



By Commissioner Mick Keelty

While still a relatively young organisation, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) is quickly approaching its 25th anniversary, which we will celebrate on 19 October.

The move to form an integrated national police agency began soon after a bomb detonated in a garbage truck outside the Sydney Hilton hotel in February 1978 killing a NSW police officer and two council workers outside the venue where the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting was being held.

In the wake of the bombing the Australian Government engaged Sir Robert Mark, former head of Scotland Yard, to examine the policing arrangements in Australia. He found that “Australia’s Commonwealth and State police system was hopelessly outmoded in dealing with modern crime such as terrorism, bombing ... and hijacking”.¹

Sir Robert observed “A police force discharging the duties assigned to the AFP ... will not enjoy public confidence and trust unless it is accountable, and moreover, is seen to wish to be accountable.”² This is now the cornerstone of our values.

Fighting crime and defending professional integrity are as important today as ever. Since its inception, the AFP has pursued technological expertise in dealing with crime while also recognising that without integrity, investigative excellence was worth little.

As we look forward to our silver anniversary we can look back on 25 years of growth, and the ongoing

ability to equip ourselves with the tools to deal with ‘modern’ crime. We can continue to cultivate public confidence by a constant pursuit of high levels of professional integrity.

A wide-ranging talk given by Dr Peter Shergold, Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, to AFP senior management late last year is reproduced here. It recognises the “extraordinary range” of activities undertaken by the AFP that have been taken on “with great distinction”. Dr Shergold sees that emerging issues will require a reassessment of how things are done and many will require extensive reassessment of how we achieve our aims. Keeping to that theme is also an explanation of the AFP’s new functional model.

An example of our technical excellence covered in this issue is an article on the Australian Bomb Data Centre (ABDC). ABDC members were an invaluable part of the investigation that has brought more than 30 suspects to court for the Bali bombings. They were part of an integrated Australian state and territory, federal and international team led by the Indonesian National Police. I doubt that such a cooperative arrangement would have been thought achievable when Sir Robert handed down his report. Likewise, the AFP’s Forensic Services continually searches for excellence in its field as depicted by the article on advances on fingerprint detection techniques.

Balancing the search for operational excellence is the search for appropriate methods of maintaining professional integrity. The article on the Fisher Review provides an overview of this ongoing process.

The cover story for this edition marks 40 years of Australian police service in Cyprus. On its formation in 1979, the AFP took over the task of providing Australian contingent members to the UN force originally provided by Australian State and Commonwealth police from 1964, then solely by the Commonwealth Police from 1974.

It was in Cyprus that AFP peacekeepers learned the skills that have stood them in good stead for similar missions around the world. The three articles on Cyprus provide an overview of the history of the conflict, how change may be in the wind and a personal reflection on the poignancy of a return visit after an absence of many years.

In December, Ali Roude, Chairman of the Islamic Council of New South Wales, was a special guest at the Senior Executive Retreat. Mr Roude spoke about what it is to be an Australian Muslim, and explained how his organisation aimed to promote cultural understanding. His speech is also reproduced in this issue.

Reference

1. Australia Through Time, 125 Years of Australian History, 1993, Random House, p.461.
2. Parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Crime Authority, Inquiry Into The Australian Crime Commission Establishment Bill 2002, Submission No:1, Australian Federal Police Association, p7.