

Submission for AFFSAB Accreditation  
in the field of  
Crime Scene Investigation

## **1. Executive Summary**

The stated aim of the Australasian Police Professional Standards Council (APPSC) is to “attain full professional status for policing...and improved police practices”. The aim of the APPSC is achieved within the forensic field in part by the personal accreditation of practitioners in the field of Fingerprints and Firearm Examiners. The accreditation by a national body, of individuals within these disciplines has allowed for the identification of clear and measurable levels of competence. A similar level of national consistency does not exist within the discipline of crime scene investigation.

To address what is seen as a deficiency on a national level of the individual recognition of standards of those undertaking crime scene investigation, it was agreed that a committee would be formed to seek such accreditation. The accreditation that the committee is seeking is in line with that currently held by Fingerprints and Firearm Examiners by way of accreditation through the Australasian Forensic Field Sciences Accreditation Board (AFFSAB).

The committee that was formed to develop the criteria for such accreditation and then put forward a proposal addressing the specific needs of crime scene investigators, consisted of representatives from a number of jurisdictions. The jurisdictions represented were New South Wales Police, South Australia Police, Victoria Police and the Australian Federal Police. The committee received support and guidance from NIFS and APPSC during its sittings. The committee members were jurisdictional representatives on either the Crime Scene Specialist Working Group (SWG) or the Field and Identification Specialist Advisory Group (SAG). Both of these groups exist under the auspice of the Senior Managers Australia New Zealand Forensic Laboratories (SMANZFL). All committee members were self nominated and all jurisdictions were invited to nominate a representative.

It has been recognised from the outset by the SWG, SAG and current working party that not all jurisdictions will be able to meet the criteria required for AFFSAB accreditation for crime scene investigators. It was resolved though in spite of this, the

agreed upon standards need to be at such a level not to diminish the value of personal accreditation under AFFSAB.

## **2. Background**

In August of 2004 the concept of AFFSAB accreditation for Australasian Crime Scene Investigators was discussed at the SAG meeting in Adelaide. A proposal was put to the SAG and it was endorsed by all those present that it was in the interest of the discipline of crime scene investigation that the concept be developed and a committee be formed who would be responsible for such a proposal. At the subsequent Senior Managers of Australia and New Zealand Forensic Laboratories (SMANZFL) meeting the concept was presented and received in principle support from the Committee.

In November of 2004, a draft proposal was presented to the Crime Scene SWG and again the concept received full support and endorsement. Following this meeting, a discussion paper was prepared and circulated through each of the jurisdictions for comment.

In August of 2005, the proposal was discussed at the SAG meeting in Brisbane and comments sought from the previously circulated discussion paper.

In February of 2006, an initial meeting was held by a working group who were responsible for the development of the structure and process which would ultimately form the submission to APPSC for AFFSAB accreditation for crime scene investigators.

In May of 2006, a draft submission was circulated to each jurisdiction by APPSC for comment. The final response to the circulated document was received in February of 2007.

In March of 2007, the Committee reconvened to consider the proposed amendments from those jurisdictions that provided a response. The committee determined that in

the absence of a response it was assumed that the proposal was acceptable in its current format.

### **3. Benefits of AFFSAB Accreditation**

The benefits of AFFSAB accreditation for the discipline of crime scene investigation would ensure standards of best practice are met and would allow for consistencies in measurement of competence across national forensic jurisdictions. Individual accreditation will also allow for acknowledgement of professional standing within the discipline of crime scene investigation.

In recognition of a 'commonality of purpose' for those undertaking a role or in this case pursuing an identified standard the benefits of Accreditation include:

- *Underpinning a platform of standards;*

Compliance with the accepted platform of standards ensures that methodologies are robust, repeatable and validated and that training is competency based. This has a direct bearing on the presentation of forensic analysis and evidence in courts, thus reducing the risk of failed prosecutions.

- *Professional mobility;*

The professional mobility is a direct consequence of the above point, the establishment of a platform of standards. Professional mobility has many advantages in times when a rapid response is required to scenes of major crime or disaster which are beyond the means and capabilities of any one jurisdiction. Examples of a multi jurisdictional response include the Port Arthur Massacre, Operation Alliance (Bali Bombings) and Operation Cawdor (South East Asian Tsunami).

It is of utmost importance to match the appropriate skill set to the required position in times when a rapid response is required. AFFSAB Accreditation for Crime Scene Investigators would allow the requesting jurisdiction to have confidence in ensuring this will occur by requesting accredited staff respond to any such incident.

- *Acknowledgement of professional standing*

Crime Scene Investigators who attain personal accreditation have demonstrated that they have met the standards of assessment required by a national body of their peers. The ability of a group of practitioners undertaking like duties to come together as one group in terms of assessment and recognition also allows for the growth and propagation of the individuals and the discipline of crime scene investigation.

#### **4. Risks in not pursuing AFFSAB Accreditation**

Possible risks in not pursuing AFFASAB accreditation for Crime Scene Investigators is that the discipline of Crime Scene Investigation will remain disjointed on a national level. The difficulty which currently exists in comparing practitioners from one jurisdiction to another will remain and the ability to move the discipline forward on a national level will remain problematic.

#### **5. Crime Scene Accreditation Process**

Throughout each of the jurisdictions who may consider AFFSAB accreditation for their Crime Scene Investigators there exists variances in the manner in which scenes of crime are examined and the roles performed. To remove confusion the Committee, has agreed upon a role for which they would seek AFFSAB accreditation rather than a position.

The role for which AFFSAB accreditation would be sought, under the title of Crime Scene Investigation would include as a minimum the following;

- Attend scenes of major or serious crime or incidents, as the responsible reporting forensic case officer, including homicide, sexual assaults, suspicious deaths and clandestine laboratory/drug investigations;
- Record the scenes through various techniques including,
  - Photography
  - Note taking
  - Preparation of sketch plans
  - Video recording
- Identify and collect evidence for further examination,
- Conduct chemical enhancement techniques which may include,
  - Luminol
  - LeucoCrystal Violet
  - Hemastix
  - Acid Phosphatase
  - Enhanced Light Source
  - Amido Black
  - Hematrace
- Prepare comprehensive briefs of evidence and attend court to give evidence.

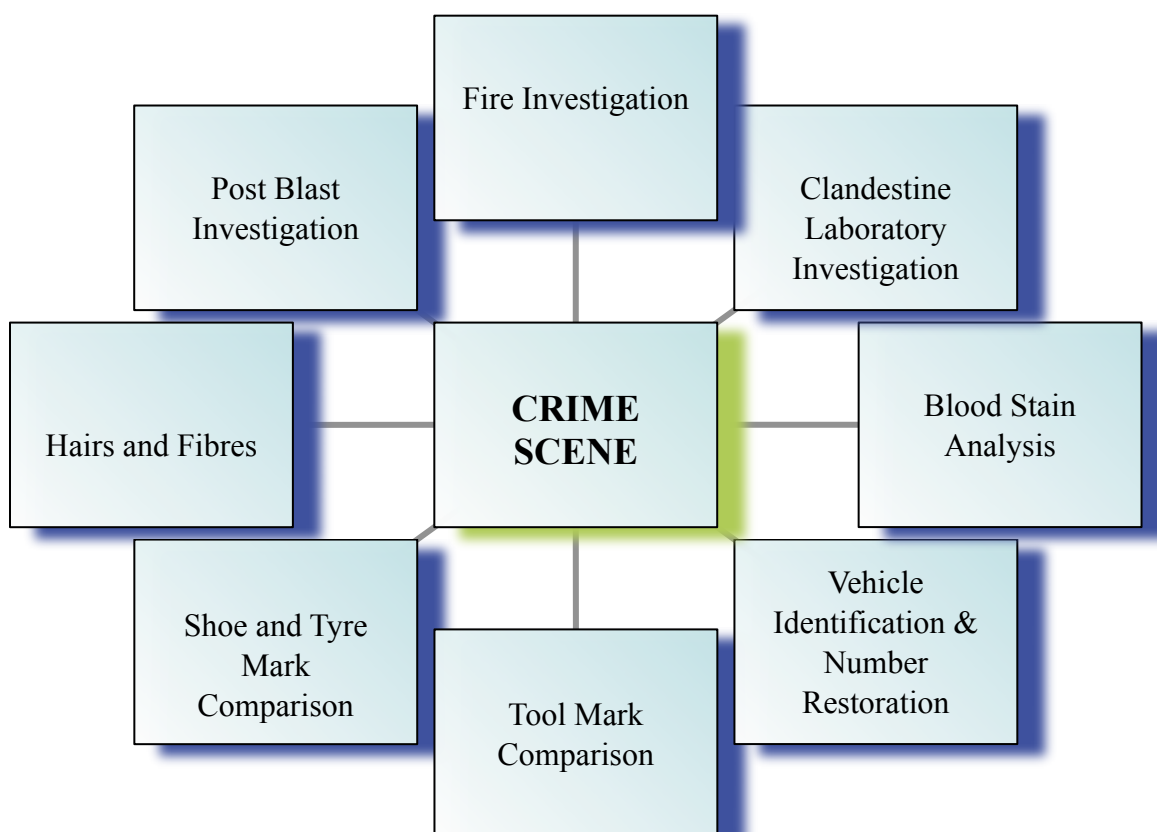
It was the determination of the members of the Committee that those Crime Scene Investigators who by way of job description are not authorised to lead investigations into scenes of homicide, or only examine volume crime scenes would not be included within the definition of “crime scene investigator” for the purposes of AFFSAB accreditation.

It was acknowledged by the members of the Committee that a definition of Crime Scene Investigator as outlined above would be discriminatory in its very nature by excluding members who perform similar roles but not the full range of duties as outlined above. The Committee agreed that it was necessary to seek accreditation at the higher level of crime scene investigator, rather than lowering the bar to include all.

There were a number of options that were considered by the Committee in determining the minimum standard that would be required to be met by an applicant prior to consideration for AFFSAB accreditation in the discipline of crime scene investigation. It was acknowledged that there was an overriding need to balance the value of ensuring personal accreditation is available to all, whilst maintaining the rigor of such a process. This was to avoid devaluing the awarding of such an honour by making the attainment of accreditation too simplistic.

In recognition of this the working party arrived at the following structure for Crime Scene AFFSAB accreditation:

*Core discipline of crime scene investigation with the additional requirement that applicants possess authorisation in a recognised sub class crime scene discipline.*



**Diagram 1. Sub classes that may be selected to compliment the core discipline of crime scene.**

## **6. Application Criteria**

The minimum tertiary qualification required for application for AFFSAB accreditation is the Diploma of Public Safety (Forensic Investigation) or equivalent as determined by the Board<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the tertiary qualification, field experience in crime scene investigation involving the examination, interpretation, recording and management of crime scenes, and the collection and processing of physical evidence is essential.

The following essential criteria are required:

- Four years conducting scene investigations of major/serious and complex crime and incidents,
- Experience in court testimony and completion of the NIFS Expert Evidence Workshop [or jurisdictional equivalent],
  - Training completed according to jurisdictional requirements
- Completion of sub-discipline training in one or more of the following specialised areas (See Diagram 1):-
  - Fire Investigation
  - Toolmark Comparison
  - Shoe and Tyre Comparison
  - Bloodstain Pattern Analysis
  - Hair and Fibre Analysis
  - Vehicle Identification and Number Restoration
  - Post Blast Investigation
  - Clandestine Laboratory Investigation

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<sup>1</sup> Equivalent study or a mapping exercise of tertiary qualifications



Note

Whilst the AFFSAB Board will not be assessing the technical knowledge of the applicants area of expertise in the sub discipline specialised area, the Board will reserve the right to accept or reject the qualification associated with the sub discipline.

In evaluating the qualifications, the Board will consider the following factors:

- Duration of relevant training,
- Completion of recognised courses,
- Successful completion of external proficiency test, where external proficiency tests currently exist,
- Currently undertaking case work.

## **7. Entry Levels for Crime Scene AFFSAB Accreditation**

There are three entry levels associated with the AFFSAB accreditation process.

Applicants will need to address the assessment requirements as identified within the level appropriate to their entry point. (See Annexure 1).

**Entry level 1** incorporates existing crime scene members within each jurisdiction who at the commencement date meet the “Application Criteria stipulated at Point 6”.

**Entry level 2** incorporates crime scene members who have commenced training prior to the commencement of AFFSAB (*date to be determined*), accreditation and have not yet completed all relevant training programs.

**Entry level 3** incorporates crime scene members who obtain a full time position within Crime Scene after the commencement of AFFSAB accreditation.

## **8. Assessment Criteria**

Applicants seeking AFFSAB accreditation will be required to participate in an Assessment Centre which will assess their skills and knowledge by way of practical, written and oral assessment.

### **8.1. Practical**

The purpose of the practical phase will be to assess the applicant's technical knowledge, scene examination and management skills.

The applicant will navigate through a computer interactive medium such as ISRAPS or Panoscan that have been previously recorded at actual scenes of major or serious crimes.

The applicant will have an hour to identify the actions they would undertake including initial response and the technical processing of evidence within that scene. The applicant would provide their verbal response to the assessment team who will be present in the room. The assessors will record the responses offered by the applicant.

### **8.2 Written**

The purpose of the written phase is to assess the applicants skills in recording accurate information in relation to scene examination and exhibit collection. The applicant will be given the opportunity to record notes during the practical phase and will have access to these notes for the written exercise. The written exercise will require the applicant to submit a pre formatted report to the committee outlining why they notionally collected the exhibits they did during phase one, what forensic analysis they would subject the exhibits to, the sequencing of the forensic analysis and the anticipated benefits.

### **8.3 Oral**

The oral assessment will be in the form of a review where the applicant will submit 3 finalised cases that are of a complex nature, covering work undertaken by them relating to major / serious crime or incidents. The cases will be submitted to the

assessment panel 2 months prior to sitting the assessment centre. The panel will select one case for use during the review process which is anticipated to take approximately one hour. The applicant would receive notice prior to attending the assessment centre as to which brief the committee has selected so they have time to prepare. The applicant would only submit the forensic component of the brief of evidence and the assessment would be limited to the forensic aspect only.

## **9. Assessment Centre**

The 3 phases of the assessment centre will be completed within one day, where possible. The location where the assessment is to be held will be dependent upon the number of applicants to be assessed. It is envisaged that the location would be moved throughout the jurisdictions reducing the financial impost upon each jurisdiction. The costs associated with the applicants attending the assessment centre would be the responsibility of the jurisdiction to which they are attached.

## **10. Rationale behind the Assessment Centre**

Unlike the disciplines of fingerprints and firearm examination the assessment of the technical skills of a crime scene investigator is problematic. The current external proficiency test which exists has limitations and a number of deficiencies in that process have previously been exposed. These limitations include, but are not limited to;

- the integrity of the completed proficiency test,
- the complexity of technical skills which are assessed,
- the consistency of results.

The assessment centre for crime scene investigators will overcome the current difficulties in assessing the competence of applicants. As the 3 phases of the assessment centre will be conducted within one full day, where possible, each of the

phases will be conducted in the presence of an assessment committee. This then ensures that a high level of confidence exists that the opinions offered during the assessment process are those of the applicants.

During the sitting of an assessment centre applicants will be assessed against common criteria and in the practical and written phases, the same scene would be used. At subsequent assessment centres, future applicants would be assessed using the same criteria but against a different crime scene. This thereby ensures the results are unique to that scene, but the criteria they are assessed against are common to all assessment centres.

The structure of the assessment centre allows the committee sufficient latitude to guide the applicant if their responses are lacking in depth or not in line with the assessment criteria.

## **11. Assessors**

The assessment committee will comprise three members; the composition of that committee would include a representative from the jurisdiction in which the applicant comes, an assessor representing the AFFSAB Board and a third independent member.

Assessors would be nominated by their jurisdiction and be recognised as specialists within the field of crime scene investigation. It is required that assessors possess extensive experience in crime scene investigation and would be at a middle management level eg. Team Leader, Sergeant or above within their organisation. It is also a requirement that at least one member of the assessment committee possess a Certificate 4 in Work Place Assessment and Training. It is desirable that the assessors possess the Diploma in Public Safety (Forensic Investigation) or equivalent.

## **12. Ratings within the 3 phases of the assessment centre**

The rating of the applicants in the 3 phases of the assessment centre will be against predetermined criteria that are consistent across each of the assessment centres held. The applicants would be required to demonstrate their level of competence to a standard expected of an experienced crime scene investigator. During the 3 phases of the assessment centre the following skills of the applicant will be assessed:

- crime scene management,
- exhibit detection, recording and collection,
- the prioritisation and sequencing of subsequent analysis and
- the compilation of a forensic brief of evidence.

In assessing the skills demonstrated by the applicant in the 3 phases, the assessment committee will use a rating system that is consistent for all applicants. The rating system used will have essential and non-essential areas of compliance. A tolerance level has been built into the process for those receiving non-compliance in a non-essential area.

## **13. Failure to Meet Standard of Assessment Centre**

Where an applicant has failed to meet the required standard in any one of the three assessment areas that is the oral, practical or written they would be deemed to have failed the assessment centre.

For the applicant to achieve AFFSAB accreditation they would be required to undergo the Assessment Centre at a future sitting and complete the entire process.

#### **14. Notification of Outcome of Assessment Centre**

The results of the applicant's performance at the Assessment Centre would be provided to all applicants within seven days of the completion of the assessment centre.

#### **15. Feedback following attendance at the Assessment Centre**

Formal feedback would be provided to the applicants who failed the process upon their request. Application for the feedback would be made to the APPSC. The feedback would be provided by the jurisdictional representative who sat on the panel.

To aid in the feedback process the documentation completed by the assessment committee would be made available to the committee member providing that feedback. These documents will not be made available to the applicant.

There is no right of appeal attached to the process nor does formal feedback provide for a change in the outcome of the assessment centre.

#### **16. Removal of AFFSAB Accreditation**

AFFSAB accreditation will be removed from the individual if the following circumstances exist:

- The individual no longer permanently occupies a position within the discipline of crime scene investigation,<sup>2</sup>
- Jurisdictional case work authorisation is removed,
- Accreditation status is not renewed,
- Advice is received by AFFSAB from the jurisdiction that the individual is no longer suitable to hold accreditation.

## **17. Re-Certification**

Accreditation will be re-certified to an individual under the following circumstances:

- Endorsement that the crime scene investigator has currency within a crime scene area and their re-certification is endorsed,
- An annual proficiency test has been completed.

## **18. Submission Progression**

The submission has been circulated to each Policing jurisdiction and comment on the content of the document was invited. Following the receipt of the feedback from the circulated submission, the Committee reconvened. The committee discussed the feedback and agreed amendments were incorporated into the document.

## **19. Time Frames**

The final document will be presented to the Board of NIFS and APPSC for final consideration.

If the proposal is supported the Committee would then in conjunction with APPSC, set in place the necessary mechanics for the implementation of AFFSAB Accreditation for Crime Scene Investigators.

- Submission presented to NIFS Board and APPSC, May 2007
- Subject to endorsement by the Committee will reconvene within two months to develop the Assessment Centre tools
- Commencement of AFFSAB accreditation for Crime Scene Investigators 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2008.

## **20. Committee Members**

Moira Johnson

Senior Team Member

Crime Scenes

Forensic and Technical Services

Australian Federal Police

Cheryl Brown

Senior Sergeant

Officer in Charge

Forensic Response Section

South Australia Police

Francine Poole

Detective Inspector

Professional Services Branch

Forensic Services Group

New South Wales Police

Stephen Lake

Senior Constable

Crime Scene Unit

Forensic Services Department

Victoria Police

Peter Baines

Detective Inspector

National Institute of Forensic Science

Committee Chair

27 March 2007



## **Annexure 1.**

### **Entry Level 1**

- Practising CSI's who have completed all training prior to 1 July 2008, must provide AFFSAB with;
  1. CV covering relevant training courses, relevant tertiary studies and casework history
  2. Undergo AFFSAB assessment requirements
  3. An additional area of specialist knowledge from Section 5, Diagram 1
  4. Supporting statement from supervisor
  5. Recommendation from Head of Forensic Service

### **Entry Level 2**

- CSI's who commenced training prior to 1 July 2008, and complete training after this date are required to;
  1. Complete a relevant *jurisdictional training program* (Diploma Public Safety [Forensic Investigation] or Equivalent)
  2. Undergo AFFSAB assessment requirements
  3. An additional area of specialist knowledge from Section 5, Diagram 1
  4. Supporting statement from supervisor
  5. Recommended by Head of Forensic Service

### **Entry Level 3**

- CSI's who commence training after 1 July 2008, are required to;
  1. Complete relevant *national training program* (Diploma Public Safety [Forensic Investigation] minimum or Equivalent)
  2. Undergo AFFSAB assessment requirements
  3. An additional area of specialist knowledge from Section 5, Diagram 1
  4. Provide supporting statement from supervisor
  5. Recommended by Head of Forensic Service