Attestation a symbol of organisational renewal, says AIPM director

Director, Australian Institute of Police Management Professor Timothy Rohl

The Director of the Australian Institute of Police Management, Professor Timothy Rohl, gave the following (abridged) occasional address at the Attestation Ceremony for the new members who graduated from New Agent Qualifying Course 1/97.

Ceremonies, are by their nature, highly symbolic – they are the glue which binds us together in communities. We celebrate all important occasions with ceremonies.

The attestation of new members is an occasion for great celebration. As a ceremony it is similar to, but different from, a university graduation. Graduation recognises the successful completion of a lengthy period of formal study. Attestation represents the first major milestone in the professional life of a police officer.

Attestation celebrates two important events – it is an occasion of great pride for the new members – their parents – their grandparents – their friends and their families – and it is also an occasion of pride for the whole of the Australian Federal Police – because attestation is also the symbol of organisational renewal – the arrival of new people, a new generation, new ideas and new thinking.

To you both – the newly attested members and to all the members of the AFP, I congratulate you.

I particularly congratulate the new members on their decision to join the AFP – the Commonwealth's premier law enforcement agency – and by doing so – enter the profession of policing.

But it hasn't always been a profession. That is a development of more recent times.

Policing has a long history, an interesting present and, I believe an exciting future.

The past

Most people, and that includes a lot of police officers, aren't familiar with the origin of the

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word 'police'. It comes from the Greek word 'politeia' which is somewhat difficult to translate – but in essence it means the linkage of government and citizens.

There is evidence that 'police' were a special function of Roman Government. We know that the Emperor Augustus Caesar established a police force in Rome at about the time that Christ was born for 'the maintenance of order and the security of the city'.

Our police tradition traces its roots back to 1829 when Sir Robert Peel, as the Home Secretary of England, introduced into Parliament a bill which provided for the 'organisation of a professional police force' to replace the military who had been until then responsible for maintaining peace and order in London. Smartly attired, uniformed police made their first appearance on the streets of London on the morning of September 19, 1829.

So widespread was the recognition for these 'policemen' – this was the first time that this term was actually used – that similar concepts were developed within 30 years in various parts of Europe and the USA.

The role of the early police was to 'preserve the peace and maintain order' – they didn't have an investigatory function – that was to come later. Investigations were carried out by private investigators on behalf of those citizens who could afford their services.

The first police force in Australia was established, under Governor Phillip's second commission, to replace the military as the colony's law enforcers after public disquiet with the drunkenness and corruption in the military had reached irresistible levels. Phillip's early constables were drawn from, as one commentator describes it, the ranks of the "best behaved of the convicts", although this arrangement did not last long and was replaced in due course by a more "professional" group of local citizens – who were unpaid but received in lieu, a weekly rum ration.

The AFP is the newest of Australia's police forces. It came into existence in 1979 when three organisations – the Commonwealth and the ACT Police and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics were amalgamated.

The changing role of policing in society

The police role is not static, it is complex and diverse and has been evolving over the last century and a half. Policing has continually assumed functions whilst responding to the changing needs of government and the community to provide a range of 24-hour services.

August Vollmer, the man often regarded as the father of modern policing in the USA, summed up public views of policing as he saw them in the USA in the 1920s. He said, "The policeman is denounced by the public, criticised by preachers, ridiculed in the movies, berated by the newspapers and unsupported by prosecuting officers and judges . . . he is supposed to possess the qualifications of a soldier, a doctor, a lawyer, a diplomat and an educator". Policing has never been easy.

So what is the state of policing now?

Historically, policing has been defined in terms of what police did. The range and complexity of police functions is considerable by any estimation. They include:

- the social service function where police perform a wide range of tasks which are of a highly complex nature and which often involve difficult social, behavioural and political features;
- the peace keeping and preservation of order functions where police deal with human conflict ranging from large scale riots and crowd and street behaviour to domestic disputes, and from the enforcing of traffic regulations to the issue and administration of a variety of business licences;
- the emergency service functions which require specialist skills such as search/rescue/first aid, frequently unrelated to crime or potential crime situations;
- the preventative, protective and interactive community policing role where police initiate strategies and techniques to lessen the opportunity for the commission of crime, to reduce social

tensions, conduct education programs, prevent accidents, protect people likely to be victimised or otherwise taken advantage of, and preserve the rights of the citizenry;

• the law enforcement function where police exercise the authority to invoke the criminal process - to search, seize, enter, detain, arrest, prosecute and properly secure conviction - this is an extraordinary power when you think about it - the community places enormous trust in its police officers;

• the investigative function often requiring substantial understanding of law, medicine - particularly forensic medicine, accountancy, psychology, sociology and anthropology

• the managerial function requiring supervisory and human resource management competencies in coordinating community and organisational resources, establishing budgetary priorities and operational goals and strategies, developing better police practices and high standards of performance; and

• the self-regulatory function where police develop codes of practice and ethical standards which underpin professional practice.

In the future, however, good policing will be defined much more globally and by a community that is more critical, better educated and more demanding.

Good policing is not only about what is done – it is also about how it is done. Modern policing is more accountable, more ethical and more visible.

Policing in Australia is undergoing a radical transformation. Police officers in all Australian jurisdictions are being recruited and developed differently. They are better trained in technical skills and are being educated to be more resourceful, innovative and flexible; to be problem solvers and make better judgements; and to be highly ethical and accountable.

Policing truly is becoming more professional.

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The future

What will policing be like in the future?

Some years ago I attended a meeting at the FBI Training Academy in the USA to participate in establishing an international society of police futurists – an international think tank – which was established to assist police and law enforcement leaders to better understand the changing environment so that they could plan for the future more effectively – so that they could think globally but act locally.

At that meeting Alvin Toffler, the noted futurist, spoke to us and he made some comments which I think are worth repeating here. He was not intimately aware of the total complexity of day-to-day policing – so he illustrated his point about the future of policing by comparing it to the military in the Gulf War which had not long finished. He made the point that Desert Storm was the first 'smart war' in the history of warfare. By that he meant that all the rules that had defined warfare – had changed irrevocably.

The gathering and analysis of intelligence was more sophisticated than ever before and the technology underpinning weaponry was at the cutting edge – in previous wars, if the military wanted to take out a building they would bomb the block where it stood. In Desert Storm the sophisticated satellite weaponry and Scud missiles could be aimed with such precision that they could almost go into a pre-chosen kitchen window.

He made the point that the American military that participated in Desert Storm was the most academically qualified military that had ever gone to war – there were more PhD's and Masters graduates in uniform than in any previous military encounter in history – this war was waged with brain power not grunt power. The reason there was such a troop build-up on land, in the air and at sea was to make it look as if it was warfare as usual – you could hardly fight a war without lots of troops on site – after all, it had never been done that way before.

Toffler described Desert Storm as the first 'smart' war in history and he made his point very clearly, that policing in future would also have to become 'smarter'. Particularly in times of diminishing budgets and resources – because crimes still have to be investigated and the community protected. The best police forces will only be able to do this if they find new ways to do old things.

There is a lesser known piece of information

about the Gulf War which is of interest to policing and that relates to the role played by the media.

This was the first war where the world audience watched it as it happened, live on television. Apparently President Bush watched it on CNN. Whilst this meant that the reporting could not be sanitised by the military, it could still be distorted by media interpretation. It is a reality for modern policing, that the media can be your harshest critic, but it can also be the best way for promoting your successes. Like the American military – smart police forces need to build good relations with the media.

The vision statement of the Australian Federal Police is 'to fight crime and win'.

When you commence your field assignments you may find people who will tell you why things can't or shouldn't be done – they may be looking at problems using yesterday's mind set. 'Smart' policing is like 'smart' warfare – it is about being better educated, thinking differently, having the courage to put your ideas forward and realising that there is a need – in this extraordinarily complex and technologically rich environment – to separate the past from the present if we are to stand any chance of keeping ahead of the game.

The changing nature of crime

We know that the nature of crime is changing in society – and this will present new challenges for our police forces.

Historically police have been concerned mainly with crimes against people or property such as assault, murder, rape, theft, burglary and embezzlement.

While there is every probability that such crimes will continue to be an essential focus for police, there are other crimes which reflect increasing levels of sophistication in the community and the global village as we approach the new century. Already 'crimes of the new millennium' are becoming apparent.

The 'new age' crimes will increasingly be those associated with information and technology, and the way technology will transform old crimes such as money laundering and fraud.

The American researcher Georgette Bennett predicts that the investigator of the future will face a society which is demographically different from today. She believes that "Street crimes will decrease in relation to more impersonal, far reaching white collar crimes that are perpetrated by older criminals against older victims". She also predicts that "the number of crimes committed by women will accelerate, not in stereotyped areas like prostitution, but in white collar crime and domestic violence". She also predicts that "senior citizens will enter the crime arena as geriatric delinquents". If she is right you'll probably need to keep a closer eye on your grandparents. Her observations are already supported by evidence currently available in Australia that crime committed by young women has recently increased by 44 per cent.

The role of the investigator

In my introduction I mentioned how it was not the function of the early police agencies to investigate crimes. But over time, the most distinctive skill that has become associated with policing has been that of investigation. But no skill these days is the exclusive domain of any single professional group.

This became abundantly clear to me about a year ago when I addressed a conference in Sydney on 'investigation techniques in the future'. I had mistakenly thought most of the audience would have been police officers. In fact, only about 5 per cent of the audience of 300 were from within policing – the others were from private industry – mostly from the big accounting firms – who were keen to learn the skills associated with investigating white collar crime. They weren't criminals – much of their work related to auditing and they need to know how to trace complex financial transactions on behalf of their clients.

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Once again, investigations were being carried out by private consultants on behalf of wealthy or corporate clients.

The role of the police investigator is very simple, it is to ascertain the truth within the law. Many of the problems besetting police organisations today revolve around the way in which investigations have been undertaken.

The police investigator holds a unique public office predicated on trust and accountability. A single instance of the breach of that trust can take years to restore.

From the public's point of view, the police are, as Sir John Woodcock describes them, the

"gatekeepers to the criminal justice system", and it is their investigative skills, and their ethics, that determine how well they meet the public's expectation.

The reputation of every police agency is directly related to the reputation of each officer.

The reputation of Australian policing internationally

Australian policing, and particularly that carried out by the AFP enjoys a high reputation internationally. I know this first hand from my experience in chairing the International Heads of Police Colleges Symposium which is held at Interpol Headquarters in France every two years.

Australia has developed an international reputation for leadership in policing. I think that it is important to report to you that the presentation that attracted most international attention at the last symposium – held in December last year – came from the AFP liaison officer who is based in London. His presentation was about the cultural and organisational transformation that is occurring in the AFP under the leadership of Commissioner Palmer. You should take pride in the fact that these changes that are regarded as an example of international best practice in policing.

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Words of empathy and caution

I am sure that for some of you your decision to become police officers has not been easy. I suspect not all of you have had the unconditional support from your families and friends that you might have liked. I am also sure that all of you have come to realise that by your decision to become police officers you will be asked to make concessions that the community does not make of other people. It was for this reason, I suspect, that the French novelist and social philosopher Honore de Balzac described policing in the latter part of the last century as the noblest of the professions – he understood that you are special people.

The reason why some of your parents may have expressed reservations about your decision to become police officers is because they are concerned about you – they know – probably even more so than you, that there are risks in policing.

There are some physical risks, of course, but you are already aware of these. I suspect that their fear is for your integrity, because they understand that you could one day find yourself in a situation where your integrity will be tested. There is never a right way to do the wrong thing.

With your attestation and your ancient oath of office you have agreed to live, and work by the values of the Australian Federal Police – integrity, commitment, excellence, accountability, fairness and trust – they must become your guiding principles.

Words of optimism

In conclusion, I urge you to maintain a strong interest in your career and your profession. Be fascinated by the past – discover things like the origin of the word 'constable' – but live in the present and learn to think in the future.

The AFP is as I have said, undergoing a major transformation. It is leading the nation in changing policing from an occupation to a profession, its role and core business is being redefined, technology is requiring people to learn new skills. It is clearly not a time for business as usual.

Remember that transition is never an easy time for organisations or their members. You are the most highly qualified people ever to enter the AFP as a group – and you will continue to be educated and trained. Your progress will be watched with interest by many – including serving members who may themselves be having difficulty making the transition. How you go about your work will be very important.

It is useful also to remember that our worth to our organisations is not just what we bring to it – our qualifications, experience and natural talents – but rather the value that we add to the way the whole of the organisation does its business.

By your attestation you have become the newest custodians of the policing profession. You now share in the responsibility to make it better because of your stewardship.

I congratulate and compliment each of you on your achievement thus far.