

Last day for a career of firsts



A career of 'firsts' drew to a close recently, with the AFP's longest-serving police woman saying goodbye to her 33 year policing career.

Karen Beck's life changed dramatically in the early 1970s when she found an advertisement in a local newspaper for a career in policing. As a young woman who had travelled the world, Karen had not been ready to settle down into the quiet lifestyle many women at the time were expected to lead.

When she saw the ACT Police recruitment notice, it seemed to be the challenge she had been looking for.

"I considered policing the most different job the average woman could do," Federal Agent Beck said as she reflected on her long and fruitful career. "It was so far away from the traditional woman's role as a typist or secretary, or getting married and staying at home with a family. This offered opportunities

that in those days, you wouldn't really consider otherwise.

"My parents were horrified — it was the most unladylike thing their daughter could ever do".

That "unladylike" career move, however, saw Federal Agent Beck champion women's progress in policing, as she became the first detective-designated female in 1978 — "a proud moment" she humbly stated.

In 1986, she was the AFP's first female investigator in Internal Investigations and, a year later, her posting to Los Angeles saw her become the first female overseas liaison officer.

However it was not her personal successes of which Federal Agent Beck was most proud, it was the AFP as a whole.

"I came away from overseas postings and all the work that I've done to realise

— or confirm — that the AFP is as good as a lot of the overseas agencies that we've always held in high regard, like New Scotland Yard or the FBI or any of those agencies that figure prominently in the media.

"When you compare what we do, we are as good."

Federal Agent Beck predicts the organisation's value will continue to flourish well into the future. "I believe the AFP will have a greater presence overseas and, given we are already on par with any law enforcement agency anywhere in the world, especially in our ability to contribute offshore, that capacity will further expand."

Is there anything she won't miss?

"Only getting up when it's minus seven degrees outside! Everything else, especially the people, I will miss".

Federal Agent Beck officially retired on June 14 this year.