

Twenty years of the *Australian Protective Service*

Protective security officers have provided a service to the Commonwealth that can be traced back decades.

While only briefly part of the AFP from 1979 to 1984 when the world first experienced a wave of global terrorism, quite a few took the opportunity to undertake police training and remain with the AFP, while others pursued opportunities with the Australian Protective Service when it was formed in 1984.

Today, back with the AFP, they find themselves an essential part of Australia's counter terrorism strategy.



In a tenuous sense, the Australian Protective Service can trace its origins back to the formation of the Commonwealth Police in 1917, though it is generally accepted that the true predecessors of the APS were the Commonwealth Peace Officer Guard.

After the disbanding of the first Commonwealth Police Force at the end of World War 1 many transferred across to the newly formed Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB), tasked to fulfil the Commonwealth Government's Investigative needs.

An incident involving the Federated Seaman's Union in 1925 acted as the catalyst for the creation of the Commonwealth Peace Officers at a time of suspicion of allegedly left wing, communist activity.

Prime Minister Bruce called upon the SIB to investigate the union and requested the NSW

Police assist in the arrest of unionists that had contravened the Immigration Act, but Jack Lang, the Labor Premier of NSW, refused this request.

Once again the Federal Government were without a uniformed law enforcement organisation. Not willing to concede, Prime Minister Bruce introduced a Bill to Parliament for the formation of a new law enforcement organisation. On 2 September 1925 the Attorney-General was given the power to appoint Peace Officers "for the preservation of peace throughout the Commonwealth" under the new *Peace Officer Act 1925*.

Successive changes led to the formation of a new Commonwealth Police Force in 1960 when the Commonwealth Investigation Service and Peace Officers' Guard merged, allowing a plainclothes investigation branch to combine with a uniformed service.

This arrangement continued until the late 1970s, when it was decided that the ongoing problems with the ACT Police over jurisdictional boundaries could be resolved by combining the resources of both the Commonwealth and ACT Police Forces to create a new police force, one that would carry the two distinct



Members of the first Australian Protective Service recruit course in South Australia in November 1984.



The Hon. Stewart West, Minister for Administrative Services, opening the APS National Training Centre on 19 October 1989.

uniformed functions of general policing and guarding.

The AFP was established on the 19 October 1979, and at first this hybrid appeared to function satisfactorily. However, as time wore on it became apparent that the guarding service or Protective Service component as it had now become known, was performing less of the tasks associated with policing as it moved to fulfil its more specific function of providing protective security for the Australian Government. Therefore it was decided that an independent uniformed force to protect government property should be formed, using the members of the AFP Protective Service component to make up its base. Thus the Australian Protective Service was formally established on 20 October 1984.

The events of 11 September 2001, and the subsequent war on terror, has required the APS to expand its operation.

As of July 2002, the Australian Protective Service became an operating division of the AFP, ensuring cooperation between key counter-terrorism agencies, and greater operational coordination of Commonwealth law enforcement resources. Full integration officially occurred on 1 July 2004, although the process will be ongoing. Looking back over the history of the Australian Protective Service, some might say that we've gone full circle.

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APS graduating course March 2003. The integration to the AFP began in 2002 with completion on 1 July 2004.