

# COMMISSIONER ON AIR

**T**HE Commissioner gave an interview to Ms Pru Goward of the ABC on 2CN (Canberra), broadcast live on 25 May.

The following is an edited version of the interview.

*Pru Goward:* . . . 'Commissioner McAulay of the AFP which is also responsible for the ACT, and Australia-wide, I guess you do have to focus a fair bit on ACT matters although we keep jumping up and down about the things that immediately worry us.

*Commissioner McAulay:* Yes, yes, Canberra's very important.

*Goward:* Yes, and I understand that you've taken onboard the concerns of shop owners and people like that in the Civic area, who say there aren't enough foot patrols, and enough Police on duty, . . .

*Commissioner:* We have increased the commitment in that area tremendously in the last few months.

*Goward:* Do you think shop front pedestrian-walking Police are a good idea?

*Commissioner:* We hope to introduce a system of shop front offices right throughout Canberra, in the major centres, and that will be a combination of providing over-the-counter services and foot patrols in the major areas. Just how extensive you can use foot patrols of course is limited by resources.

*Goward:* Right, so in other words instead of having the Police Station around the corner, it's in the shopping centre?

*Commissioner:* While that will be a police office, there will still be the larger Police Stations properly, strategically located.

*Goward:* And what do you see the function of the shop front?

*Commissioner:* It will give us a high profile, it'll provide the sort of foot patrols that people say are absent from the present system.

*Goward:* I guess the problems with the foot patrols is manpower though, isn't it?

*Commissioner:* Of course, it's very expensive in terms of manpower. Some years ago I was asked in South Australia to investigate the possibility of extending

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foot patrols and the commitment added up to some 64,000 people when we only had 3,000 or so. Obviously, you can't extend foot patrols too far.

*Goward:* But just having them in Woden, Tuggeranong and Belconnen would be a start wouldn't it?

*Commissioner:* It certainly would.

*Goward:* And how many extra Police are we talking about?

*Commissioner:* I hope no extra Police really. We're doing a review of the way we use our manpower, and I hope to eliminate some of the administrative overheads. By that we will probably get the manpower that we want, but the study is not finished yet, so it's too early for me to make that sort of pronouncement.

*Goward:* Well I think the spate of crimes in the past 3 or 4 months and certainly the problems with kids last year, has given strength to your arm hasn't it.

*Commissioner:* I think so.

*Goward:* Well you've been Commissioner since February 15 and traditionally the Australian Federal Police have been described as a bit of a poor relation to the State police forces. Do you agree with that?

*Commissioner:* No I think that's changed in the past few years, especially the past

five years. I think we are accepted by other police forces now as being an equal brother and, in many respects, experts in certain areas.

*Goward:* What would you say your expertise is?

*Commissioner:* In the investigation of revenue type offences, very serious organised crime, and the importation of narcotics. Of course we make a lot of arrests nowadays, and fortunately we're beginning to get the principals too, which is a change from a few years ago.

*Goward:* How do you feel that the AFP has delivered and developed this expertise in organised crime areas and drug busts?

*Commissioner:* I think the AFP has been very well managed over the last 5 or 6 years, and we've put a lot of emphasis on training. But we are reviewing the things we're doing and rational deployment of our resources . . . Of course we had Government priorities and we deployed our manpower in accordance with those priorities but policing is very dynamic and this is the time when we're reviewing the priorities to see whether they will continue into the future, or whether we will have a fresh set.

*Goward:* What does the AFP do in the States?

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**Commissioner:** The AFP enforces Commonwealth law, and of course we've got responsibilities in the illegal importation of narcotics, so it's mainly organised crime and importation of narcotics.

**Goward:** Which means that you must be in constant conflict with Justice Stewart, head of the NCA, who doesn't seem to like policemen at all?

**Commissioner:** Oh well, that's not altogether my experience, I believe when the NCA was formed there was a need for it, and it will continue sometime into the future. Sometimes I don't agree with Mr Justice Stewart, and then we talk about it, and that's a good way of solving problems.

**Goward:** Let me quote a few of the things he said. As for criticism that the catching of Cornwell and Co., now Cornwell was that drug importer, was precisely the sort of thing that Police should and could have done . . . Justice Stewart becomes ropable, "Absolute rubbish. The Police wouldn't have had the faintest idea of how to go about looking for, seizing assets and that sort of thing." Is that correct, would you have been able to handle Cornwell?

**Commissioner:** Of course you must remember that it was Police work in the NCA that did all those things. It has largely been a question of how you deploy your resources. What's not understood is that 10 to 15 percent of human resources in a conventional Police Force are devoted to criminal investigation. Of that resource, only a proportion is employed in the investigation of what you call organised or serious crime. So what I'm saying is 90 percent of the Police Force is not doing duties which are related to the investigation of crime.

**Goward:** Which is his point, you don't have the practice therefore.

**Commissioner:** Oh no, we are very skilled in the areas where we concentrate, but the other problem traditionally when focusing on organised crime is that there has been a lack of resources, and on a day-to-day basis, we know that Mr Big is out there, needing to be caught. But a little girl gets raped and murdered down the street, then that becomes a very important issue. We know that in terms of the community expectations, that's where we've got to put our resources. We'll worry about Mr Big tomorrow. Unfortunately tomorrow there's another crime of that nature which takes our resources again.

**Goward:** So you're saying it's a resource problem?

**Commissioner:** It is, it's a resource and a priority problem, and the community policing aspects of our work, which are very laudable, in fact militate against the application of resources to long-term

investigation. I think back over nearly 40 years of Police work, and I know that most of our investigations in those days were very short. We seldom tackled investigations which went for months or years. Now, of course, we are doing more and more of that work; many of our investigations run for 3 or 4 years. For a conventional Police Force they'd seldom have the luxury to be able to apply those sort of resources for that length of time.

**Goward:** So this is a luxury that the AFP enjoys?

**Commissioner:** We're getting into that position, because outside of the ACT we don't have the community policing responsibility.

**Goward:** And when ACT self-government comes, presumably you won't have it in Canberra.

**Commissioner:** That depends on how Canberra is to be policed, if it was to have its own Police Force, of course the AFP would no longer have that role.



*Ms Pru Goward*

**Goward:** Is that what you'd like to see?

**Commissioner:** No, I wouldn't. I think it's rather necessary to have a community policing role somewhere in your operation.

**Goward:** Why is that?

**Commissioner:** Because it gives you base level skills, it teaches your officers how to talk to people, how to communicate and how to understand their problems . . . And the other thing about it is that the ACT is not the centre of organised crime, so the ACT Police will on some occasions lack the expertise to deal with these sophisticated long-running investigations. The rest of the AFP can provide that facility to the ACT Police, in the same way as the ACT Police provide us with some very useful resources also.

**Goward:** So let's look at the future of yourselves and the National Crime Authority in relation to organised crime. You

want to continue to work with organised crime. You want to keep the AFP up there don't you?

**Commissioner:** I think the long-term effects, bad effects on the community, have never been understood by the community. I mean things like drugs, unless it touches (you) personally, are not things that you worry very much about. Questions of organised crime generally are seen as fairly remote from our day-to-day lives, but the fact is, it is impacting on us, in terms of higher taxes, general quality of life, the gradual erosion of our society, our society standards, and the infiltration of corruption into institutions. So the long-term effects of organised crime are very severe on the community, and it's proper that we focus on those things now, even if we didn't do it in the past.

**Goward:** But how do you see your relationship with the NCA in tackling the problem of organised crime? Do you think it should change?

**Commissioner:** As I said before, I personally get on quite well with Judge Stewart. I believe that the NCA is performing an important function. It's sad that it was necessary to form an NCA, but as I said before, the need exists today and will exist for sometime in the future. I would hope that looking down the track a bit, it's not necessary to have organisations like the NCA.

**Goward:** Because organised crime disappears, or because the Police Force develops the expertise to deal with it entirely on its own?

**Commissioner:** As I say, it's not necessarily the expertise, I think we already have the expertise.

**Goward:** The resources then.

**Commissioner:** Yes, the resources and how we use them, and the priorities that we apply.

**Goward:** I know the Australian Federal Police Association is very antagonistic towards the NCA and feels that it consistently understates the role of Police and denigrates Police work — but you don't go that far.

**Commissioner:** No, I don't. The fact is that every day in this country, Police Forces are pursuing very important and successful operations. They don't seem to get the same focus of attention as NCA inquiries do, but for every arrest that the NCA is making, very worthwhile arrests, I might add, Police Forces right throughout the country are doing many times that number of arrests.

**Goward:** Should Justice Stewart, should the NCA use the AFP more in its work?

**Commissioner:** We already have a lot of our personnel attached to it. They do use Police; the majority of the investigative

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force of the NCA are Police Officers, from the AFP and all Police Forces in Australia.

*Goward:* And you are happy with the situation like that; would you like to see it extended?

*Commissioner:* It's not a question of extending it, as I said in the long term, I would hope that the need for an organisation like the NCA would disappear. In the meantime there will be disputes about what sort of resources I can second to the NCA, and from time to time these will be in conflict, but I have found that in talking to people, we manage to resolve our conflicts and, certainly, I found that in talking to Judge Stewart,

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*Goward:* Well you're a lot nicer about him than he is about Police, if I might say so.

*Commissioner:* Oh well, hopefully I'm a nice person. That's not saying that he isn't.

*Goward:* He says he wouldn't have a policeman on his Authority.

*Commissioner:* That's his privilege, that's his view. He's entitled to it of course.

*Goward:* What do you want to do with the Australian Federal Police? Why did you take the job on when you know you'd already been a Police Commissioner?

*Commissioner:* I think that the role of the AFP is very attractive to the professional policeman. I came from the Northern Territory where it was totally a community policing responsibility. We didn't have much in the way of organised crime

— very little — so we responded to the needs of the community, and I think we did it fairly well. I think the Northern Territory Police Force is a very good force, but it wasn't tackling the sort of problems which I believe are so important to the community in the longer term, and it wasn't tackling that problem because the problem didn't exist.

*Goward:* Isn't there organised crime everywhere?

*Commissioner:* There is organised crime everywhere, but on a scale that's very low in the Northern Territory by comparison to the rest of the country.

*Goward:* Do you have any particular expertise yourself in organised crime work.

*Commissioner:* Before I went to the Northern Territory I was Chief of the CIB in South Australia, and I suppose most of my operational career was as a detective. Although it wasn't in the forefront of our programs in the Northern Territory, I've been a member of joint controlled organisations like the National Police Research Unit, and the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence — I was Chairman of that for a while — I've been involved in the Australian Police Ministers Council, the Senior Officers Group of the Australian Police Council, establishing the National Institute of Forensic Science, so I wasn't out of touch with what I regard as the big issues in this country.

*Goward:* And you're obviously very committed to the idea of stamping out organised crime. You take it seriously

and I say that because a lot of people think it's something that is only seen in the movies and books.

*Commissioner:* No, I take it very seriously. I mean it's been with us for a long time. It was a long time before it was properly identified. This was one of the positive things to come out of the Commissions of Inquiry like Costigan, and some others, which was to increase public awareness, . . . and get these things a priority, and to see the community realised its problem.

*Goward:* And, of course, there are still a lot of people who aren't quite sure what organised crime is. Have you got a simple definition?

*Commissioner:* No, there is no simple definition, it's a group of people conspiring to injure the community to make profits.

*Goward:* And it requires organisation because of the complexity and the size of crime.

*Commissioner:* Oh yes. As a young detective I was making perhaps 40 arrests a quarter. That was sort of the norm in those days, and that's rather different to the figures that have been promulgated in this week's issue of the Bulletin [May]. But none of us were really tackling those major problems, perhaps we didn't know that they existed. Certainly they had no priority in those days. Now-a-days, of course, many of our investigations involve huge teams of people to cover two or three years of investigations. We used to carry our exhibits and our briefs around in our hip pockets; now we move them around in 3-ton trucks.

## . . . and on the media

**COMMISSIONER Peter McAulay** is urging senior AFP officers to be more media aware as part of efforts to lift the public profile of the force.

"Outside the ACT I don't think the average member of the public knows much about the AFP at all," he said when opening an AFP Media Awareness Course at the AFP College, Barton, on April 11.

"The AFP has to put an emphasis on good media relations.

"I have found the vast majority of media people to be well motivated and well meaning and trying to do an important job for the community."

Alluding to traditional police caution towards the media, Commissioner McAulay said the AFP needed to get its

message out nationally to the people of Australia.

At present the work of the AFP was not given enough prominence in the national media.

"In the main the only way to know what the AFP is doing is to study every newspaper in Australia," he said.

"We need the media. We must find a way of improving our image by using the media.

"It is important that in appropriate circumstances we are not frightened to front up to the media and say what needs to be said."

But the credit had to go to the right people.

Commissioner McAulay said it was very frustrating from an operative's point of view to see the boss stand up and take the praise after a successful operation.

"In essence the upper echelons must make statements on policy and other officers statements on operations."

Commissioner McAulay warned that statements to the media could not be

allowed to prejudice future or current operations and that if there was any doubt officers should err on the side of caution.

He said the very success of the media could pose problems.

No one could deny that the Watergate case in the United States which brought about the downfall of President Nixon and the Fitzgerald Inquiry in Queensland highlighted the media's ability to bring attention to public issues that perhaps nobody else could bring out.

But it was unfortunate that almost every journalist now regarded himself as an investigative reporter in the Watergate mould.

"That makes them extremely difficult to deal with for people like us but we need the media.

"It is necessary to have information promulgated and the only way is with the co-operation of the media. At the same time it is necessary to use the media to build the image of the organisation," he said.