

Adelaide tackles the big issues

Photos: Brian Hartigan, AFP Photographer

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Unravelling an international drug syndicate one day, investigating a complex tax minimisation scheme the next: Adelaide long ago said goodbye to its sleepy town image, and claims its place on the major investigations map.

“When people talk about Adelaide, it used to be to make wisecracks about that old stigma of an isolated town with little action, and not much to investigate,” says Manager Adelaide Office Greg Quigg.

“In reality, those days are long gone. Adelaide is just a normal AFP office these days. The national focus from the functional model means the only thing separating one AFP office from the next is the town they’re based in.”

The office is located on Currie Street in the centre of the city whose population of just over one million enjoys the riches of living in one of Australia’s most respected food and wine districts. Adelaide is renowned for its proximity to the Barossa Valley, its stretches of sandy beaches along the southern region of Glenelg, and its relaxed lifestyle.

The pace picks up, however, when stepping inside the office door. The AFP shares a high-rise building with other government agencies, with whom it does regular business and, while Adelaide is one of the AFP’s smallest offices, the investigations are just as complex and rewarding. The experience

gained by staff here puts in them in good stead for their future with the organisation.

Coordinator Economic and Special Operations Steve Mullins says one thing really separates the work at the Adelaide Office from other centres around Australia. “In Adelaide, staffing numbers are relatively small with a full-strength team of around 60,” he said.

“What this means in a day-to-day sense for investigators is members don’t have the luxury of separating into teams dedicated to specific crime types. In Adelaide, investigators get it all, having truly embraced the AFP’s functional model. Our unsworn members in Adelaide Office offer the same levels of commitment and enthusiasm for work as our sworn colleagues — always willing to chip in and help out”.

In fact this model in many ways reflects the future of policing, with multi-skilling the key.

Members in the Adelaide Office are setting themselves up for a strong investigative future.

“Investigators can work on one crime type one day and another the next — if not that same afternoon,” Federal Agent Mullins said. “What this means is members in the Adelaide Office are setting themselves up for a strong investigative future, with experience right across the full spectrum of national investigations.”

As Coordinator Border, Counter Terrorism and Surveillance Terry Allen points out, an office small in numbers does not mean an office small in investigations.

“In May 2005, five men were arrested and approximately 116kg of heroin seized after a 12-month investigation by members of the Adelaide office,” he said.

The Adelaide-instigated *Operation Domini* saw the AFP’s largest seizure of heroin in a number of years.

Federal Agent Peter O’Neill, who ran the investigation, said the operation resulted in the identification of members of an international drug syndicate operating in Australia, the seizure of approximately 116kg of heroin and the arrest of five syndicate members.

“This investigation involved close cooperation with agencies from Belgium, the Netherlands and China, as well as Customs and the AFP’s Sydney Office, culminating in the seizure of drugs allegedly concealed within the framework of two shipping containers



Federal Agent Greg Quigg, at left, is the Manager Adelaide Office. Adelaide skyline courtesy Adelaide City Council.

of plastic chairs shipped to Australia from China,” he said.

“Two Sydney men were arrested allegedly trying to access the shipping container in May 2005 and were charged with attempting to access a prohibited import. “Another two Sydney men allegedly were located not far from the warehouse. One is due to face charges of dealing in money to be later used as an instrument of crime, and the other facing charges of having goods in custody on his person.

“A 29-year-old man was extradited from Hong Kong in May last year and will also face charges relating to the seizure. It will be alleged in court he was linked to the warehouses which stored the narcotics in Sydney and Adelaide,” he said.

Federal Agent O’Neill said police conducted search warrants at residential premises in Sydney after the

drugs were located, and another 11kg of heroin seized — bringing the street value of seized heroin to around \$60 million.

“Seizure of the shipment, Adelaide’s largest and the biggest the AFP had seen in some time, disrupted an international criminal syndicate responsible for the importation of narcotics to Australia, and provided significant intelligence which spun off into other investigations,” he said.

This major investigation was a good result in itself and an opportunity to strengthen internal and external relationships.

“At the time this investigation ended, the entire Adelaide Office was involved. It was really positive to see that whole-of-office commitment,” Federal Agent O’Neill said. “This was also a good opportunity to get to know our Sydney and overseas colleagues better. >



Left: Federal Agents Peter O'Neill, left, and Scott Growden have been working on some major drug and fraud investigations in Adelaide.

Below: Protective Service Officer Mark Kennedy is based at Adelaide Airport.



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I think this particular job was a great example of the joint office concept, and highlighted how beneficial that concept is," he added.

More recently, a joint AFP and Tax Office investigation into suspected fraudulent activities of a group of South Australian accounting firms called on the resources of most Adelaide Office members.

Federal Agent Scott Growden is running the investigation which saw search warrants executed across the city in early May following reports of a complex tax minimisation scheme — where people due to pay large amounts of tax allegedly invested in the scheme to make a financial loss, thereby avoiding or minimising their tax burden.

"This is one of the larger economic crime jobs for the Adelaide Office, with investigations revealing the value of the alleged fraud to be in the vicinity of \$4 million," he said.

So does a major fraud investigation highlight increased criminal sophistication in Adelaide? Federal Agent Growden thinks it's more a

reflection of the way the AFP does business.

"More than reflecting any changing nature of crime itself, the complexity of this investigation is indicative of the strengthening relationship the AFP has with its client agencies," he said.

"Developing strong ties with the Tax Office allows communication lines to open and as a result, more of these investigations are likely to come our way."

Strengthening relationships with partner agencies is a theme across the Adelaide Office. Client Liaison Officer Katie Allan maintains the flow of information between the AFP and its many partners. Her role is to ensure outside agencies are in the loop when they need to be, and that they can seek advice on matters which may be forwarded to the AFP for investigation. She works closely with Sue Ward, who is posted indefinitely to the AFP from Austrac. Ms Ward ensures investigators make best use of Austrac data.

"I was the first Austrac member posted to the AFP in Adelaide, and have been here since 2003," Ms Ward said.

"For the AFP, I think it's productive to have someone stationed here permanently to help out with investigations. As an example, I was able to provide a financial intelligence report for a recent cocaine importation investigation, which helped investigators identify links between suspects. In that way, it's really crucial to have that close working relationship, because it's always going to be easier to call out across a partition for advice than to pick up the phone and call a stranger."

It is this kind of collaboration that makes the Adelaide Office work so effectively. It's a close environment which embraces the functional model — different areas working together, sharing resources, to achieve a common goal.

"The reality is, crime happens in Adelaide just as it happens elsewhere," Federal Agent Quigg said. "What makes the Adelaide Office really work is there are no barriers to getting the job done — we all chip in whether it's drugs or tax or money laundering or anything else. Here, we experience it all."

Snapshot: Adelaide then and now

The nature-nurture debate is an old favourite of psychologists worldwide, and finds its way into the policing genre via the inescapable truth that policing has a tendency to run in families. Is it that certain people are predisposed to a law enforcement lifestyle, or is it simply that people follow in their parents' footsteps?

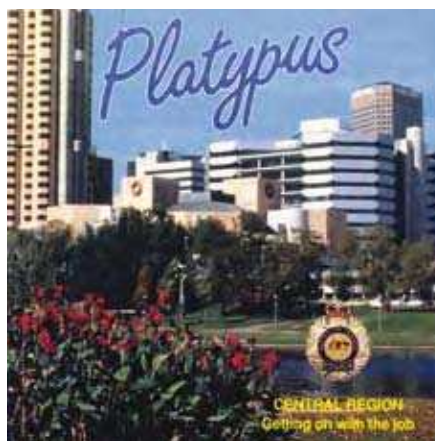
While these questions tend not to find solid answers, examples of the phenomenon can be found AFP-wide.

One such instance is Doug Lalic, former Adelaide-based federal agent, and his son Simon, a current member in the same office.

In winter 1993, then-Acting Superintendent Doug Lalic spoke to *Platypus Magazine* about Adelaide's complex fraud investigations which could cost "tens of thousands of dollars" to investigate.

"Up until about five years ago, we had few complex frauds, but since then, especially with tax fraud, it has been necessary to call on the expertise of accountants from the Australian Tax Office and to liaise closely with the DPP from the start of an inquiry," he said.

Mr Lalic joined the Commonwealth Police in 1966 at age 23. His policing career started in uniform in the ACT and, two years later, he moved to



Top left: *Platypus Magazine* ran a feature on the Adelaide office in 1993, in which then-Acting Superintendent Doug Lalic spoke of complications with investigations (above left). Today, Mr Lalic's son Federal Agent Simon Lalic works out of the Adelaide Office (at right).

Adelaide where he began his "plain clothes" career.

For the bulk of his career, Mr Lalic worked on fraud and drug-related offences and reached the position of Detective Senior Sergeant prior to the federal agent title's appearance in 1996.

Mr Lalic says the best thing about his AFP career was the freedom to "work as I see fit and run my own investigations". He particularly enjoyed being involved in prolonged investigations.

While Mr Lalic retired in 2001 after 35 years in policing, his son Simon keeps the Lalic name in the Adelaide Office,

Below: Sue Ward, at left, works closely with Federal Agent Katie Allan, right.

Right: Federal Agents Terry Allan, left, and Steve Mullins, right, are the Coordinators at the Adelaide Office.



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having transferred from ACT Policing in 2003. "When I was growing up and people asked me what I wanted to do, I always said I'd join the AFP. It just seemed to be the natural step for me to take," he said.

Like his father, Simon commenced his policing career in uniform in the ACT after graduating from recruit training in 1999. Four years later, he transferred to the Adelaide Office where he is currently attached to Operations Team One.

So what's changed between Lalics?

In 1993

Office location: The office was part of the AFP's Central Region, which covered all of South Australia. The Central Region head office was located on the edge of downtown Adelaide.

Officer in Charge:
Commander Don McCulloch.

Significant achievements:

- In June 1993, Central Region's Airport Intelligence Section arrested a drug courier and identified and arrested an accomplice. The heroin, weighing 2.954kg, was the largest seizure in South Australia and Australia's second largest 'body pack' seizure at the time.
- Detective Constable Luke Cornelius trekked 3500km along the South Australian coast to conduct a risk assessment of the coastline.
- An investigation into the illegal export of 600 million year old fossils, valued around \$600,000 at the time. The

investigation began in 1991 and resulted in the return of the fossils to Flinders Ranges National Park.

- In 1993, an investigation began into the latest high-tech crime of telephone "phreaking" – making telephone calls by manipulating telephone carrier exchange equipment and PABX systems. The Sydney Computer Crime Unit found a company has lost around \$50,000 when individuals in NSW and South Australia used the company's telephone system to make ISD calls.

In 2006

Office location: The Adelaide Office is on the eighth floor of a building on Currie Street which houses numerous government agencies. Renovations are anticipated for the future, with the office to be expanded to incorporate additional storage facilities and an employee gymnasium.

Officer in Charge:
Federal Agent Greg Quigg

Significant achievements:

- In March 2005, AFP and Customs members seized approximately 116kg of heroin in a multi-national, multi-agency operation.
- The Adelaide Office has embraced the AFP's functional model, allowing investigators to tackle the full spectrum of crime types. Members gain solid experience in a range of investigations.

- Members have raised money for various charities through events such as golf days and the Foundation 21 Buddy Walk which raises money for Down syndrome sufferers.
- Responding to national priorities and building relationships are great AFP challenges and successes. Adelaide meets the challenge by assisting with IDG, ACT Policing, the Bali bombings investigations, the Indian Ocean tsunami, the International Network and *Operation Penderennis*.
- In support of national priorities, a money laundering investigation in Adelaide recently saw an offender receive a six year prison sentence.
- Allegations of a complex \$4 million fraud were investigated by Operations members, with search warrants conducted around the city centre.
- Adelaide Office is undertaking a broad range of investigations including high value money laundering, proceeds of crime, online child sexual exploitation, narcotic importations, war crimes, and taxation-related investigations.

The workload at Adelaide Office is expanding, investigations are growing and the scope of activity is increasing. On top of large drug and fraud investigations, members recently deployed at short notice to Sydney, Brasilia and Timor-Leste. "The team still found time to raise money for cancer and support the homeless," Federal Agent Quigg said. "I envisage Adelaide Office as a typical AFP office with challenging work and opportunities for all."



Adelaide Airport: All systems go

Adelaide's new international airport terminal is not only a coup for Adelaide tourism, it also has the potential to increase response requirements for AFP members stationed there, as traveller numbers increase, particularly from international flights.

To meet this demand and as part of an overall Australia-wide airport security boost, police commander positions were created for the 11 Counter Terrorism First Response airports earlier this year.

Superintendent Geoff Eaton is the Airport Police Commander in Adelaide, and is based at the airport full time. He says the new airport security structure is helping deliver a more finely-tuned security and community policing service, through working more closely with the aviation industry, our Australian Government agency partners and state authorities.

"Staffing at Adelaide Airport will expand in July this year following

the South Australian Government's announcement to commit to the recommendations of the *Wheeler Report* and facilitate 24 South Australia Police sworn officers into the unified policing model at the airport," Superintendent Eaton said.

"They will take two years leave from South Australia Police to fulfil their appointment as AFP special members, while retaining their state powers. Most will perform uniformed general duties (in AFP uniform), as well as forming part of the Joint Airport Investigation Team and the Joint Aviation Intelligence Group".

"With these new resources on deck, we will have a greater control over our destiny, particularly in relation to the investigation of offences and management of incidents within the airport environment."

In terms of day-to-day functioning at the airport and the workload of members stationed there, it will mean a more streamlined approach to security.

"I anticipate greater reinforcement to travellers, quicker response to incidents, and the ability to target criminal activity at airports involving people in the aviation industry," Superintendent Eaton said.

"Importantly, it will also mean greater interaction between Protective Service and general duties members, meaning sharing skills and ideas."

Protective Service Officer Mark Kennedy, who is currently acting in the OIC chair for the Counter Terrorism First Response Team, said working at Adelaide Airport was a fulfilling experience.

He has been posted to a range of roles both nationally and overseas, but says being involved in aviation is one of the most satisfying positions he's held.

"People I work with know their job and are professional at what they do," he said.

"Adelaide has always had a reputation of being effective and efficient".