

# COMMISSIONER McAULAY MEETS THE MEDIA

by Paul Lewer

**L**AWS have become a haven for the guilty,' Commissioner Peter McAulay said at a 'meet the media' session on February 16.

Police powers, the growing community crime rate and the equal importance of ACT policing to the other tasks of the AFP were among the topics covered by the new Commissioner.

He said the use of the law as a haven brought with it all the attendant difficulties of gathering evidence in the areas of crime and corruption

'Police don't have sufficient powers,' the AFP's new chief told journalists at the AFP College, Barton.

'Mr Costigan during his inquiries mentioned a lack of resources, lack of training and a lack of police powers,' he said.

'It is because of those inadequacies that we have been forced to have so many commissions of inquiry.

'However a lot has been achieved in the last few years and I expect more to be done.

'I'm sure the AFP could do more against organised crime but in the final analysis it is a matter of resources.

'The organised crime scene is a global one,' Mr McAulay said.

He said Australian police forces had made some progress in the war against illegal drugs.

'If you looked at the trends several years ago they were terrifying, now they are just frightening: to that extent we are getting on top of the problem.'

On the issue of intelligence gathering, Mr McAulay said the AFP would have to give the telephone tapping powers it had at present a fair trial.

'A big problem in gathering intelligence is that we must do it without unduly disturbing the public; we can't intrude unnecessarily.

'Intelligence gathering is very much more effective than it was five or six years ago and we are getting on top of the problem to some extent.'



About growing levels of violent crime, Mr McAulay said the emphasis on violence in the media and entertainment areas was partly responsible and that law enforcement was only part of the answer.

We are living in a more violent society than that of two or three decades ago; there have been changes in community standards,' he said.

'Crime has become a very topical subject in the political world and the politicians are really convinced they have to do something.

'There is a need for long term proactive programmes to change attitudes and to stop the glorification of violence.

'Gun laws have to be tightened throughout Australia. There is some good legislation but some areas have none at all.

'Also, penalties must be appropriate to the crime. The courts can only work with the legislation they have and that is not always adequate.

'Sentences are a very difficult matter and I don't envy the judges in their role.

'Probably half the people in gaol don't need to be there; the half that do need to be there probably need to be there for much longer — the problem is to know which half!'

Turning to ACT policing, Mr

McAulay said there was a perception in some quarters that police numbers were inadequate for the Territory.

'Those numbers seem to be adequate to me,' he said, 'but because of that perception I will be looking at the situation.

'Canberra's growth is leading to more crime which is part of a national trend. I will be talking to the Commissioner of the New South Wales Police, Mr John Avery, about his sort of programmes in that state.

'There are hundreds of types of community policing programmes. In the Northern Territory we put police into the schools, for example,' he said.

Asked about his attitude to the death penalty, Mr McAulay said: 'Overall I am an abolitionist but perhaps for some very special crimes we may have to re-think the possibility; for example for some forms of terrorism.

'It can be a very calculated crime which does not flow from a personal relationship between the terrorist and the victim.

'Also, the holding of terrorists in custody creates a continuous risk.'

Mr McAulay said Australia was fairly well prepared for terrorism given the level of threat.