



OPERATIONS: How the nerve centre works

By Sergeant Ray Lester

0800 hrs—PLATYPUS arrived at Operations Room, City Police Station. All is relatively quiet.

0820hrs—Activity has increased — all staff fully committed to answering inquiries.

One could fill pages documenting entries of activities and inquiries being received by Police in the Operations room, the 'nerve centre' of the day-to-day operations of police in Canberra. With a staff of seven between 0700-2300 hrs and five between 2300-0700 hrs, the members attached to this section of the A.F.P. answer as many as 600 telephone inquiries daily.

The Operations room has provision for eight telephone operators with a further six positions in an adjacent area (for use in disaster or emergency situations) to answer inquiries from the public.

The procedure followed in the centre is a complex, but highly efficient one.

On receipt of a call, the telephone operator completes a colour-coded message card for quick reference. These cards are filled out according to the type of message or incident reported (e.g. accident or traffic, crime or miscellaneous).

These cards are then conveyed to the Supervisory Sergeant. He acts on the message, and passes it to the radio operator for transmission to a mobile patrol, or to a specialist section if it requires more detailed attention (eg. CIB, Scientific, etc.)

In three booths situated at the end of the operations room are the radio operators. These members monitor and despatch all radio communications for North and South Canberra (General Duties) and Protective Services.

During the course of a normal day's duty the radio despatcher is broadcasting to up to 80 mobile patrols at any one time, 50 foot patrols, as well as a Rural patrol which covers some 990 sq. miles of

rural A.C.T. and the Water Police craft.

The city is divided into zones with mobile patrols being designated to specific areas. Once a call for assistance is received the time factor required for a patrol to attend an incident is as little as four minutes.

All telephonic and radio messages are automatically taped on a 36 track 24 hour tape recorder. Tapes are held for a period before being erased, or some are kept for longer periods because of evidential reasons.

Also within the confines of the Operations room are three telex machines and a voca-dex. The two telex operators handle as many as 2,000 messages per month sending and receiving transmissions from all divisions of A.F.P. State/Territory Police Forces and associated agencies.

The voca-dex is a unique machine. Its operator, by simply

dialling a compatible receivers' telephone number and feeding a typed sheet, photograph or report into its rollers, can transmit the content via telephone cable to the receiver's machine within 6 minutes anywhere

the public ranging from people locked out of homes and flats to serious crimes.

Problems arising from language difficulties due to the large ethnic

As a bystander all appeared to be a jumble of words as each officer competed with the other to answer incoming inquiries, together with a radio operator transmitting coded messages. This produced a stimu-



in Australia. All A.F.P. divisions and many stations are equipped with voca-dex machines.

The Operations room also handles thousands of media inquiries into routine police matters per month as well as inquiries from

community in Canberra are solved by a number of interpreters who can be contacted readily to assist.

All members attached to the Operations Room are capable of carrying out every function in the centre and are seconded for a two year period.

lating cacophany of sound essential to a day's work.

* * *

1000 hours—PLATYPUS departed the Operations Room — impressed.

STUDY GRANT

Detective Inspector Alan Sing, of A.F.P. Eastern Division, is currently overseas on a special study grant awarded to him earlier this year by the Board of Control of the Australian Police College (the awards were announced in an earlier edition of Platypus).



Inspector Sing will use his grant to research social, judicial and legislative trends and the consequent relationships to human rights; the law of arrest; the law of search and seizure; and the admissibility of self-incriminating evidence.

After serving 11 years in various sections of the N.S.W. Police, Mr Sing joined the former Commonwealth Police in 1976 as an instructor at the Australian Police College at Manly.

During his study tour Inspector Sing will visit various police,

customs and justice departments in the United States, Canada, Britain and Germany before returning to Sydney in August.

Before departing he said: "I would like to express my gratitude to the Board of Control for extending this opportunity to me."



Two members of the A.F.P. (A.C.T.) Senior Constables Doug Hair (left) and David Williamson (right) received their Bachelor of Arts Degrees at a ceremony held at the Canberra College of Advanced Education recently.

Doug graduated with majors in Administration and Law and David with majors in Law and Sociology.