a significant arrest and seizure. Often information on a drug job can come from overseas agencies who make the AFP aware of the movements of known couriers.

Detective Sergeant Scantlebury said that the observation of patterns of arrival can lead to good arrests too.

“In the late 80s there was run of Nepalese couriers over a six-month period which suddenly died off – obviously someone got the message that we were onto them. A similar thing happened with couriers travelling on Romanian passports not long after,” he said.

There are five teams in the Western Region Drug Operations and investigations are allocated to best make use of the mix of skills present in each.

Detective Superintendent Beck said that in general Western Region offers a great training ground for investigators due to the diversity of work.

“We don’t have the numbers to have the luxury of specialist investigators. Everyone has to be prepared to take on anything that comes up. This means that Western Region can provide a wide range of experience more quickly than the larger regions might,” she said. □

Forensic pair give diverse service



Sergeant Peter Gerritsen (l) and Constable Keith Taylor assembling colour negative processing equipment.

SERGEANT Peter Gerritsen began his forensic career specialising in fingerprint identification, but as the range of Western Region’s investigations widens, he and his assistant, Constable Keith Taylor find that they have had to broaden their expertise.

Sergeant Gerritsen established a permanent forensic service in Western Region in 1990 and has found no shortage of work since that time. He said that a major operation can provide six months of forensic work aside from the day-to-day requests for photography, fingerprint analysis, firearms testing, document examination and forensic enquiries.

Arriving in Western Region with just a few cameras, a polilight and a fuming cabinet, he has since that time given an emphasis to improving the range of forensic services available to Western Region.

Attracted to forensic investigation mainly through an interest in fingerprints, Sergeant Gerritsen completed his fingerprint studies with WA Police after arriving in the west.

Constable Taylor also arrived in Perth with partial qualifications in the Associate Diploma of Applied Science in Forensic Investigation which he has continued through

the WA TAFE system with periodic returns to Canberra Institute of Technology to complete core units.

Sergeant Gerritsen said that a lot of his work is related to drug busts and that he had been “up north” a few times for a few large drug seizures, photographing the scene, locating fingerprints and other evidence of scientific value.

Where drug investigations can require a variety of forensic services, fraud and general crime is generally straight document work.

Sergeant Gerritsen said that he prefers to analyse a document for all prints present, rather than to know he is looking of a specific individual’s print.

“We have had quite a few cases where a non-suspect’s prints have turned up on a document and that has given investigators a new and sometimes successful line of inquiry,” he said.

“I would hope to think that access to local forensic services has resulted in more prosecutions. It is hard to quantify, but I am aware of a number of cases when a fingerprint has been identified and after the suspect is confronted with the evidence often they will throw their hands up and plead guilty.

“I find that pretty good,” he said. □