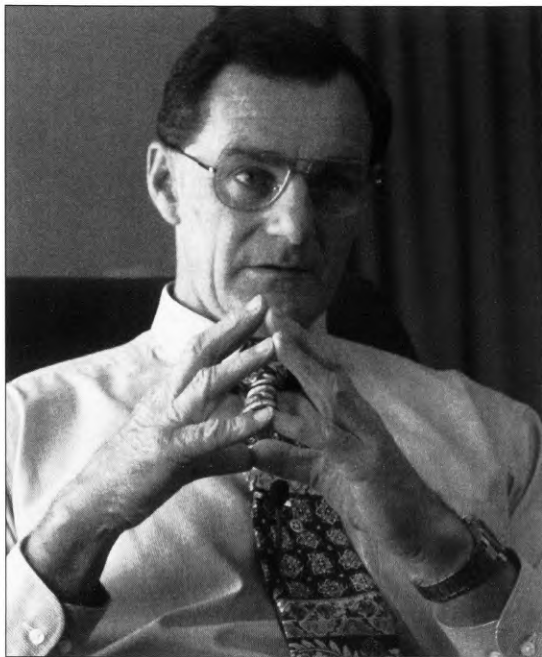


# AFP endorses decision for inquiry while officers at protest applauded



Commissioner Mick Palmer

*In view of the various reports circulating in the media concerning the recently announced independent inquiry into allegations of corruption and malpractice concerning the Australian Federal Police, I believe it is important to put on record in the clearest possible way my attitude, and that of the AFP, to the inquiry process.*

The AFP strongly endorses the decision by the government to conduct an external inquiry into the organisation and will co-operate fully with and offer absolute support to Mr Harrison SC in his inquiry responsibilities.

As early as November last year the senior executive of the AFP recognised there was a need for an external inquiry with the qualification being that whatever action was taken it was critical it did not interfere with or compromise inquiries underway within the NSW Police Royal Commission, and that any decision should follow appropriate consultation with the Royal Commissioner.

My unequivocal view is that any external inquiry is a positive opportunity for a rigorous independent review, evaluation and audit from which we and the community can only benefit.

The AFP has nothing if it does not have its integrity and the trust of the wider community. There is no room for either the practice or the practitioners of corruption.

We are an organisation engaged in fundamental reform and radical restructuring, much of which is aimed at addressing the concerns raised in regard to the quasi-military and closed-shop culture of policing. An external inquiry can only assist this process.

I have written to all major newspapers requesting that in reporting the inquiry process sufficient objectivity is maintained to ensure we do not throw the baby out with the bath water.

On the other side of the coin, Budget-related demonstrations in Canberra on 19 and 20 August, highlighted the professionalism and dedication of the AFP. ACT Region members supported by personnel from Head Office, Training and Weston, faced angry mobs at both the new and old parliament houses. The damage to property and injuries to members were the subject of national media coverage.

As noted by the Prime Minister, "What occurred was un-Australian, it was ugly, it endangered the physical well-being of men and women from the Australian Federal Police, Parliament House staff and Protective Services who were forced in the pursuit of their duties to subject themselves to insult, physical attack, and all sorts of abuse".

The performance by AFP personnel, their restraint and dedication to duty has won plaudits from the Prime Minister, Opposition Leader, peaceful protesters via talkback radio, and the media generally.

The incident highlights the very best qualities of those in policing and the best qualities of the AFP. It highlights also the appropriateness for there being one police service to respond to the policing needs of the national capital.

AFP personnel involved have done the AFP proud.'

