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**Speaker1:** [00:00:05.65] Hello and welcome to Tasmania Police's podcast. This is Tas Police. I'm Inspector John Pratt and I'll be your host as we chat to a wide range of Tasmanian police officers about why they joined the job and why others should too. We're coming to you today from Lutrawita, Tasmania. And before we start our conversation, I'd like to respectfully acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land upon which we work and pay our respects to elders past and present. We recognise the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the continuing custodians of the rich cultural heritage of Lutrawita, Tasmania. I think it's safe to say many of us would like the opportunity to take our pets to work with us. Some of our officers get to do just that every day. But these pets are really more like colleagues. Police dogs play an important role in many of our operations. So today on this is Tas Police. We're chatting to our dog handlers unit to find out more about why dogs are so helpful when it comes to detecting drugs, finding explosives and locating property. Senior Constable Josh Tringrove is here to talk about what it's like to train, work and live with a police dog. Thanks for joining me today, Josh. Before we hear about the dogs, can you start by giving our listeners some background information about your career with Tasmania Police so far?

**Speaker2:** [00:01:24.84] Yeah, well, I started back in 2008 in a school based program for two years, then got onto a recruit course in 2010 and then graduated after that course and have been with the Tasmanian Police and Northern Territory Police until now.

**Speaker1:** [00:01:40.02] And what sections have you worked in? What have you been with Tas Police?

**Speaker2:** [00:01:42.57] I've been in general uniform. I just finished a stint as a detective at Bridgewater Criminal Investigation Branch and I've also done several other secondments.

**Speaker1:** [00:01:51.67] And how did you come to be part of the dog handler squad?

**Speaker2:** [00:01:53.86] Well, that's a long story That starts back in 2015 where I was actually I'd spent some time in the Northern Territory as a police officer and developed a passion for the dogs. I've always been a dog person, but developed a really keen interest in developing dogs and working dogs and then came back to Tasmania in 2016 and started working just through expressions of interest and attending the dog handler unit training days and ever since then have just been attached in either a relief manner or just training days up until the eighth of this month where I joined full time.

**Speaker1:** [00:02:27.55] So I know we're here to talk about dogs primarily today. But you mentioned you work with Northern Territory Police. Can you just tell us a few differences between Tasmania Police and Northern Territory Police?

**Speaker2:** [00:02:36.73] Yeah. So I was based out of Alice Springs for just under three years and during that time I did a lot of remote policing of month on month off. So it's very different climates as well as clients that we deal with on a daily basis. Difference between here and Alice Springs is quite dramatic.

**Speaker1:** [00:02:53.29] As I said, the dogs are certainly the highlight of this episode, so let's move on to them. Can you tell us a bit about the dog handler Squad?

**Speaker2:** [00:03:00.01] Yeah, so we have three full time handlers in the South. We have one full time handler in the northern district and we have two full time handlers in the north west district. Out of those, we have two firearm and explosive dogs, one based at the north of the state and one based in the south, which is myself. We then have two drug dogs in the south, one in the north and one in the northwest.

**Speaker1:** [00:03:24.10] So as a member of the dog handlers unit, what does a typical day look like for you?

**Speaker2:** [00:03:28.03] So a day for us. Obviously, the dogs come home with us 24/seven. So as soon as I wake up, obviously Olsen, my dog, will wake up to I'll go down and let him out of his pen and he'll go to the toilet and get ready for the day. And then obviously he jumps in the car and we're lucky enough to start and finish from home. So then we'll travel in and depending on whether a planned search is on the cards. So if either a CIB or uniform or anyone has requested a dog to do a search of a house or vehicle, we also cover the Spirit of Tasmania and also other gateways into Tasmania. So if we don't have one of those, we'll normally go into the office. But throughout the eight hours that we're there, we're obviously primarily training and trying to get some food into the dogs.

**Speaker1:** [00:04:09.25] So as you said, the dogs are with you 24/seven. Is that restricting in your day to day life?

**Speaker2:** [00:04:14.02] Look, it can be as I said, I'm a dog person, so they don't really I don't see them as a hindrance. They're more of a great companion that does stay with you for 24/seven. So obviously, before I go to bed, I have to put him to bed, but I'm pretty privileged to to hold the role.

**Speaker1:** [00:04:27.55] You just mentioned that you're a dog person yourself. Do you need to be a dog person to be part of the dog handlers unit?

**Speaker2:** [00:04:32.50] I wouldn't say it's a necessarily to to be part of the dog unit. There's obviously been people prior to me being in the unit have never had any involvement with dogs up until the time that they decided that the dog unit is for them. So I wouldn't say it's necessarily a big thing.

**Speaker1:** [00:04:47.23] We spoke about earlier that dogs are a very important part of our operations. Can you tell us about the types of jobs that you actually do with the dogs?

**Speaker2:** [00:04:54.37] Yeah, so I'll speak about obviously my dog being Olsen, who's a firearm explosive dog. So we cover any searches that may encounter or there may be information to suggest there would be firearms or ammunition present at a house or if if it's the explosives. We cover everything from doing searches for, obviously, politicians and all that coming down. We search offices and stadiums in relation to counter-terrorism stuff, but on a daily basis, most of our searches will involve going to houses for firearms or ammunition. We've also been called upon to look for missing persons who are believed to have used firearm or had access to firearms. We've also been tasked to attend recent shootings to locate casings which have been successful in the past.

**Speaker1:** [00:05:40.51] What's one of the more memorable jobs that you've completed with your dog?

**Speaker2:** [00:05:43.84] I would say a really good job was there was an incident that took place in a Glenorchy suburb and there was a firearm that was discharged on a couple of occasions and in the direction of members of the public. And that was late at night. It was completely dark. I was contacted and attended with Olsen and after searching a house, a car and the surrounding area, which was recreational park, it was about two hours into the search. We located two spent casings. So it took us two hours and it was a very long, obviously search. But those two casings linked the person to the offence and then a subsequent search of the area then found what we call a silencer, which goes it's attachment that goes onto a firearm that was found located in a nearby bin. So that was 2.5 hours worth of searching for three very little items, but that went to successfully prosecute the person.

**Speaker1:** [00:06:36.68] So do you think those items would have been found had it not been for the dogs?

**Speaker2:** [00:06:39.77] So prior to me getting there, they'd actually been a search conducted, a line search being conducted by uniform and other members of Tasmania Police, and it was only until obviously everyone else was packing up when I was still searching. So in that instance I would probably say no.

**Speaker1:** [00:06:52.92] So we recently saw in the media that a few of our dogs have headed into a well-earned retirement, and that means that some new members must join the dog unit. Can you tell us about the process of selecting new dogs, what their training looks like and how long it takes to train the dogs to be ready for duty?

**Speaker2:** [00:07:06.90] Yeah, so we've run a couple of different courses here in Tasmania Police, the most recent course that's currently being undertaken, although dogs have come from Australian Border Force, so they have a breeding program there that Tasmania Police develop their dogs from. So on this occasion we had a couple of handlers go over there and select the dogs based on qualities that we'd like to see in our dogs, and then they embark on a ten week course in this case because the handler is already trained. But the courses that can actually be undertaken is normally nine weeks plus three weeks, and that's to develop both handler and a dog.

**Speaker1:** [00:07:39.48] And what does that training actually involve?

**Speaker2:** [00:07:41.19] So that training involves for the dog, imprinting the odours, depending if it's a drug dog or a firearm or explosive dog into teaching that dog how to search, how to locate items of interest to them, and obviously how to positively show or positively indicate, we call it show the handler that they've found what they're looking.

**Speaker1:** [00:07:58.80] So, what does make a good police dog?

**Speaker2:** [00:08:00.30] So obviously, first and foremost is their trainability. They have to be willing to work. They also have to have a fair bit of drive, we call it. So, as I said, willing to work. They will have to work for their food the whole life. And so what we try and do in the early stages is get them into that habit of they're not being fed until they're working, and that obviously gets their working habits established.

**Speaker1:** [00:08:23.88] And is there any one particular breed of dog that's chosen because of their suitability for this sort of work?

**Speaker2:** [00:08:28.74] At this stage we have all Labradors, so we have both Golden Labs and a couple of black Labradors.

**Speaker1:** [00:08:35.46] And how old are the dogs when you start their training regime?

**Speaker2:** [00:08:38.16] So normally.. The dogs that we've selected on this course is two at eight months and one at 15 months. And that's normally around the age bracket that we want, anywhere from 12 months up to two years.

**Speaker1:** [00:08:49.68] And as we mentioned earlier, a couple of dogs have just recently retired. How old are they and what are the reasons that they actually retire?

**Speaker2:** [00:08:55.95] So we had three dogs retire. We had Bernie, Una and Aggie. They retired because of their age. So their working life, we try and get at least eight years out of a dog on these dogs. They're actually either nine or nearing nine.

**Speaker1:** [00:09:09.90] And can you tell us the best part about working for Tasmania Police and specifically the dog handler squad?

**Speaker2:** [00:09:15.21] Well, I think working with Tasmania Police, as I said, I've had a diverse career so far and I've landed in the dog handler unit, which is a passion of mine and I don't think there's any other job that you can get where you get the diversity and then you get to work with a friend that you have for life in a way that a dog is so loyal to you.

**Speaker1:** [00:09:30.45] I know the dogs are highly trained, but I would imagine they're also relatively unpredictable at times. Have you had any funny experiences during the job?

**Speaker2:** [00:09:38.64] Well, yes, absolutely. So, for instance, obviously on a on a dog course today we were down at the International Hobart Airport teaching the dogs how to people screen. So that's where they screen the air around a person. So when a human walks past, they drop odour and that odour is what the dog is looking for. So whilst working a dog in the international space for a New Zealand flight, we had the unfortunate accident that a dog actually went to the toilet right in the middle of the international airport where there was approximately 130 people as well as Australian Border Force customs. So that was a great experience.

**Speaker1:** [00:10:12.48] And what was the crowd's reaction to that?

**Speaker2:** [00:10:13.89] Look, I've never seen a crowd move so fast away. Look, it happened to be not the best case of the runs. So it did go a fair while and did have a hefty smell to go along with it.

**Speaker1:** [00:10:25.26] I think it's fair to say that unfortunately not every person that joins Tasmania Police can make it into the dog handlers unit because it's certainly obviously a very sought after job. I'd just like to ask you whether you have any general advice or tips for anyone who is thinking about becoming a police officer.

**Speaker2:** [00:10:39.30] Yeah. So obviously if you've got an interest in policing, definitely give it a crack. It's a great, rewarding career, but also if you've got an interest in dogs. And you want to work with dogs, Come and join us. All you have to do is demonstrate your interest. And that's how I started. I was on a relief course, which was a four week course. And then from there I've developed my skills and honed them into to what I am today to being the firearm explosive dog handler.

**Speaker1:** [00:11:02.07] As an island state we have a lot of entry points around the place be it boats, be it planes. I certainly think that, as has been demonstrated in the media of late, the success of the dogs locating unwanted products and illegal substances coming into the state has been very successful. It's obviously a clear example of how well the dogs are trained and how effective your unit is. Thanks very much for joining us today, Josh, Really appreciate your time.

**Speaker2:** [00:11:24.66] Thanks, Inspector.

**Speaker1:** [00:11:30.30] That's it for this episode of This is Tas Police. I hope you enjoyed the conversation. You can stay up to date with all our episodes by subscribing on your favourite podcast app and you can find all our previous episodes on the Tasmania Police recruitment website recruitment.police.tas.gov.au/podcast.