

Commander's Message

The changing view of crime in the west

DURING the 1980s, the spotlight of the Australian financial markets swung to Western Australia as a result of the actions of several WA business entrepreneurs whose activities captured the attention of the entire nation.

That was until the stock market crash of 1987 and the emergence of the *WA Inc.* investigations. Only then did the impact of some of the more enlightened entrepreneurs in the criminal environment come to light. The revelations of *WA Inc.* changed the way that law enforcement officials in this state view the incidence and complexity of the crimes being committed.

Peter Phillips and his team at the Perth office of the Australian Securities Commission will be able to attest to that.

Notice clearly has been served on the AFP to rethink its operations in the west, and in particular the north-west coastline, and a redeployment of AFP resources has occurred within the Region.

Like Northern and Central Regions, the tyranny of distance in this Region is apparent when trying to mount an effective oper-

ation in a remote area. Communications and vehicular access is virtually non-existent. To that end, the assistance and co-operation of the Western Australia Police has been immeasurable.

Reliable information from remote locations is difficult to obtain when ready access to our office or staff is unavailable. The AFP Resources Review of 1992 foreshadowed this predicament and recommended the trialing of a *resident agent* concept for the north-west coast.

Since that review, Deputy Commissioner Brian Bates has approved the deployment of Peter Sullivan in Broome, Nigel Spitz in Port Hedland, Steve Hill in Albany and Jim McLaren in Geraldton. These deployments will greatly assist our ability to gain accurate information regarding criminal activity in those areas. The assistance and co-operation of the Australian Customs Service, in providing facilities in all of those centres is greatly appreciated.

The opening up of the north west towns to further international air traffic has changed the remoteness of the area to one of immediate



Commander Rod Leffers

access to Australia's northern neighbours.

Tourism brings with it the inherent danger of inadequate representation in the area to cope with incidents as they occur, and 'Broome time' (a concept that things will happen when they happen) permeates all coastal towns up north. While this laissez-faire attitude ensures tourists have a pleasant stay, it is not conducive to AFP responsiveness in the area.

Population density alone will not induce the resources needed to adequately staff Western Region, particularly in the north. The instances of large scale drug importations, coupled with complex frauds investigations, will.

A strengthening of the AFP's commitment to the north-west in order to secure a presence and the ability to adequately respond will also see an ever increasing workload placed on those remaining in Regional Headquarters. I am sure the true resourcefulness of both dedicated members and staff members alike will ensure the future success of this Region's operational challenges. □



Commander Leffers takes time out for a group photograph with Western Region Headquarters staff members