

Organised crime goes global

By Assistant Commissioner Alan Mills

In the fight against organised and serious crime, it is essential for Australia to have a federal investigative agency and effective co-operation between all law-enforcement agencies not only in Australia, but throughout the world.

Fifteen years of Royal Commissions have demonstrated the rise in influence of organised crime in Australia.

The past two decades have seen a rise in the audacity and ruthlessness of terrorist acts world-wide as evidenced by the bombing of the US World Trade Centre, the Tokyo subway gassing and the bombing of the US federal offices in Oklahoma City.

In order to meet existing levels of crime in Australia and with an eye to the future impact of overseas crime trends, law enforcement in general has become increasingly sophisticated and the AFP in particular has positioned itself as an internationally recognised leader in the field.

Most other developed countries have a federal agency, and international arrangements allow the AFP to interact with these agencies on behalf of Australian law enforcement.

Since its inception in 1979, AFP has grown in stature to become a multi-faceted organisation equipped to handle a multitude of tasks from investigation of complex fraud and illicit drugs to new forms of organised crime as well as provision of quality policing services to the ACT and in support of Australia's UN and international peacekeeping commitments.

As world-wide law enforcement strategies have had an effect on traditional patterns of crime,

organised crime has moved into new and lucrative criminal endeavours.

Law enforcement structures and techniques of the past can not react with sufficient speed to counter emerging criminal developments such as international financial fraud, large-scale organised drug trafficking and the emergence of new criminal groupings following the end of the Cold War.

The AFP has recognised the need to be more responsive to the changing needs of federal law enforcement and is now in the final stages of an extensive organisational change process that will equip it to deal with current and future trends in crime.

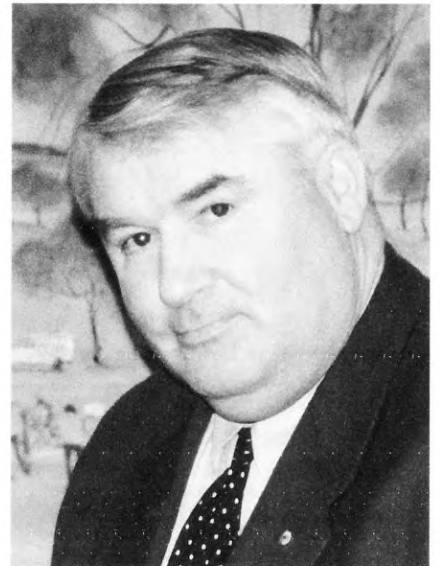
The process involves a flexible, team-based approach to the conduct of investigations, empowering individual investigators and emphasising the importance of working with other agencies and a strategic alliance with the National Crime Authority.

Crime in the 1990s has changed from one which historically was carried out by one particular socio-economic group to being perpetrated by criminals from a wide range of occupations and educational backgrounds.

Serious fraud has become of such a size that it can be a major factor in changes of government and has brought down huge multi-national companies overseas.

The revolution in modern technology, particularly in communications and transport, the development of global markets associated with the deregulation of financial systems and the progressive removal of border controls, and the emergence of new market economies have profoundly influenced the criminal environment.

Criminals no longer confine their activities to one city, state or even country.



Assistant Commissioner Alan Mills

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Successful investigation of crime must be conducted in the spirit of co-operation and collaboration. If agencies are not working together then there is the potential for them to be in effect working against each other.

It is not important who gets the credit for a successful outcome, what is important is that a criminal enterprise is stopped. Co-operation is a deed not a word.

It is essential that Australia develops highly effective, co-operative arrangements most likely to successfully combat serious crime on a global basis.

It is the AFP's emphasis on global crime that places it in a position, in conjunction with Office of Strategic Crime Assessments (OSCA) to read the warning signs on new and sophisticated criminal activities.

Nearly all major crime issues impacting on Australia originate elsewhere, particularly with reference to drugs and fraud. This is why the AFP with its global focus must continue to foster partnerships not only on a national basis but internationally as well.