

## Commissioner's Message

**I**N mid 1982, I was approached with the proposition to become Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police. As a serving Army officer, I was not comfortable with the proposal and it was only after lengthy discussions that I finally accepted the Commission. Today, at the end of my term, I reflect on the achievements of the Force with pride, secure in the knowledge that I was able to contribute to a team effort.

In 1983, the Australian Federal Police was starting to recover from the trauma of amalgamation. Today, thankfully, that is largely behind us. Although a few diehards display their egocentricity by trying to keep the old wounds open, the Force as a whole consists of highly motivated men and women aiming to achieve a common goal. The fringe militants must be pushed aside as they are nothing more than a distraction from our vital task of fighting crime in our community.

The rising professional standards displayed by members of the Force is a trend which you must all strive to maintain. Operational techniques are becoming more varied than in the past and require a greater degree of technical expertise to implement. We have managed to hold our position of being a little ahead of today's criminals - we must not, however, rest on our laurels and become complacent. You are all aware of the sophisticated methods used by the organised crime syndicates and how these methods make the collection of evidence increasingly difficult. We must counter these difficulties - use your initiative and apply new ideas - keep the criminals off balance and on the defensive.

Enthusiasm, increasing personal standards and initiative will only go part of the way to countering crime in our community. Members of the community through the Government must be prepared to allocate the resources needed for a modern law enforcement organisation. The Government has given us some increases over the past few years, but unfortunately we have experienced little tangible rise in capability due to the continuing increased demands made on the Force. The trend to apply arbitrary cost saving measures must be halted and the needs of the Australian Federal Police



recognised. We must, however, be prepared to demonstrate the extent of our problems in coping with the general thrust and extent of criminal activity, what we have done to solve them, and exactly what else we need to continue the battle. Qualitative statements on their own and police value judgements are not enough for the world of competing resources in the economic situation of the current decade. We must by careful evaluation and performance analysis, demonstrate our real needs to Government. We must not accept today's procedures as necessarily being equally applicable tomorrow. We must design innovative approaches to deal with future tasks.

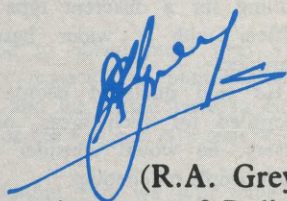
Threats to an organisation can originate from both internal and external sources. I have already referred to the counter productive influence of the egocentrics, a few still serving, some retired, who were once a threat to the Force but are now nothing more than a distraction. The external threats are however, real and increasing in significance.

The first external threat comes from the criminal elements and their associates. They aim to discredit the Australian Federal Police as a law enforcement body and reduce its effectiveness. Their methods include attempts to corrupt individual members of the Force and to manipulate the press and certain elements of the community to their advantage. The Force has resisted these external threats and has established an enviable reputation for integrity which is recognised both nationally and internationally.

The second external threat is relevant to the exercise of police autonomy in the proper day to day performance of our duties. The Australian Federal Police currently enjoys under the Commissioner a high level of administrative and operational autonomy which has been rightly granted by

government through the AFP Act. This autonomy allows the Force to operate with maximum efficiency and a minimum external influence, which serves to maintain the integrity of the organisation as an impartial law enforcement body. There are some people who presently argue for greater control of the AFP, inherently by changing essential command responsibilities of the Australian Federal Police. The argument is for increased accountability and efficiency by tighter administrative control from outside the AFP; such arguments ignore the need for operational effectiveness and organisational integrity. If the Government is swayed by such arguments, I believe that, at the very least, the effectiveness of the Force will decline and its integrity will be in jeopardy. In this general context, every member of the Australian Federal Police should read the address by the recent Chief Justice of Australia, Sir Harry Gibbs, given to the AFP Commissioned Officer's Qualifying Course No. 8003 on 26 November 1986. It is reproduced in the February 1987 edition of *Platypus*, No. 15.

In conclusion I would like to reflect on the future of the Australian Federal Police. The decade coming up looks to be a time of challenge, and of continuing potential crisis in law and order. The Australian Federal Police is a young organisation comprising largely young men and women. It is you, the younger members, who will give the Force its direction and its strength. There is no doubt that at times you will be scorned and misunderstood by members of the community you are working to serve and protect. Notwithstanding such pressures, persevere; help your fellows when they are down. This often means placing duty first, generally to the detriment of personal wishes and pleasures. As a team you will recognise this and strive to achieve. It has always been so. I am proud to have served as your Commissioner and look forward to following the development of the Australian Federal Police over the years to come.

  
(R.A. Grey)  
**Commissioner of Police**