

ACT Policing is best at Show

Months of careful planning and preparation resulted in the interactive ACT Policing display at the 2007 Royal Canberra Show being awarded the Grand Indoor Champion title by Show organisers.

The display centred on the *Our community too* theme, incorporating the Suburban Policing Strategy (SPS) and support for our local community programs such as Crime Stoppers, Neighbourhood Watch and Safety House. AFP Recruitment also played an important role, promoting careers within the organisation to interested members of the community.

The award was only one area of the display's success. During the three-day event, more than 20,000 Canberrans and interstaters passed through the stand, learning valuable safety information, collecting show bags filled with crime prevention tips and AFP merchandise, and perhaps even more importantly, breaking down barriers between police and their community.

Acting Superintendent of Crime Prevention Matt Varley said the value of one-on-one contact between police and the public was significant.

"Having that contact with members of our community, particularly in a positive and relaxed environment, really helps strengthen the relationship we have with the Canberra community.

"There were so many instances during the three days of the Show where parents brought their children up to police officers to meet them, so the kids



Top: Some of the ACT Policing members who participated in the Royal Canberra Show display the Indoor Grand Champion ribbon.

Left: Sergeant Sharan Slater of Volunteers in Policing, hands out show bags to young visitors.

Above right: Members of the public had the opportunity to be photographed in a marked traffic XR8

could see police were friendly people who can help them. That sort of contact is invaluable," he said.

The display's main feature saw children given the opportunity to have their photo taken in a police car and presented to them in a specially-designed ACT Policing folder, promoting the concept of the SPS and the close ties between police and our community. Crime

Prevention's Nicole Towers took many of the photos and said it was a huge success.

"We took around 2000 photos of little kids – and big kids – in the car. It was a really exciting experience for a lot of young children and I heard hundreds of them talk about how much they liked police," she said.

While Constable Kenny Koala was one of the higher profile faces at the Show keeping the kids happy, many Volunteers spend hours packing show bags and general duties officers kept an eye on crowd behaviour.



It wasn't just the young visitors who gained from the exhibit. ACT Policing Chief Police Officer Audrey Fagan said these sorts of public events were crucial in promoting the good work of ACT Policing.

"Our members handed out 3000 show bags containing important safety information and another thousand or so brochures that can help make people's homes and lives more secure. Preventing crime is such an important aspect of policing, and face-to-face contact is a very successful way of getting that advice out there.

"While the Grand Champion award is certainly a great achievement, the success of the display is really measured by the number of people we were able to reach out to," she said.

The display was managed by the Crime Prevention Team with the help of many areas across ACT Policing and the wider AFP. Coordinator Human Resources Lisa Perry said the collaboration with ACT Policing worked well for Recruitment as they were able to provide information to many potential recruits.

"The ongoing interaction with members of the public interested in recruitment over the three days was overwhelmingly positive," she said.

The Volunteers in Policing also provided crucial support, including filling all 3000 show bags – a task which appeared overwhelming at first glance however with around 10 'vollies' chipping in,



their mission was complete within a day. Volunteers also staffed the display and sparked the interest of interstate organisations in establishing police volunteer programs of their own.

The event was a key way to show the Canberra community the importance of the Suburban Policing Strategy, while also encouraging people to consider a career with the AFP.



The AFP's Mounted Cadre looked impressive.