

# Functional Model

## *proves its worth*

[Deputy Commissioner John Lawler]



Photo by Brian Hartigan

Deputy Commissioner John Lawler

*The adoption of the functional management model by the AFP brought a number of immediate benefits, as well as advantages that can be reasonably expected to accrue in the medium to longer term. In time, I would expect that our stakeholders will also appreciate that they too, have benefited from its introduction. I refer not only to our fellow law enforcement and intelligence agencies, but to government departments and the Government itself.*

On a personal level, I can say that the most immediate and obvious advantage of the introduction of the functional model has been my daily operational briefing from the National Managers. Every weekday at 8.45am I chair a meeting of the National Managers where they provide briefings on all significant operational activity within their portfolios. This sets the operational “tone” for the day, particularly when key operational details are aired against a backdrop of the major media stories of the day.

Significantly assisting the National Managers in leading their functions is the deliberate policy of accommodating them on the same floor in purpose-designed office space that acts as a catalyst for enhanced collective awareness of each function’s operational and policy positions. Such an arrangement gives the AFP opportunity to pre-position to maximum advantage on both operational and policy issues, which in turn, gives the organisation the best opportunity to succeed. An example of such positioning was the contribution made by all National Managers to the Government’s White Paper on terrorism. All were able to contribute in the knowledge that they were operating in a collegiate fashion, in presenting a unified response to government.

One of the accepted potential weaknesses of the functional management model was the possibility that “silos” could occur where information became trapped within a function, and was

thus lost to the organisation. I believe that the National Managers' accommodation and meeting arrangements, as enshrined in the corporate governance requirements, have eliminated this as a possibility. As the National Managers report to the National Managers Group, the body that provides the highest level of operational leadership within the AFP, operational priorities are able to be determined in consultation with those responsible for managing the operations, whilst in the presence of those managers of enabling services.

I regularly represent the AFP before House of Representatives and Senate committees of inquiry, and inter-departmental committees. I have found that, following the functional management model introduction, the quality of advice prepared for me improved markedly. This should not be seen as a reflection on those who prepared that advice in the superseded geographical model, but I believe that the functional model allows for more complete data capture, and thus gives a fuller representation of the AFP's position on any particular issue. Of course, in these times of heightened media focus on our every action, the centralisation of national management has allowed the AFP to more accurately market our position to the world. Unwanted and unauthorised media disclosures have largely ceased to be an issue since we adopted the new model.

As all National Managers are required to report directly to me on all aspects of their portfolio's performance, from operational activity to high level resource management, I have found that I now receive an "AFP wide" snapshot of any particular functional line, at any given time. This ensures uniformity of performance throughout the function, and allows for higher standards to be attained, and more efficient and flexible utilisation of resources within the organisation.

In reporting AFP operational outcomes to government, I have found that we are now in a much stronger position to demonstrate our achievements. This is of particular importance for two reasons. Firstly, we now receive over

half our total budget in specific "tied" funding, so it is obviously vital to our interests that we continue to demonstrate to government that we have expended the finances in accordance with the budget appropriations. Let me highlight the importance of that point by saying that in the International Deployment Group alone, the budget over the next five years is approximately \$1 billion. Clearly, we must be in a position where we can report all individual portfolio outcomes to government accurately and whenever necessary.

Secondly, and this is where we must present as a unified organisation with a single position on any given issue, it will be imperative that we present a sophisticated and accurate portrayal of our position. I see the functional management model allowing us to access our information, and present it in a more accurate and timely fashion than was previously the case. I believe our ability to more positively position ourselves with government, and before the media, will allow us greater leveraging ability to further improve on our successes, both with our stakeholders and government.

Lastly, client and stakeholder relationships are another area that can be expected to benefit from the introduction of the functional model. We can now confidently conduct business with a stakeholder, operating in the knowledge that we represent the AFP across a complete portfolio which, I believe, will significantly enhance operational and policy activity. For example, we are in the advanced stages of negotiating a new service level agreement with the Australian Customs Service. Once this agreement is implemented, we can plan on uniformly high standards of service delivery across Australia. I feel that there is a certain logic to this as, having national criminal laws in the federal sphere, it follows that we should have nationally consistent levels of operational standards and service delivery. Therefore, without a functional management model, nationally consistent standards are almost impossible to achieve.

I am confident that as life in the functional model becomes second nature to us, the benefits to the AFP will become increasingly apparent to all. As we continue to position ourselves for success in the new millennium, we shall enjoy increasing organisational and personal growth, and this will be, in no small part, due to the decision to adopt the functional management model.