

Top law enforcement agencies are at the leading edge of organisational change

By Terry Browne

The way law enforcement agencies go about doing business is under review throughout the western world, and while some agencies wait to have change forced upon them, the AFP is among those internationally renown police services that are leading the way in preparing for the demands of the future.

The AFP management style is moving from a traditional autocratic, directive, controlling approach to a values-driven and participative, supporting and co-ordinating style which promotes empowerment and personal accountability in lieu of the overly prescriptive rules and regulations.

As the AFP restructures itself based on flexible empowered teams, heightened appreciation of the diversity of its staff, and a new operations model, the success of similar changes made to leading US and UK law enforcement agencies is becoming apparent.

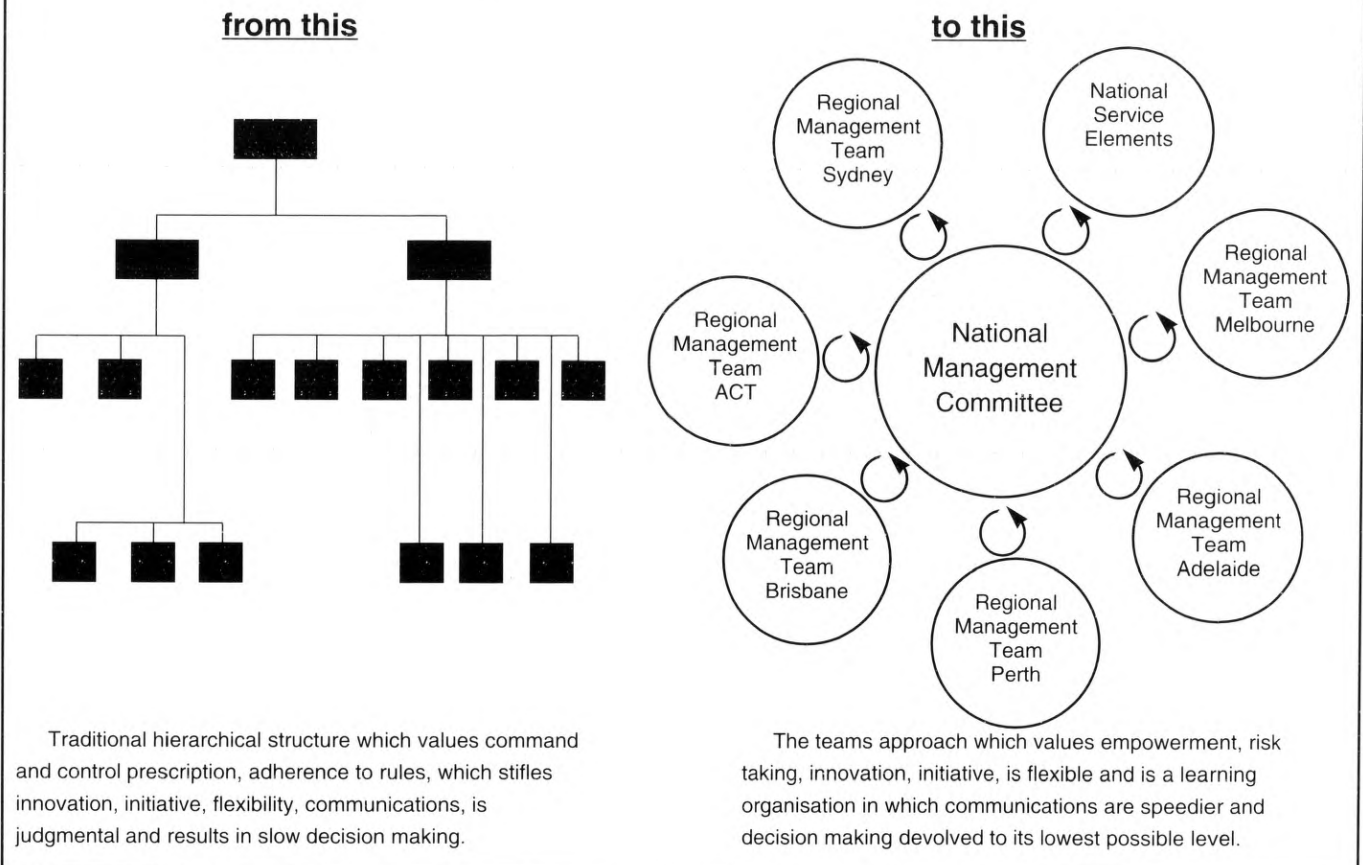
The AFP is not alone in heralding change

The benefits of devolving power further down the ranks has been demonstrated by Commissioner William Bratton of the New York Police Department.

The Economist of July 29, 1995 reported that in 1994, Mr Bratton's first year in office, he presided over a 12 per cent fall in recorded crime and that New York's murder rate is now the lowest in 25 years.

The report said that previously, as Commissioner of the Boston police and in a spell as head of New York's transit police, Mr Bratton became convinced

The AFP structure is changing:



that old-style methods of law enforcement had failed. He reinvented New York's transit police partly by improving equipment, but also through a dose of 'management by objectives': the transit police's task became to cut crime, not merely respond to it.

Morale soared, and subway crime fell by half. In moving his management techniques to the NYPD he sent in a 'transit [change] team' to size up his new beat. It found a hierarchical, centralised organisation, with an ingrained, defensive culture. New York's 76 precincts were judged by how quickly they responded to crime rather than how well they prevented it.

He introduced a radical change in methodology and now boasts: "I would pit my command staff against any Fortune 500 company."

The Economist said that he also devolved power to the precinct commanders, who now deploy their resources as they see fit. Mr Bratton is encouraging these commanders – the NYPD's business-unit managers – to push empowerment even further down the ranks, to sergeants and the officer on the beat.

As with other re-engineering exercises, results are carefully monitored, Mr Bratton looks at up-to-date crime statistics daily. ("Can you imagine running a bank if you couldn't look at your bottom line every day?") He also keeps an eye on such measures as the number of businesses leaving the city. Twice a week there are "crime-strategy" meetings with the precinct commanders to discuss the latest trends. If hot-spots, such as a rise in robberies in one area, appear, resources are moved.

The Metropolitan Police lead the way in UK reform

In January 1994, the UK's Metropolitan police launched the policy document titled 'The Future Picture for the Metropolitan Police Service'. The purpose of the restructuring of 'The Met' was stated by its Commissioner Sir Paul Condon: "Our ultimate aim in restructuring is to improve policing performance and the quality of our service.

"We need to promote a more

enterprising style of management, breaking free from the spiral of reactive policing.

"There are currently some management trends in the public sector, here and elsewhere, that seem to be more than passing fads.

"We must not allow expectations to get out of hand, but several of these [trends] match what we are already doing and they should be explored, to assess their potential application for the Metropolitan Police Service.

These include:

- being less bureaucratic;
- being more 'customer' oriented;
- being more 'results' oriented than input focused;
- requiring the senior management tier to 'steer' and the 'operation tier' to decide the 'hows';
- using specialists (police officers in our case) as catalysts for community action;
- giving more emphasis to prevention than to cure: addressing causes, rather than symptoms.
- recycling at least some of the benefits of making savings to those who achieve them;
- promoting 'team work' and 'ownership' of activity; and,
- striving for excellence in personnel issues, not minimum standards.

The AFP trains for change

The AFP has commenced team-based training through seminars held by Being Human Pty Ltd in Eastern and Northern Region, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Southern Region, Dr Ross Benzley in Central and Western Regions and Fred Pryor Seminars in the ACT.

At the seminar held in Canberra on July 27, headquarters and ACT Region staff spent the day with Fred Pryor Seminars presenter, Jack Dempsey and were taken from basic concepts to implementation strategies.

"The key to success is flexibility, the AFP is on the leading edge of the use of teams in a policing environment and will go through a learning process."

He said that just as the AFP has had to change to survive, its members need to become multi-dimensional to be of

most value to the organisation.

The team environment provides a forum to learn new skills as well as maintaining those skills already developed. The concept is based on the idea that "none of us is smarter than all of us", and that within a team there is the potential to find solutions to problems that would be insurmountable for an individual.

On the general topic of change, Mr Dempsey said: "If you think the past five years have brought a lot of change, wait until the next five have passed — you ain't seen nothing yet!

"There is a constant demand for organisations to do more with less and to deal with constant change, and change is driven by budgets, politics and public opinion."

"In the past, information was kept further up the management line, but today information is accessible at all levels."

Change in organisations is possible today because the workforce is far better educated than before. In the past, only managers were privy to the 'big picture'. In organisations now, all staff have an understanding of the corporate goals, values and vision. This allows responsibility to be pushed down the line and to be implemented where it is of most value."

The benefits of the team structure

Mr Dempsey cited the benefits of working in teams as being:

- improved quality of work;
- increased employer commitment;
- greater job satisfaction;
- ability to adapt to change;
- reduced operating costs;
- increased productivity;
- improved customer service;
- reduced employer turnover;
- increased innovation; and
- enhanced trust and communication.

He said that there is generally a temporary down side to the introduction of the team-based approach which is characterised by an initial drop in productivity, a perceived loss of power by managers, and an increase in the training expenditure, but inevitably the benefits begin to emerge.