



SRG bursts into life in Canberra

July 1 marked a new era in AFP capability.

The long, thin strip of explosive charge erupted into life and the door disappeared from view. The tactical response police rushed through the now open doorway amid the dull crump of stun grenades. Moments later the hostage was led from the building, soon followed by the terrorist surrounded by police clad in dark-blue fatigues.

It was a rare and privileged insight behind the normally closed doors of police tactical response teams and tactics. It was hard not to be impressed by the skills, the high-end weapons and equipment and the precision that comes from endless practice. Amid the noise and spectacle the AFP's Specialist Response Group (SRG) formally burst into existence on 5 July at the AFP's International Deployment Group Majura village facility in Canberra.

Officially, the SRG became effective on 1 July with the amalgamation of the AFP's Operational Response Group (ORG) and the ACT Policing's Specialist Response and Security team (SRS). AFP Commissioner Tony Negus says the SRG is a 'one-stop shop' of specialist functions.

"The creation of the SRG will provide an enhanced operational model for all AFP business and provide a more effective capability to meet AFP operational responses locally, nationally and internationally," Commissioner Negus says.

Manager SRG Commander Clive Murray says the SRG launch marks the culmination of two-and-a-half years of sustained effort. In early 2010, the AFP commenced two key reforms. First, that the ORG facilities in



Negotiators are one of the roles now centralised under the Specialist Response Group command.



A Specialist Response Group member takes part in the official launch on 5 July.

Melbourne and Brisbane should be centralised in Canberra. Secondly, that the ORG and ACT Policing's Specialist Response and Security team should be amalgamated into one functional unit of the AFP.

Commander Murray says that each project was initially undertaken as two separate but dependent bodies of work. At first, the task was to identify methods of enhanced interoperability between the ORG and the SRS. But it was very quickly realised that the ORG and SRS could go way beyond simply cooperating. Project Komet was initiated and the implementation team set about creating the SRG. When both organisations deployed to the Christmas Island riots under Operation Ridley in March 2011, it only served to highlight the need for one consolidated effort.

“Now we have a one-stop shop that delivers support to all AFP operations whether that’s in the ACT, national or international,” Commander Murray says. “There is one point of referral and one system to provide specialist operational support. Before 1 July, 2012, there were two disparate functions doing very similar business.

“By way of example, training and procurement of equipment was done separately. They were operating from different bases and all of their governance



Specialist Response Group members conduct an exercise during the official launch.



AFP Commissioner Tony Negus meets the press at the official launch of the Specialist Response Group.

and SOPs were different. So now we have brought that together into one consolidated position. Overall, this provides for a more effective and efficient operating model.”

Officer in charge of SRG Targeted Operations Sergeant Steve Cooke was the co-author of the 51 recommendations under Project Komet that brought the SRG to life. He says the formation of the SRG not only makes good sense for the organisation but enhances the professional opportunities for its members.

“If ever you can live the dream, most of us are probably living the dream at the moment,” he says. “There are fantastic opportunities for us on a number of different fronts – the equipment, the training, the ongoing validation and the operational opportunities that it provides on all fronts. We really are working at the community policing level, at the national level and at the international level.

“For me personally, being the officer in charge of Targeted Operations and building our disaster response capability is not only a great challenge: it is a really exciting time for us. We are engaging in some fairly high level search and rescue disciplines so that we will actually be capable of responding to any disaster anywhere in the world as required by the Commissioner.”



Specialist Response Group members showcase their skills at the official launch of the AFP’s world-class policing capability.