

Finishing on a high note

National Manager Forensic and Data Centres James Robertson is retiring from the AFP after 20 years service to pursue his academic career. But before he goes, Dr Robertson has some important business to attend to.

Dr Robertson has been appointed to implement recommendations arising from the Federal Audit of Police Capabilities. He will oversee the Beale Review Implementation Board, which is responsible for ensuring the AFP's 11 portfolio areas put the recommendations into practice. As the Senior Responsible Officer Dr Robertson will chair the board meetings and report directly to Deputy Commissioner Close Operations Support, Michael Phelan.

"Implementing the Beale Review recommendations is important to the AFP and to Government," Dr Robertson said.

"Our success will be measured by results, definitive action plans and comprehensive project documents."

The Board will work with the relevant AFP portfolios to ensure that information is properly assessed and documented, and that full consideration is given to the impact that implementing the recommendations will have on AFP operations.

"The Beale Review has provided a great opportunity for the AFP," Dr Robertson said.

"It's the blueprint for the AFP's future. We want to get it right, so our job is to make sure we have good business processes in place to implement the recommendations in a timely manner."

Most people would take a well-deserved break after completing such an important task, particularly when it was done at the end of a 20 year career. But Dr Robertson intends to pursue his first love, and return to the academic field. When he leaves the AFP, he will take up a position as Professorial Fellow at the University of Canberra,

where he will also take on the role of Director of the National Centre for Forensic Studies (NCFS).

Dr Robertson says because the AFP has a Memorandum of Understanding with NCFS, he will continue to have an ongoing relationship with his former colleagues. He is also pleased that in providing training opportunities, resources and facilities, the NCFS will be contributing to the professional development of forensic science officers in the AFP. It is a reciprocal relationship, as the AFP has donated equipment



01: Dr James Robertson 02: Beale Review Implementation Board members at the inaugural meeting.

to the university's forensic laboratories, which are also part of the AFP's business continuity plan.

Dr Robertson is the longest serving Senior Executive Service (SES) officer in the AFP, and has served four Commissioners - Peter McAulay, Mick Palmer, Mick Keelty and Tony Negus.

Dr Robertson says from his early days in the AFP he learned to be on his mettle during executive meetings and social events. He recalls that Peter McAulay would challenge his managers to stand up before dinner and give a 10 minute

talk on the topic of their choice, but without any prior warning or time to prepare.

"I followed the principle of 'be short and be seated', and I think it was a successful strategy," Dr Robertson said.

Dr Robertson has been instrumental in developing formal qualification pathways for budding forensic scientists through collaboration with universities around Australia. This has helped to ensure that Australia is producing high-quality graduates, while also encouraging new areas of research and development in the forensic sciences.

He has also championed the acquisition of state-of-the-art technology, saying the best equipment is necessary to achieve the best results. He says it is also important for scientists to have the right tools for their job.

"My greatest achievement in the AFP is the people I'm leaving behind," Dr Robertson said.

"If you have the right people with the right qualifications and attitudes in the job, then the organisation is in safe hands. That's my biggest legacy."

