



Platypus is the official staff magazine of the Australian Federal Police, and is prepared by the AFP Public Relations Branch.

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A section of the memorial window to the late Assistant Commissioner Colin Winchester, donated by his AFP colleagues and installed in St Peter Chanel's Church, Yarralumla, on 10 January 1992. Photograph: Colin Roach AFP
Stained Glass artist: Gloria Osborne for the Glass Works, Phillip, ACT



The Platypus has been adopted by the Australian Federal Police as a symbol representing the diverse requirements placed upon members in the execution of their duty. This unique and tenacious Australian mammal is a survivor against increasing pressure from today's environment. It leaves no stone unturned in its daily pursuits and has equipped itself with a range of features to adapt to changes over many years. It is capable of passing unnoticed, if required, yet demonstrates an unfailing dedication to exploring all possibilities in an effort to maintain its special place in Australia's wildlife, at times against large and more powerful opponents — a quality admired and respected by members of the Australian Federal Police.

Commissioner's Message

1991 will be remembered in historical terms because of some of the momentous world events that either took place or commenced during the year.

In my 1991 message, I referred to the possibility of a Middle East conflict. Of course, it is now a matter of history that this war took place. However, although some of the symptoms of these Middle East problems were eliminated by the conflict, it seems that the underlying problems in that part of the world still exist. Therefore the ongoing law enforcement implications, arising out of possible future terrorist activity continue.

The year was one of remarkable political instability in many parts of the world. I doubt if the most informed commentator could have predicted what happened in 1991 based on the state of affairs that existed a few years ago. The new political order has had some dramatic effects on international policing. Membership of Interpol has swelled to 158 countries, with the recent inclusion of countries like the [former] USSR, Albania, Vietnam and Mongolia to name just a few. Virtually all those nations which used to belong to the so called Eastern Bloc are now members. However with the chaos which currently exists in that part of the world it is hard to know what Interpol will look like in another year's time. Certainly the disintegration of the USSR as we knew it will have far reaching implications.

Now that the veil of secrecy has been lifted it comes as something of a shock to realise that Eastern Bloc organised crime already has established links with the rest of the world.

In my previous message, I talked about the increasing importance of the South Pacific nations in regard to law enforcement. I attended a conference of the South Pacific Chiefs of Police which was held in Wellington in October. An assessment of emerging criminal activity in that part of the world confirms our suspicions that organised crime is looking to this region as a lucrative area in which to expand its activities. Out of that conference came an agreement to make a coordinated and comprehensive submission to the South Pacific Forum

pointing out law enforcement needs.

The combination of all these circumstances has undoubtedly increased the importance of the international operations of the AFP. In the same way as it became untenable to look at organised crime in Australia in the various jurisdictions in isolation from the others, it has become untenable to look at crime in Australia in isolation from the world community.

In combating international crime, the incompatibility of the various criminal justice systems will become a major impediment to effective law enforcement.

However this will not be the only challenge for 1992 and indeed beyond. Clearly the patterns of crime are linked to certain aspects of the economy. The current recession in Australia is bound to have an impact on crime in this country during the year. This, of course, will require a more flexible approach to the way we assess and reassign priorities.

What is quite evident is that we will have to meet the new and additional challenges with substantially the same resources that we have already. With the prospect of high level unemployment continuing for some time into the future, I find it both annoying and disturbing that the clamour for the distribution of more and more "goodies" continues unabated. We are all going to have to live within our means and this has implications for the law enforcement community.

The year 1991 saw the re-emergence in Australia of violent protest in the form of the anti-AIDEX demonstration in Canberra. It will take us a long time to analyse every aspect of this incident, but already emerging is a strong suspicion that we may be facing similar incidents in the immediate future. We will have to be prepared.

On a less pessimistic note, let me say how pleased I am with the quite obvious improvements in the standards of our efficiency and productivity. There are many reasons for this no doubt, but one ought not to overlook the very substantial contribution that the unified workforce has made through improved teamwork.

1991 was a successful year for the AFP. You made it so and for that you have my sincere thanks.