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Australia's police forces



EACH OF Australia's six States, its Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), has its own police force.

As well, based in the Nation's Capital, Canberra, ACT, is the Commonwealth (Federal) Police Force whose special duties include protection of political leaders and other VIPs. In most cases the State and Territory police handle the crime in their area, but there are pieces of Federal territory all around Australia, such as airports, and these are the province of the Commonwealth Police. However, there is flexibility. Like all the separate Australian police forces, the Commonwealth Police assist their colleagues where necessary.

With wide ranges in population densities, Australia offers policemen beats which can range from a few streets in a densely-populated area like Kings Cross, Sydney, to almost 4,000 square miles, in the Northern Territory and in the north of Western Australia.

In Australia, the commissioner, or chief of police, in each State and Territory is usually chosen from senior police ranks by State legislators. He is responsible directly to a Cabinet Minister. A police commissioner retains his non-political position even if a government changes. He then becomes responsible to the new administration.

Commonwealth (Federal) Police Force

The executive officers of the force — the Commissioner and three Assistant Commissioners (of Crime, Crime Intelligence and Operations) are members of the Federal Public Service. The remaining personnel are employed under the Commonwealth Police Act, 1957. On June 30, 1977, the force totalled 1,505.

The Plainclothes Branch of the force investigates breaches of Federal law. It also helps provide security for the Governor-General and the Prime Minister and is responsible for the security of foreign VIPs while they are visiting Australia.

With specialisation so essential in

modern police work, organisations in the Commonwealth Police Force include: Australia Crime Intelligence Centre; Australian National Central Bureau (liaising with Interpol); Central Information Bureau; Currency Squad; Companies Squad; Document Examination Bureau; Firearms Safety Testing Section; and Neutron Activation Analysis Section (located at the Australian Atomic Energy Commission, near Sydney).

The Neutron Activation Analysis Section, with expertise in various analytical fields, handles cases for State police, the Federal Narcotics Bureau, State health departments and hospitals. It carries out analyses of distilled liquor and morphine-based drugs for the Federal Department of Business and Consumer Affairs.

The Currency Squad works closely with overseas and Australian State law-enforcement agencies. Among the squad's visitors in the year was a United States Secret Service special agent who gave evidence against a man in Brisbane, Queensland, charged with forging US\$100 and US\$20 bills. Other visitors included two of Scotland Yard's Counterfeit Division when forged British banknotes were discovered in Sydney.

During the year, the members of the Operations Branch were positioned to protect 66 visiting dignitaries. Their most extensive operation was for the Silver Jubilee visit of Queen Elizabeth. Within this branch is a counter-terrorist section.

The Plainclothes Branch of the force investigated in the year 25,440 cases of general crime ranging from breaches of the Wireless Telegraphy Act to hard drug offences, from tampering with the Electoral Act to aircraft bomb threats.

The force acts as a national agency for the collection, collation and dissemination of Criminal Intelligence. Resources of the Australia Crime Intelligence Centre are used extensively for preparing threat assessment on prominent Australians and VIPs from other countries. The centre is the focal point for intelligence on illicit drug trafficking and provides Australian statistics

for bodies like the U.N. Economic and Social Council and Interpol. During 1976, 85 per cent of all Australian drug charges involved marihuana — there had been a 29 per cent increase in heroin offences compared with 1975.

New South Wales Police Force

Under its Commissioner, the New South Wales (NSW) Police Force has about 9,100 members. It is responsible directly to the State's Premier. The force serves about 4,800,000 people. The force's functions have been defined as "prevention of crime, detection of and capturing offenders, protection of life and property, preservation of good order and control of traffic".

The Sydney Metropolitan Police Area comprises 10 police districts with a superintendent in charge of each. A district is made up of a number of divisions, controlled by inspectors. There are 36 of these divisions in Sydney. There are two special divisions — No. 20, at Police Headquarters, and No. 21 Special Squad which comes under the control of the Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB) and is sometimes used for operations against gangs of known criminals.

The rest of the state is divided into nine districts with a superintendent in



charge of each. There are 34 divisions, each headed by an inspector.

Several special squads are based at the Sydney CIB, including the Armed Hold-Up Squad, Homicide Squad, Special Breaking Squad, Consorting Squad, Drug Squad, Crime Intelligence Unit, Fraud Squad, Vice Squad and Motor Squad. Detectives and plainclothes police are also stationed at most police stations in the metropolitan area and at the larger country stations.

Victoria Police Force

Under its Chief Commissioner this force has about 6,500 members (some 300 of them policewomen). They include one deputy commissioner, five assistant commissioners, two commanders, 24 chief superintendents, 29 superintendents, 87 chief inspectors, and 173 inspectors. They serve about 3,700,000 people.

Victoria is divided for police purposes into 26 geographical districts each commanded by a chief superintendent. The districts are in turn broken down into divisions and sub-divisions, giving the state 363 police stations at the beginning of 1977.

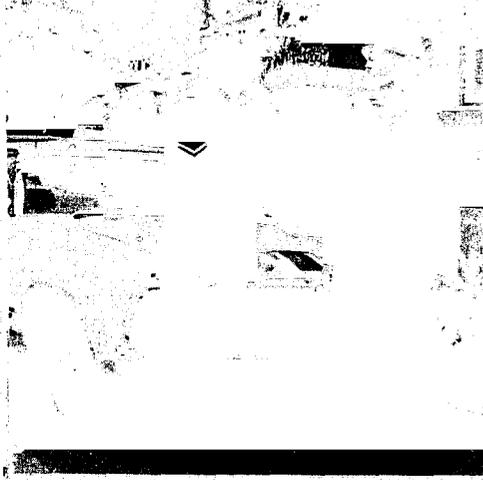
The assistant commissioners have these areas of responsibility: Crime, traffic, operations, services, personnel. Their joint areas are co-ordinated by the director of administration. The first three have been described as "the working of the machine" and the last two as "getting the machine to work".

Queensland Police Force

The senior members of the force are its commissioner, a deputy commissioner, three assistant commissioners (country districts, metropolitan, administration and training), one chief superintendent, eight regional superintendents, and four other superintendents (traffic, training, service, crime). The force totals about 3,800 members in a State with a population of two million people.

South Australian Police Force

Under its commissioner the force has about 2,700 members. They include one deputy commissioner, three assistant commissioners, two senior chief superintendents, 11 chief superintendents, 27 chief inspectors and 37 in-



spectors. The State has about 1,245,000 people.

The force's motto is "The Safety of the People is the Highest Law". Its role is laid down as the preservation of life and the protection of property, the prevention and detection of crime and the maintenance of peace and good order.

Western Australian Police Force

This force has a strength of about 2,290. They serve about 1,116,000 people. The higher ranks include a senior assistant commissioner, and three assistant commissioners (for administration, crime, traffic) a chief superintendent, 21 superintendents, 20 senior inspectors and 25 inspectors including one woman police inspector.

To bring about more effective understanding among the State's Aboriginal population, 18 Aboriginal police aides are part of the force (since July 9, 1975). They help their fellow police officers, particularly in the very remote northern areas of the State.

Western Australia is divided into 11 police districts, each under the control of a superintendent, and the districts are again divided into sub-districts.

The force also has various special branches such as the CIB liquor and gaming, firearms and inquiries, transport, communications, women police, scientific branch, prosecutions, ballistics, security, gold stealing, police lecturing, public relations and crime prevention branch, water police, mounted police, underwater recovery unit and an air sea rescue intelligence co-ordination centre.

Tasmanian Police Force

The Tasmanian Police Force has about 1,033 members, 38 of them women. The State has about 405,000 people. The force includes a deputy commissioner and two assistant commissioners (one is in charge of logistics, one of operations). These top positions are in essence Public Service appointments and, in October 1977, were filled by former police officers with long experience.

Chief Superintendent is the highest rank for a serving (uniformed) police officer. His main functions cover discipline



Police Rescue Squad



The New South Wales Police Rescue Squad in action.

and welfare matters, but he often acts as an Ombudsman (adjudicator). Each police district has a superintendent in charge, with a subordinate structure of inspectors in charge of special sections (such as the Information Bureau, communications, search and rescue, etc.). Inspectors also are in charge at strategic geographical locations throughout the State which is divided into 12 main police divisions.

The force's transport (cars and motor cycles) are the most modern available. The cycles include many trail-bike types and many vehicles are four-wheel drives. These are used mainly in the island's rough and mountainous areas — some of Australia's most difficult — for search and rescue operations.

The State's territorial ruggedness demands and has a first rate police communications system plus the best in search and rescue equipment. There are about 20 police base radio stations. The force also has 14 coastal high-speed small craft and a larger deep-sea rescue vessel, the Vigilant, with a range of 800 miles. Crewed by three or four, the vessel can carry 24 people on rescue missions.

For land rescue work in the mountains, police experts are often helped by special parties of civilian climbers and walkers. They use a fully equipped mobile communications base.

The force's Diving Squad is in continual demand, the work ranging from shipwrecks to finding bodies, discarded weapons or the proceeds of robberies. All divers are volunteers and receive no special rewards for service.

(l to r): Victoria Police mounted policewomen; Queensland Police traffic crew; motor cyclist on duty in Brisbane.

Australia's police forces

Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Police Force

The ACT force has about 540 members. They include a deputy commissioner, five superintendents, two senior inspectors, seven inspectors first class and nine inspectors second class. The Act has about 188,000 people.

The ACT is an area within the State of NSW and contains the nation's capital, Canberra, and the embassies and high commissions of many countries. This presents the force with special problems of surveillance and protection.

With Canberra's population growth — and its crime rate — the ACT force has seen an increase in its specialist sections such as Criminal Investigation Division (CID), criminal intelligence, drug squad, youth aid, public relations, safety education, traffic control, breath analysis and search and rescue. The force's policy is that all its members should gain the best grounding in as many special areas as possible. The city contains some of the country's most modern police stations and the force's communications equipment is highly sophisticated.

Australia's moral and social standards are changing rapidly and the force's training methods have had to evolve quickly to meet the challenges which that change can bring. Along with training in specialised fields such as criminal law, obtaining of evidence, court proceedings and the like, the force's recruits are taught to handle the problems facing society today — among them drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness and juvenile delinquency.

Northern Territory Police Force

The Northern Territory (NT) force has about 448 members in 36 police stations throughout one of Australia's most remote region. They include two assistant commissioners, five superintendents, six chief inspectors and 17 inspectors.

The NT force is responsible for maintaining law and order and for the prevention of crime throughout the territory's more than 1,295,000 ha (500,000 square miles) with about 98,000 people including 23,000 aboriginals.

At most NT bush police stations there is an Aboriginal police assistant, officially called a police tracker. These trackers have saved many lives and traced many criminals with their uncanny tracking skills. A good tracker can tell from the angle of a blade of grass what time has passed since it was trodden on.

Although smaller than those of the States, the force has its CIB Fingerprint Section, Photographic Section, Modus Operandi Squad, Traffic Control Section, Scientific Squad and a wide range Radio Section.

At remote police stations a member of the force may have to perform a variety of duties, including collection of public monies, to act as assistant bailiff of the local court, be the Stock Movement permit officer and the representative of the Motor Registration Branch. He may also have to act as agent for various Federal departments, such as the Department of Transport, Australian Postal Commission and the Attorney General's Department.

Transport and Communications: All police stations and patrol vehicles are equipped with transceivers to communicate with Divisional Headquarters. Radio-telephone networks operate in the Darwin (capital of the NT) and Alice Springs (near Australia's centre) areas. They connect all vehicles with their base

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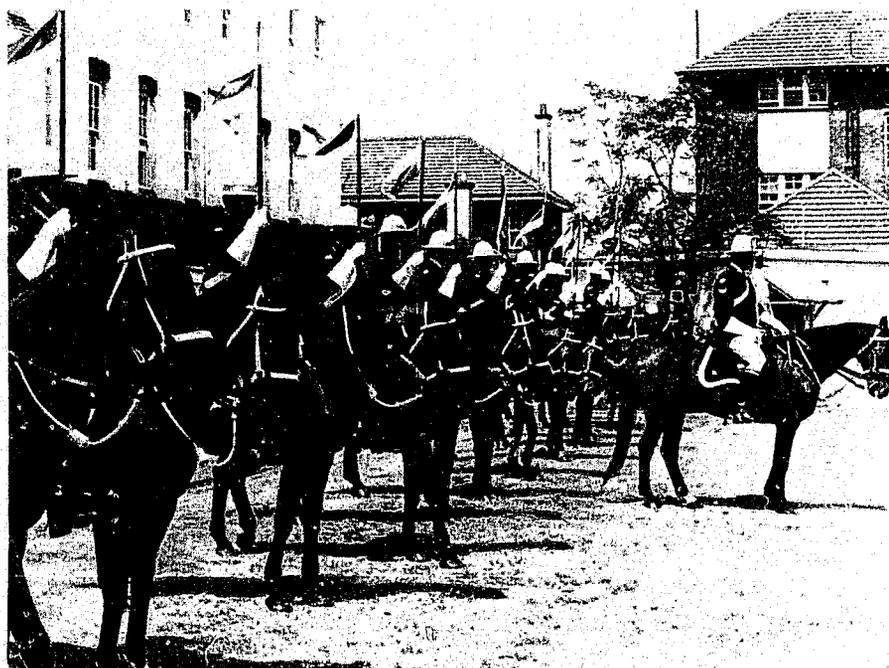


The trackers of Northern Territory

THE Northern Territory Police can boast one unique feature at least (apart from the distinction of the world's biggest beats). They use the services of full blooded Australian Aborigines as 'Northern Territory Police Trackers'. Pictured above with Constable Roy Harvey is one such tracker, Bennett, who operates from Mataranka, a township about 280 miles south of Darwin, capital of Northern Territory. Bennett prefers to be known as such rather than by his tribal name. The trackers wear distinctive khaki uniforms and are invaluable in guiding police to travellers lost in the bush, or criminals who have sought sanctuary there. The tracking skills they employ are unique and the product of thousands of years' experience of the desolate open spaces of the Northern Territories.

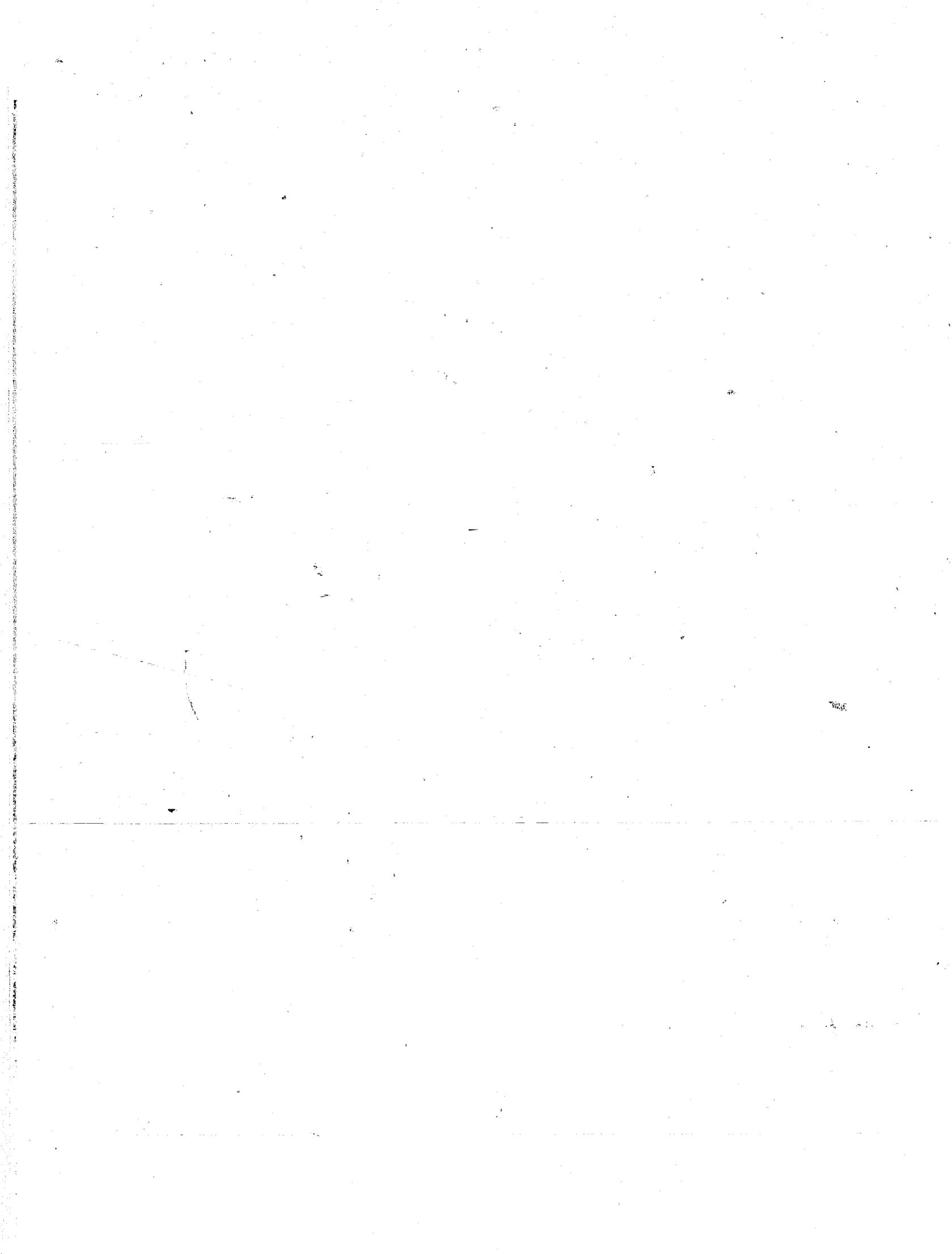
stations. The stations have modern vehicles suited to the often rugged terrain. Some also have horses used for special tasks.

Women Police: The NT's women police work under the same conditions as the men. They are attached to CIB units in Darwin and Alice Springs. Their special duties include interviewing female complainants and offenders, obtaining statements from them, making inquiries into the welfare of young and teenage children, searching of female prisoners, and handling cases of lost and found children.



New South Wales mounted police section, based at the Police Academy, Sydney.

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