

An emphasis on training and borderless crime



By Commissioner Mick Keelty

The September 11, 2001 attacks on New York that tore an otherwise normal business morning asunder, followed by the bombings in Bali last year that killed so many young Saturday-night party-goers, highlighted the importance of international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and borderless crime of any kind.

The AFP has been well placed in this fight for a long time. Our International Officer Network – currently 44 officers deployed to 24 offices in 22 countries – is the AFP's, and indeed, Australia's conduit for a two-way flow of criminal intelligence vital to our success in combating transnational crime.

Much of that success in recent years can be attributed directly or indirectly to the involvement of our internationally deployed network of officers and the relationships they have nurtured with host-country agencies.

In the days immediately following the blasts in Bali, Federal Agents Kimberley Bates and Russel Smith in our London Office provided personal, daily briefings to senior executives of the London Metropolitan Police and other UK stakeholder agencies. These stakeholders were reliant on the timely receipt of critical information and intelligence that was relayed to relevant British Government ministers and to Prime Minister Tony Blair.

This is typical of the major contribution made by the entire international network, which is not always obvious or visible.

The Australian Government's attitude to the importance of this network is reflected in its allocation of an extra \$47 million to expand our involvement in the Asia Pacific region. By the end of this year, our network of internationally deployed officers will number 56 personnel in 31 offices in 26 countries.

In this issue, Platypus Editor Brian Hartigan takes a closer look at the International Officer Network in general and our London Office in particular, shedding light on its functions and operations and how the deployed officers see their role.

Training, core to everything we do, is another important facet of our operations examined in this issue. Our investment in the future of the organisation starts with the training we deliver to our people.

At the heart and soul of this training is the AFP College. More than just one building, the college, under the umbrella of Learning and Development, is one team made up of complementary support elements in faculties and schools scattered across Australia.

The number of people benefiting from development opportunities through these educational facilities has increased dramatically over recent years – more than 4700 in the fiscal year 2001/02.

Importantly, the college is also dedicated to assisting our regional partners throughout the Asia Pacific. In the same financial year, under the Law Enforcement Cooperation Program, more than 800 overseas-agency personnel underwent training provided by the AFP.

Continuing our theme of overseas involvement, CSI – East Timor on page 28 takes an inside look at ongoing forensic support the AFP is happy to provide to the world's newest nation. Coping with circumstances and facilities well below familiar standards, Federal Agent Justine Adamek takes us through the sometimes gruesome daily case load of forensic work.

On the home front, Federal Agent Alan Scott explains how the AFP is a leader in a field that has for too long given rise to damaging prejudices – our liaisons with the gay and lesbian communities.

What was initially known as the Gay and Lesbian Contact Officer program – now the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer Network – began as a pilot scheme in 1996. At a time when most programs of this kind elsewhere in Australia were formed on an informal basis by concerned police officers, the AFP's GALCO program received direct support and funding from AFP management.

That support and funding continues today and I am proud to say that the AFP is at the forefront of tolerance and acceptance in our community.

Also, in this issue of Platypus, Federal Agent Michael Kilfoyle takes a brief look at the Management of Serious Crime program.

Since MOSC began in 1991, when participants were solely AFP members, the program has advanced to become one of the most recognised and prestigious investigations-management programs in our region and beyond. This year saw the 28th convening of the program and the 25th program open to non-AFP members.

In July, the AFP will officially expand its capacity to fight high-tech crime. The Australian High Tech Crime Centre (AHTCC), to be hosted by the AFP, is a commitment by all Australian police services to work together in fighting high-tech crime successfully.

Our goal for the AHTCC is to provide a centralised, national investigative capacity, as well as support facilities for other jurisdictions and a clearing house for intelligence related to electronic crime.

It is important to note that electronic crime is not limited to computer-based incidents such as hacking and denial-of-service attacks, but includes the general use of technology across all crime types such as fraud, drug trafficking, sex offences, counter terrorism and so on. Establishing this centre recognises the distributed and multi-jurisdictional nature of this crime type.

The AFP's extant High Tech Crime Team will form the nucleus of the AHTCC when it becomes active. This was a commitment I made that was accepted by the Police Commissioners' Conference and the Australian Police Ministers' Council. I expect the AHTCC, added to the sizable AFP component, will include officers from other jurisdictions.

The AHTCC will add a high-profile, new facet to AFP's core business. The next issue of Platypus will feature a more detailed examination of its function and role.

