# Episode 4 - RDS - v1.mp3

**Inspector Pratt:** 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 Lutruwita, 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 Lutruwita, Tasmania.

**Inspector Pratt:** On today's episode, I'm talking to Trainee Constables Andreea Haidau and Felicity George, who previously worked in the Tasmania Police Radio Dispatch services. We'll be chatting about their time in RDS and how it has prepared them, and helped them to take the leap to join Tas police. Andrea and Felicity, welcome.

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** Thank you Inspector.

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** Thank you.

**Inspector Pratt:** Radio dispatch services or the Radio Room, or DDS, as it's also known, has the important role of being the link between members of the community and the police service. They are the voice on the other end of the phone. When you call 000, or on our non-urgent police line, 131 444, and they are the team that is responsible for dispatching resources to incident scenes, checking in with officers about what's happening and, if needed, liaising with other emergency services like the Tasmanian Fire Service and Ambulance Tasmania. Before we talk more about RDS, let's start by getting to know both of you. Andreea, can you tell me a bit about yourself, your background and what's led you to join Tasmania Police?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** Yeah, definitely. Thanks, Inspector. I'm 22, originally a northwest girl, and I moved down to Hobart to start working in the radio room prior to getting onto a recruit course. Most of my friends and family are based up north, but currently based at the police Academy for the current recruit course.

**Inspector Pratt:** What took your interest in joining Tas police?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** So it's definitely something I wanted to do since being in high school, and it was something that just clicked with me and I knew that's what I wanted to do. I did the CDP program in grade 12, which definitely affirmed that that's what I wanted to do. I just wanted a bit of life experience before I got into a course. Yeah, I just want to be the first port of call for people that need help. It's a great job, great stability, lots of pathways to go down. I've pretty much find a new pathway to go down every single day. I'm here at the Academy, so it's pretty awesome.

**Inspector Pratt:** Can you tell us what you did between completing the CDP and going for Tasmania Police?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** Yeah, so straight after school I started working as a chef in a small business cafe. I did that for four years. I applied in 2020 and I didn't get through. And so I applied again last year, and I got offered the radio room before I got put in a course.

**Inspector Pratt:** After sitting for the interview. You then worked in RDS for a period of time. Can you tell us how that came about?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** Yeah, definitely. So they offered it to me for experience of what kind of jobs will go to just understanding what police actually attend and just all the different situations that will have to attend when we're out on the road.

**Inspector Pratt:** So you worked at RDS for about four months between doing your interview and then starting here at the Academy, can you explain how that process actually worked?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** So they offered it to me on my interview day. I accepted, and I was very happy to go down there and work there. I was then asked to attend my final fitness test in November, where I was finalised for the January course.

**Inspector Pratt:** Felicity, can you tell us a bit about your background and how you came to join Tasmania Police?

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** Yeah, of course. So my background, after I finished year 12, I did my cert three and four in fitness and I went down that path. Being a personal trainer down here in Hobart for about four years until I moved to Melbourne. Managed a couple gyms up in Melbourne as well for about a year until I had to shut some of them gyms down, and I just thought to myself, where am I going to go with my career? Policing has always been an option for myself, so I thought, look, I can move back down to Hobart with my family and that's what I did. I applied for Tasmania Police, I conducted my interview. Fortunately, I wasn't successful at that time, but they did offer me a position in the radio room, which I was grateful for. And then I did about eight months up in the radio room, which was a very eye opening to what we are doing now as being a recruit. With that, you get an understanding the background of jobs and the background of what actually happens for the front line police in to conduct their day to day role.

**Inspector Pratt:** So you said you weren't successful with the interview, but you were offered a job in RDS. Can you explain that a bit more? Yeah.

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** So when I was told I wasn't successful in that interview, they were like, there is a position or there will be a position up in the radio room for myself. If I wanted to go down that path. At that point, I was kind of gutted that I wasn't successful. But from now on, being up in that radio room - forever grateful that I probably wasn't successful in that first interview stage. Just the exposure you get to take it into a recruit training phase is a big step forward into understanding different parts of it, and it'll help you throughout your career, as well as your being as a recruit.

**Inspector Pratt:** And Andreea, while you're up in the radio room waiting to start in a recruit training course, you're paid. Is that correct?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** Yeah, correct. We're paid a recruit wage plus 32%. And also we could work over time, which is something that was really cool that we could do to earn a bit more money.

**Inspector Pratt:** As the first port of call for the Tasmanian community in emergency situations, you must have experienced a huge variety of incidents in your time in the radio room. Can you talk to me about an average day? What it looks like?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** Yeah, definitely. So an average day looks like taking non-urgent 131444 calls and emergency 000 calls. They were calls that were all different types of levels from like, you know, just chatting to someone that needs help or emergency situations, car crashes, domestics, all that type of thing. I wasn't trained as a dispatch operator, so I just had the experience of taking calls and talking to people over the phone. All types of ages, mental health status, anything like that.

**Inspector Pratt:** Felicity, Andreea just mentioned that there's training involved so you can become a radio operator in RDS. Can you step us through that training that you underwent?

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** Yeah, so there are three different levels of being up in the radio room. So you have your CSO, which is that first level that you're all introduced to when starting up at the radio room, which is primarily taking the 131 444 calls. Like Andrea just explained, you are that first point of contact before you step to another level that you get trained in, which is an ACO. They primarily take the 000 calls, which are emergency calls, as well as 131 444 calls as well. So they grab the details off that person and they pop an incident or a job and that then goes through another process which is given out by our EDO or operators. That is that third level, and then they give it out and communicate with the officers on the road. So to break it down, there's the three levels. That first one is where you get that first point of contact with the public, as well as being that second level, you still have that point of contact with the public, but you establish more information. You conduct searches for our frontline safety and operational safety, which then grabs all the information that is needed to then give out to the officers on the road, which is done by our EDO's, which is done through our radio system.

**Inspector Pratt:** So for the time that you spent up in RDS, as you've explained, a variety of jobs, that you have involvement in, any memorable ones?

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** Yeah, I do have a couple big ones. So I've had a call with a person for about an hour and 45. So this one I had conducted night shift, so started at 11:00, got set up, got ready at my desk, and we had a call that this person was stuck in the middle of nowhere, no phone reception, didn't know the location. We're lucky when people call on 000, Telstra sends through an AML, which is a location or a ping where that phone is. So I stayed on the phone with this person for the hour and 45 minutes just to talk with her and to stay on the line, and then we worked with our officers that were attending her to establish where she was. So it was kind of that work as a team up there as well. You're not just that individual. It all has to work as a team as well as on the road. So when we finally found that person, we got one other operator told the officers to flash their lights while I was on the phone to that lady to say, can you see flashing lights? So it all kind of intertwines and works as a team as well. Even though you are at your own computer, you still have to work as a team.

**Inspector Pratt:** So I'd imagine tasks like that would be very satisfying when you have a great outcome.

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** Yeah, it was. It was kind of like a relief. She was hysterical. So as well, being exposed to that prior to being a recruit, I kind of feel like I have a step forward in that communication side with talking to people, understanding the ways to go about when you are confronted with someone that is hysterical, you can't get a word in, try to settle it down so that again, that works well understanding what you're capable of prior to coming in as a recruit.

**Inspector Pratt:** Andreea, over the four months that you were up there, any interesting jobs, memorable jobs that you're involved in?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** I think for me, the one that I remember most is being on the phone with someone that was feeling pretty suicidal. Staying on the phone with her for about an hour and just talking things through and just trying to find the root of what was going on. I think that's one I remember a lot. I think just being that person to help them in their most difficult time, and it's pretty memorable for me.

**Inspector Pratt:** As I mentioned at the start, RDS is pretty much the first port of call for members of the public wanting to contact and seek help from Tas police. You must have some very busy shifts up there.

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** Yeah, that's right, I was not radio dispatch trained like Felicity here, so I just did day and afternoon shifts, which were pretty busy, especially during the summer months while I was there. Something was going on all the time. It's a pretty busy place to be, I think. I personally didn't realise, like actually, how much goes on in the radio room and how much officers on the road rely on what we're doing there. The people are great to work with there. The officers have so much experience and advice to give me, especially before going on to a recruit course. They really helped me to understand what actually is the job of a police officer.

**Inspector Pratt:** As you both mentioned, the role in RDS involves shift work, which is great preparation for becoming a police officer. Felicity, how did you find the shift work and how do you think it will prepare you as you move forward in your career?

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** Coming from not doing shift work, I felt that I preferred it. So the way it breaks down in RDS, you are on a six on four off roster, so you are doing your two days, then you go on to two Arvos and then you go, if you are dispatch trained, you go to your two overnights. I find that I kept a good balance as well as you do need to take care of yourself when you are about to go onto night shifts and getting that sleep routine. I felt that having that four days off after was a well and needed. If you haven't come from shift work before, you will have to get that routine and find out what's right for you. But now that I have done that, and again, being a frontline officer with shift work, I'm prepared.

**Inspector Pratt:** How about you, Andre? Had you worked shift work prior to going to RDS?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** No. Not really. In my old job as a chef, I worked early mornings, pretty early mornings, so I was used to the day shifts, as in starting work at 7:00 in the radio room. Shift work is completely new to me, and from what I did in the radio room, I really enjoyed it. And it's pretty flexible, especially when you go into your afternoon shifts and you have the early morning free. But yeah, I'm excited to work shift work when I'm out on the road.

**Inspector Pratt:** You've both mentioned that working up in RDS has given you a great insight into police work. How has it helped you as you've transitioned into a recruit training course?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** I think for me, all the police intel systems and just all the systems that we write reports and paperwork, I think that just opened my eyes to what those systems actually are, and they're pretty hard to navigate, especially if you've never really worked around computers before. The ranks of officers as well. For me, that was a pretty big one. Coming into the Academy, I already knew all of that, so it wasn't something I had to learn as well, which made the first few weeks of the recruit course a bit easier for me. And just understanding the police response from the first port of call to when the call comes in, to when police dispatch, whether that's immediate while the call taker is still on the phone with the caller, or whether it's later and police are dispatched to the job if it's not as urgent. Like just understanding the process of when the job is coming in and to when police are dispatched, like what goes on in between there, and what's important for the radio room to know when we're talking to them over the radio.

**Inspector Pratt:** What about you Felicity, how do you think working in RDS prepared you for joining the recruit training course?

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** It gave a good exposure to some of the things that we would be exposed to, and the communication side of it. Being a police officer, you need that communication skills. You communicate with so many different people every single day. And what Andreea said with the systems, we have touched a little bit based on the systems here at the Academy already and again, that was a big step forward. The group of us that have been up into the radio room prior had that knowledge of what the systems were used. We used that to help our other course members to push forward as well and to understand it from a recruit side of it, so we can explain it a little bit better as well.

**Inspector Pratt:** So would I be right in saying that, having had the benefit of working in RDS, that does put you at a bit of an advantage over those that haven't had that experience in your course?

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** Yeah, definitely. So like I just said, the understanding of some of the systems, again, the communication side, some of our other course members, they come from all different areas of the state, different roles in their previous careers. Some of them probably haven't had that communication or skills prior to coming in here. Again, that's worked my communication skills and working with people, which is going to help myself along the way.

**Inspector Pratt:** Andreea, is there anything that surprised you about what you've learned from working in RDS?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** I think the thing that surprised me most is actually the people we talk over the phone, who they actually are, and the majority of our clientele is a lot of mental health affected people. And we spoke to them on the daily all the time. They are a large majority of what police attend to. People over the phone that are angry and screaming and just affected by whatever's going on at the moment, and you just have to talk with them and just calm them down until police are getting there. I think the thing that surprised me most is how many we actually get on the daily.

**Inspector Pratt:** How about yourself, Felicity? What surprised you the most?

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** The amount of work that they do up in RDS for the on road policing? I didn't kind of understand the concept. I thought, okay, the police on the road, they get the phone call, they understand the job, and then they go to the job. No, the people up in the radio room, they do all of the checks for our officer safety, operational safety as well. So being up in RDS, you have such a critical role in that safety of our officers, people on road, they are trusting the people up in RDS to cover all the checks that we have to do, and they rely on us to do a lot of things that I, prior to going up there, did not have a clue about.

**Inspector Pratt:** So as you're both aware, we sometimes offer potential recruits a position in the radio room to help people develop some additional skills, gain experience, and it also gives us a bit of a chance to get to know you a little bit better. Do you have any advice for people who may have applied, sat an interview and been offered a position in RDS?

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** I think if it gets offered to you on your interview day, I think take it. It's a great opportunity. It's not a step back, and it'll give you a lot of experience for what you're actually about to step into. My view on policing is completely changed. Being in the radio room and starting a recruit course. Yeah, it's helped me a lot. Just also with confidence, talking to people. It's massive. Yeah.

**Inspector Pratt:** How about yourself, Felicity?

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** Yeah, pretty much the same. Um, take the opportunity. Like Andreea said, as much as it kind of feels like a step back, it isn't. You get exposed to things that you wouldn't have prior to coming in if you didn't have that opportunity. There are officers up there that have been on the road for many years. You can talk to them, get an idea, ask about things. There's so many people to go to if you've got questions prior to coming to the academy, and they can answer that before you even come in again. You have an open mind for that. It's a step forward for people that didn't have the opportunity to go up there prior to coming into the recruit course.

**Inspector Pratt:** I think it's terribly underestimated the work that's done in RDS, because they are the vital link between members of the community and the officers on the street, the first line responders. And not only is it keeping the members of the public happy, it's also keeping the front line police officers safe. It sounds like it's been beneficial for you both working up there.

**Trainee Constable Andreea Haidau:** Yes, definitely.

**Inspector Pratt:** Good luck with the rest of the course. Thank you. I hope it goes well for you.

**Trainee Constable Felicity George:** Thanks, Inspector.

**Inspector Pratt:** That's it for this episode of This is Tas Police. I hope you enjoyed the conversation. In our next episode, we will talk to our recruits about the much anticipated operation skills training. As they start learning some of the more practical skills required to be a police officer.

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