



# Making a stand for office health

By **LIBBY BINGHAM**

WESTERN District Police constable Linda Bennett has been rolling her office chair though police station corridors and using the sticky tape dispenser to do arm curls — all in the interests of new health and wellbeing research.

A pioneering project in Tasmania has found the health of office-based employees is improved by reducing the amount of time they spend sitting.

A partnership between the University of Tasmania and the Department of Police and Emergency Management (DPEM) over the past year sought to encourage physical activity in the working day.

Research shows sitting for more than four hours each day can lead to increased risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease,

diabetes, and obesity.

To overcome this health risk, researchers from the UTAS Faculty of Education designed Exertime, a computer application which prompts employees to do physical exercises in the office.

Constable Bennett and other DPEM employees were prompted by Exertime every 45 minutes to stand and perform a short burst of activity at their desks.

On average it took between 30 seconds to two minutes to perform and was repeated eight to 12 times a day.

Results showed staff who regularly took small breaks from their desk duties to engage in physical activity improved their health and wellbeing, said Dr Scott Pedersen, lecturer in Human Movement at the Faculty of Education.

Those who took part in the trial decreased their sitting

time from five hours per day to about four hours a day.

"The increase in standing time was associated with improvements in physical and mental health, blood lipid profiles (cholesterol, glucose and triglycerides), and job productivity," Dr Pedersen said.

Constable Bennett said Exertime got her moving.

"When sitting down too much you can get a sore back. Exertime got you up and moving. You move more but you don't get as fatigued at the end of the day," she said.

"The first thing it does is flash up and get you to stand up. It will give you an activity to do or you could pick your own.

"You might roll up the hall in your chair, walk or do step-ups on a step or a few brace holds.

"You could use the sticky tape dispenser and do arm curls with it."



**ON THE JOB:** Constable Linda Bennett does a spot of weight-lifting with a tape dispenser. Research shows the health of office-based employees is improved by reducing time spent sitting. Picture: Stuart Wilson.