

Aviation model takes flight

Much has changed in airport security in the decade since 9/11 and continued innovation is the key.

“9/11 was the game changer,” National Manager of the AFP’s Aviation Portfolio Shane Connelly says. As he reflects on the mammoth task of keeping Australia’s 95.3 million domestic and 28.1 million international travellers safe each year – Assistant Commissioner Connelly says the Aviation Portfolio is moving to “a natural state” where safety and security at airports matches the due diligence required in the post 9/11 world.

“When aircraft were used effectively as missiles the context in airport security had changed – the paradigm had changed. It was time for us – for all countries – to revisit aviation security and aviation policing more broadly. We had always looked at airport security seriously but September 11 was the definitive moment when people said ‘we really need to look at this;’” Assistant Commissioner Connelly says.

Now, 11 years on, important projects tracing their lineage back to September 11 are reaching completion. Assistant Commissioner Connelly stresses it’s been an evolution rather than a revolution. Important reviews such as the 2005 Wheeler and 2009 Beale reviews and the December 2009 Aviation White Paper shaped the direction. But the effort of many has breathed life into those ideas.

An important milestone in this evolution is Project Macer. The project was established to implement the recommendations of the Beale Review relating to Aviation. Project Macer will transition the Aviation sector from the Unified Policing Model at Airports under the Wheeler Review to the AFP’s ‘All-In’ model. Essentially, security for airports is now centred under the operational management of the Commonwealth. Similarly, the AFP is the primary law-enforcement agency at the 10 major Australian airports at Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Canberra, Darwin, Gold Coast, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. The All-In model presents the most comprehensive and professional safeguards that Australian airports have ever had.

Assistant Commissioner Connelly says the effect of 9/11 was to force authorities around the world to really look at the vulnerabilities of airports and how to protect them. The Australian All-In model is what he says world-best research has shown as a highly effective safeguard against criminals and terrorists. Ongoing innovation and reform continues to build the supports underneath those big-picture strategic reforms. Now approaching the 11th anniversary of September 11, Assistant Commissioner Connelly says the natural state where preparations and precautions





National Manager Aviation Shane Connelly in Darwin.

are matched against the threat of crime and terrorism is almost complete.

“We are almost there,” he says. “We are very close.”



K9 teams deliver a highly visible law enforcement capability.

Project Macer

Assistant Commissioner Connelly says the most personally satisfying initiative for him is the success of the PSO gateway program under Project Macer. Under Project Macer, Airport Protective Service Officers (PSO) have the first option to transition as sworn police officers to staff the extra police positions required at airports under the All-In model.

“More than 400 PSOs had to make big decisions where they were going to go in their careers. They had to decide if they would remain as a PSO, transition to become a sworn police officer or reclassify and be redeployed to another role, or leave the AFP.

“There were a lot of sceptics who thought that the PSO workforce wouldn’t engage with the process. They were completely wrong. The take-up of the PSOs through transition has been phenomenal to the point where we have had to do very little external recruitment for Macer.”

Assistant Commissioner Connelly says the maturity and experience of the former PSOs adds to their effectiveness. Many have had long-term careers with the AFP in the PSO role. This was highlighted during the graduation ceremony earlier this year of the first Federal Police Transition Program (FPTP) graduation for 2012 and the seventh FPTP course since the Beale Review.

During his student response on behalf of the course, newly appointed Constable Will Collett highlighted this maturity within the FPTP 1/2012 ranks. He said the average age of the course participants was 42.5 years and they had a total combined service of 225 years. “Broken down, that’s an average of 11.3 years per person of prior service already to the AFP,” Constable Collett said. “That means we will be the first group to graduate and be due for long service leave at the same time.”



Airport Watch will encourage Australia’s commercial airport industry workers to assist with keeping airports safe.



The AFP is the primary law enforcement agency at Australia's 10 major airports under the All-In model of airport policing.

Program Jupiter

The construction of long-term, purpose-built facilities for the AFP at Australia's major airports continues under Program Jupiter. The project is an integral foundation to the All-In policing model. Facilities at Sydney Airport are now open and Darwin will soon follow. Canberra and Adelaide facilities are in process. The K9 facility on the Gold Coast is also open.

This accommodation provides certainty for policing operations and security of tenure into the future with 15-year leases. The funding provided from Government recognises the strategic role the AFP will continue to undertake in Australia's national and regional security environment, and will provide the AFP with contemporary and compliant accommodation that reflects the status and efficiency of the AFP's operations at airports.

During a tour of the new premises before its opening, Airport Police Commander Errol Raiser commented that the new accommodation will enable the implementation and ongoing effectiveness of the All-In model.

"The new building will provide appropriate infrastructure to support AFP operations at Sydney Airport," he said.

Some of the features in the new accommodation include extended floor area for Operational Safety Training and requalifications. It has an Emergency Operations Room for joint agency activities and an AFP Operations Coordination Centre with specialist equipment to provide greater support to commanders and provides a purpose-built gymnasium for members.

Airport Watch

Assistant Commissioner Connelly says the Airport Watch program launched in Sydney on 11 July is based on the successful methodology of any crime prevention community program. In this case it is harnessing the support of the civilian aviation industry workers at airports. Australian Neighbourhood Watch has donated the use of its logo, which has been amended to look like the tail of an aircraft. Aviation workers have been provided with the AOCC telephone number, which gives them direct access to report suspicious activity.

"Nearly 70,000 people work at Australia's airports – that's a big set of eyes and ears," he says. "So when they see something that is unusual or something that doesn't fit or concerns them it will come to the AOCC. The AOCC will assess the situation and determine

whether it forms an intelligence picture or whether it requires a deployment and will allocate a patrol to respond.”

BASQ training

Behavioural Assessment and Security Questioning training (BASQ) is a new initiative that attempts to identify and exploit the known behavioural traits of people about to commit crime or terrorism. It is based on the international research suggesting that people about to commit crime do exhibit common behavioural traits. It is anticipated that all operational AFP Aviation members will be BASQ trained in the next two years. Police will be trained to identify those traits and to ask targeted questions of persons of interest. Assistant Commissioner Connelly says the BASQ program is another level of prevention and will enhance existing security screening arrangements at domestic and international airports.

“BASQ groups will present as highly visible teams in the aviation environment. These teams will interact

with the travelling public and proactively identify threats to aviation.

“So it’s building a picture. But the wonderful thing about BASQ is it is a continuum so we can use it to make enquiries as to the true bona fides of a person of interest and we can use it to advise another airport that a person of interest is coming their way. It is trade craft and it’s not dissimilar to beat-style policing that a community police officer does in understanding his or her community.”

Assistant Commissioner Connelly says the mission now is to maintain the effort and innovation. He says people should not lose sight of the September 11 or Bali bombings and the many other incidents that have followed. He says it is the responsibility of Australian authorities and the aviation community to make sure that airports remain safe for all people who use them.

“I think a very naïve person would say Osama Bin Laden is dead so we don’t need to do this anymore. I believe the AFP is wise with its mindset and must continue to evolve and be ready to deal with any threat to national security, be it through crime or terrorism.”

AFP members patrol Sydney Airport.

