

Federal Agent Michael Casey joined the police in 1975 and has worked in a variety of areas including Close Personal Protection, Witness Protection and the Prime Minister's security team. He has also been the Contingent Commander for the 11th East Timor peace keeping mission.

In his current position as Coordinator AFP Commonwealth Games planning he is responsible for ensuring the AFP is well-equipped to manage and support an incident-free Commonwealth Games in March 2006.



Agencies unite for the Games



The 18th Commonwealth Games are coming to Melbourne next March and it would be hard to miss the signs. From merchandise in the souvenir shops, street banners, ads in the newspapers and television or even the general chatter on the street, they are coming and they are going to be big.

The event is anticipated to bring together approximately 4500 athletes, 1500 team officials, 2500 technical officers, 15,000 volunteers, 5000 contractors and 2 million spectators. It will be the biggest sporting event ever hosted by Melbourne and approximately one third the size of the Sydney Olympic Games.

With new and existing funding provided by the Australian Government, Federal Agent Casey believes the AFP, which is part of the Commonwealth games security group (SWG), is well equipped to manage any threat to athletes, international guests and the general public.

"The Australian Government has pledged \$84.8 million in security support services to ensure a safe and secure environment for Australian citizens and visitors to the Commonwealth Games," he said.

"This funding has enabled the AFP to dedicate full-time staff to the project and has allowed us to purchase state-of-the-art equipment which will be used to help monitor the Games."

As part of the Federal Budget funding, a cross-organisation approach has been adopted for Games security planning, including the establishment of the SWG which falls under the Commonwealth Games Task Force within the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

“The SWG is comprised of all major Commonwealth security groups including the AFP, ASIO and the Australian Defence Force along with other relevant organisations including Victoria Police, Customs and the Department of Transport and Aviation Security; in total 14 organisations are represented.

“The idea is that we all bring to the table specialist skills, and by working together we can provide a far more superior security package.

“This has been further emphasised in our current security climate and through natural disasters like the Boxing Day Tsunami, where we have learnt that by combining knowledge and skills we are far better equipped to deal with issues that might arise.

“Our main areas of focus will be through the Protective Service at the airports (both internationally and local airfields throughout Victoria), Close Personal Protection, counter terrorism training and monitoring, and general support for Victoria Police,” Federal Agent Casey said.

While the AFP is working with Victoria Police to provide support throughout the Games, we are also working internationally supporting the running of the Queens Baton Relay which commenced in March 2005 and will officially open the Games when the Queen’s message – contained inside the

baton – is read out at the opening ceremony at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on 15 March 2006.

“Our role for the Queens Baton Relay is to contribute to the safety and wellbeing of the escort team by ensuring appropriate security for various events and celebrations staged,” Federal Agent Casey said.

“The Queens Baton Relay is no small feat either. This year will mark the first time the baton has visited all 71 nations of the Commonwealth. During its 180,000km journey it will travel by foot, air, sea, bicycle, hot-air balloon, steam train and even on an elephant.

“The AFP will be there every step of the way.

“We are equipped to offer this level of support through our international liaison officer network which is established in many of the visited countries.

“These liaison officers have strong relationships with the local law enforcement agencies so are able to work with the local authorities to ensure a safe and enjoyable journey.”

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While Victoria Police will take carriage of policing during the Commonwealth Games and the Australian leg of the Queens Baton relay, the AFP will provide assistance and support through staff, training and equipment.

Victoria Police anticipate that 80 per cent of the force will get the opportunity to work on the Commonwealth Games both directly or indirectly; the AFP can assist by providing staff to ensure that their core responsibilities to the state of Victoria are maintained.

“By working together for an event of this scale, which will require a lot of resources, we are able to support Victoria Police by allowing them to maintain their level of state policing,” Federal Agent Casey said.

“For every AFP agent assigned to the Commonwealth Games there is one Victoria Police officer back out on the street performing their core duties.”

And while every measure is being taken to make sure that there is no major incident during the Games, the AFP will be well placed to deal with anything that might occur.

“While there will be dedicated members working throughout the Games, many areas of the AFP will be on standby, including forensics, the Melbourne Major Incident Room, Transnational Crime Coordination Centre and Incident Coordination Centre in Canberra and many other areas within the organisation.

“If something happens, we will be ready,” he said.

The Commonwealth Games will run from 15 to 26 March 2006 including 16 sports (involving 25 disciplines), taking place in more than 20 venues. While most of the events will run out of Melbourne, some events will be held in surrounding towns.