

Commissioner's Message

The last weeks of 2010 and first months of 2011 have been some of the most difficult that we as Australians have had to endure for many years.

The devastating impact of floods, bushfires and cyclones that have swept across the breadth of our country in recent times has in some way had an impact on all of our lives.

Many of our colleagues both in Australia and overseas suffered anxious hours waiting to hear about their own families, friends and homes in the aftermath of these events.

In this edition of Platypus you will read about Operation Clement and the AFP's support to the Queensland flood crisis. In the aftermath of the flash floods that swept through rural communities and urban centres, the AFP committed 59 members to assist in search and recovery efforts over a massive search area of some 300,000 hectares, including 205 kilometres of water courses.

Our officers also worked alongside members of the Queensland Police Service to provide a high visibility, 24-hour policing presence to assist and support flood affected communities as they struggled to come to terms with the loss and destruction.

Just as we as a nation were starting to rebuild our own communities, reports of a major earthquake in New Zealand were received.

The AFP deployed 50 members to support the New Zealand Police in their search, rescue and recovery efforts and to provide an around the clock policing presence to reassure and support the people of Christchurch.

Members returning from Christchurch said they were grateful to have had the opportunity to help both the community and their New Zealand Police colleagues.

Despite the friendly banter that is often exchanged between Australia and New Zealand, it is during times of trouble that the ideals of mateship are realised and we recognise our mutual obligation to support each other as neighbours and friends.

The New Zealand Police Commissioner has personally thanked the AFP for our assistance during this time.

Sadly, as also reported in the media, bad weather and unpredictable sea conditions were a major contributor to the tragic events off Christmas Island in December 2010 when a boat carrying asylum seekers sank off the Australian coast.

Members of the AFP stationed on the island were among the first to respond to the incident, putting their own lives at risk to try and rescue those on board.

The AFP's response to the rescue and recovery phase and the subsequent investigation was multifaceted and resources were

drawn from the International Deployment Group, Perth Office, Forensic and Date Centres, High Tech Crime Operations, Corporate Communications, People Smuggling, Legal and Information and Communications Technology, marking not only the complexity of such incidents but the depth of skill and experience we are able to call on at short notice.

The professionalism and dedication exhibited by all of our members deployed to the various relief operations gives me confidence that we are well placed to continue to meet the disparate challenges that we will no doubt face in the future.

As you will read in the following pages, I travelled to Brisbane earlier this year for the official launch of the Criminal Assets Confiscation Taskforce. As we know, organised crime is motivated by greed and a desire to see individuals benefit to the detriment of the community.

For this reason the AFP has joined forces with the Australian Taxation Office, Australian Crime Commission and the Commonwealth Department of Public Prosecutions in refocussing resources to identify and remove the profits derived from criminal activity.

By taking the profit out of crime, not only do we remove financial gain associated with criminal activities, we also prevent the reinvestment of profits into further criminal ventures.

The establishment of the Criminal Assets Confiscation Taskforce will build upon a number of existing strategies to further enhance the identification and pursuit of potential criminal assets.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Criminal Assets Confiscation Taskforce to the AFP and particularly those employees from each of our partner agencies who will be working with us.

Profit from criminal activity stretches across all crime types and the AFP looks forward to working collaboratively with our partners on the important work ahead.

This year's Australia Day Honours List announced by the Governor-General acknowledged the efforts of three AFP members for their outstanding contribution to the community.

Federal Agent Anthony Stafford was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his service to international relations in the Solomon Islands, and to the community. Federal Agent Stafford's ongoing passion for the people of the Solomon Islands is well known and the award is a meaningful recognition of his personal and professional commitment to them.

Assistant Commissioner's Roman Quaedvlieg and Rudi Lammers were awarded the Australian Police Medal in recognition of their distinguished service. I extend my personal congratulations to the award recipients and also my thanks to them for their representation of the AFP.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the Edmund Barton Building will be officially opened as the AFP National Headquarters by Prime Minister of Australia Julia Gillard during a ceremony to be held on Thursday 7 April.

This is a particularly significant event in the history of the AFP, marking the culmination of a major project to identify and develop a site that would allow us to bring together over 2000 members of our Canberra based national operations teams, close operations support and administrative functions.

**T.W. Negus APM
Commissioner**

