



# AFP gets social on Facebook

“It was one small click for the Social Media team and one giant leap for the AFP,” quipped an AFP member as Commissioner Tony Negus launched the AFP onto Facebook and into the realms of social networking on 11 February 2013.

A couple of hours later, the AFP Facebook page had 1000 ‘likes’. Within 36 hours, it had almost 8000 ‘likes’ and growing – surprising even the AFP Social Media team.

It is an important step in harnessing the power of the Internet and social networking and talking directly to a large community of people important to the AFP.

“Over a billion people use Facebook worldwide, and nearly 12 million of those are Australians,” Commissioner Negus said.

“What our official Facebook page aims to do is engage with the Australian public by building on our existing online presence as part of our multi-channel communications approach. This includes the AFP website, *Platypus*, crime prevention messaging and other links to the community.”

The purpose of the AFP’s official Facebook page is to raise awareness of the AFP and its activities, and to engage with the Australian community on issues of mutual concern.

It also has potential to support operational work by acting as an information resource or as an engagement and awareness tool for crime prevention and recruitment messages.

Team Leader of the AFP Social Media team, Federal Agent Erica Hanisch, says it is an exciting time for the organisation.

“I have been talking to a counterpart in another Australian police force and it took them six months to reach 8000 likes on their Facebook page,” Federal Agent Hanisch says. “The success of the AFP page is massively unexpected, but very welcome.”

Federal Agent Hanisch joined the AFP in 1989 and worked in a number of operational areas in the AFP’s Sydney office before beginning a series of overseas deployments with the International Deployment Group in 1999.

Her interest in social media was stirred when a colleague in Timor-Leste told her she should be communicating on Facebook. Since then she has completed a Bachelor’s degree in media communications and has just finished her Masters in Organisational Communication, with a focus on social media.

She says the AFP has done a very good job in communicating in the traditional media environment and maintains a very good reputation with the community and government.



But she adds that the revolution of social media has shaped the community’s expectation on how organisations should engage with them.

“They expect us to show more of a human side and to engage with them on a more social level – hence the term ‘social media’. Social media was once thought of as a place where you socialise, have fun and hang with your friends.

“It is now more a definitive term of ‘social’, meaning ‘people interacting’, and that’s the expectation now

of our audience – that we will engage with them in a more social manner on social media.”

Federal Agent Hanisch says that social media, for a government agency, needs to be managed strategically and should be utilised as a channel of engagement rather than a broadcast means of communication.

“Government organisations like the AFP are used to communicating with their audiences in a certain way. We are all going to have to adjust our cultures of communication control and start listening more, if our use of social media is going to be effective.”

Team Leader Social Media Erica Hanisch, left, Manager Corporate Communications Mark Ney and Social Media team member Emma Gerard celebrate the launch of the AFP Facebook page.

