

Commissioner Keelty retires from the AFP

After a 35-year policing career, Commissioner Mick Keelty has decided that the time is right for him to move on.

Commissioner Mick Keelty has announced his intention to retire from the AFP effective from 2 September 2009. This date coincides with Commissioner Keelty's 35th anniversary in policing.

In an email message to all AFP staff members, Commissioner Keelty explained the reasons for announcing his retirement.

"In October, the AFP will be 30 years old so the renewal of our strategic direction is timely," he said.

"I have taken the opportunity to reflect upon how the organisation has grown and developed under my leadership as my 35 year anniversary in policing approaches in September.

"I have now come to the view that my 35 year anniversary in policing is an appropriate time to complete my police service."

The AFP has been through significant organisational change since he was appointed Commissioner in April 2001, cementing its place in the international law enforcement community.

"It has been an enormous privilege to lead an organisation like the AFP through such a watershed period in its history," Commissioner Keelty said.

"Our strong relationships and collaboration with the Indonesian National Police and other law enforcement partners in the region; the capacity-building work we continue to do offshore; the establishment of educational facilities, and our strong and productive relationships with many Commonwealth and State partner agencies, are some of the achievements of which I am immensely proud."

A career police officer with experience at local, national and international levels, Commissioner Keelty is the first Commissioner to have been appointed from within the ranks of the AFP, and only the second to have served two terms.

During that time the AFP has grown significantly, gaining major new responsibilities in counter terrorism, high tech crime, international peacekeeping and law enforcement capacity-building while meeting its mission to enforce Commonwealth criminal law and protect Commonwealth interests from crime.

During Commissioner Keelty's tenure, the AFP's International Network has expanded to 34 posts in 28 countries, strengthening the fight against transnational crime at its source.

With a strategic focus on international crime-fighting, education and capacity-building partnerships, Commissioner Keelty has received many accolades for his contribution to law enforcement in the region.

Among national and international awards he has received are Australia's highest law enforcement award, the Australian Police Medal, Indonesia's highest policing award, the Bintang Bhayangkara Utama, Singapore's highest civilian award, the Distinguished Service Order, and the Timor-Leste Medal of Merit – Timor-Leste's highest national award.

Attorney-General Robert McClelland congratulated Commissioner Keelty on his long record of public service and his role in increasing cooperation among law enforcement agencies in Australia and overseas.

"Mr Keelty has led the AFP through a significant and challenging period, including events such as the 2001 September 11 terrorist attacks, the Bali bombings, the Jakarta Embassy bombing, the Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster and the 2003 Canberra bushfires," Mr McClelland said.

"He has played a key role in driving greater cooperation and interoperability with a number of Commonwealth and State authorities to effectively address the threat of terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking.





Commissioner Keelty speaking to students at the AFP College

Photo: Jane Jennings

"Mr Keelty has forged important relationships with law enforcement partners throughout the region, overseeing significant efforts to improve the law enforcement capability and capacity of our neighbours, including the establishment of the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation.

"The Government congratulates Mr Keelty on his long record of public service and wishes him and his family well for his retirement."

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd also acknowledged Commissioner Keelty's contribution, especially in international counter terrorism operations.

"Mick Keelty has provided enormous service to Australia and to the Australian Federal Police," Mr Rudd said.

"I would like to publicly acknowledge the work that he did in response to the Bali Bombings where we lost nearly 100 of our own, Australians who were murdered in that horrific event."

Mr Rudd also acknowledged Commissioner Keelty's role leading the AFP in the response to disasters including the bombing of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, and the Canberra bushfires and other natural disasters.

"And a lot of the work of the AFP will never be known because it's all undercover and this is an important part of the Federal Police's operations as well," Mr Rudd said.

"So, what I would like to say to Mick, on behalf of a grateful nation, is well done, and the nation owes you a debt of gratitude for the service you have rendered governments of all political persuasions, in ensuring that Australians have maximum public safety in a time of great threat to their security."