

Commitment strengthened

The AFP's increased commitment in Papua New Guinea is value adding to law enforcement outcomes in the country.

The arrival in Papua New Guinea of AFP members on 4 November 2013 was met with much fanfare. Traditional costumes, ceremony and formal parade heralded both their arrival and a new stage of the Papua New Guinea Australia Policing Partnership (PNG-APP). It was the perfect start to 'Phase IV' of what is a significantly enhanced bilateral law enforcement partnership. There are now a total of 75 AFP staff in PNG, including 13 in Lae, the second largest city in the country.

Phase IV of the PNG-APP is an important element in value adding to the development of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC). It is the latest evolution of the RPNGC's modernisation program through training, construction and refurbishment of facilities. Previous assistance has also provided advisor support to the Bomana Police College, the newly created Office of Reform, Internal Affairs Directorate and the Fraud and Anti-Corruption Directorate. These roles will continue as previous phases of the AFP-APP are integrated into Phase IV.

The AFP now provides publicly visible advisory support in the cities of Port Moresby and Lae. While the AFP members don't have executive policing powers, they are in uniform and work alongside frontline RPNGC officers, providing supervision and leadership advice.

Phase IV is part of a broader joint understanding signed on 19 July 2013 where, in response to PNG's development priorities, Australia offered to enhance cooperation in the areas of health, law and order, education and infrastructure. The joint understanding notes that good law and order is a fundamental precondition in creating an environment where economic development and better service delivery can flourish.

In November 2013, in her address to the first wave of AFP staff in the expanded mission at the International Deployment Group in Canberra, PNG's Deputy High Commissioner to Australia Jacinta Warakai-Manua, said the new agreement is the latest example of a long history of cooperation between the two countries.



Phase IV of the Papua New Guinea-Australia Policing Partnership is a significant increase in the relationship between the AFP and the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary.



Deputy High Commissioner to Australia Jacinta Warakai-Manua addresses AFP members deploying to Papua New Guinea at a farewell ceremony in Canberra.



Teamwork: Superintendent Brad Morgan and Superintendent Awan Bawa continue the close partnership between the AFP and the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary.

“All governments recognise the importance of this assistance in providing a stable and peaceful environment and the vital role that law enforcement by the PNG police and AFP play in building a strong economy and prosperous society,” Mrs Warakai-Manua said.

Areas of focus for the AFP include community policing, station management and supervision, community liaison, traffic operations, criminal investigations and assisting with sexual offence investigations.

Mission Commander PNG-APP Alan Scott says the early stages of the expanded mission were focused on establishing relationships.

He says in mentoring and advising the RPNGC, the intent was to make them feel better about the job they do. “We have been overwhelmingly well received,” he says. “The RPNGC officers want to do a better job. It is about showing them that – while challenging – policing is very rewarding. Things are progressing



AFP members deploying to Papua New Guinea are farewelled in Canberra.

in the right direction. They are small steps but they are positive steps.”

Commander Scott says that while small in number, AFP officers can add significant value to operational effectiveness by working with key RPNGC counterparts in critical areas.

“We go out with them on patrols and advise in a whole range of policing duties,” he says. “We work in the stations with station management and help them with issues about running a station properly. We are also assisting at the front counters in police stations when members of the public come in with complaints. We are highlighting the benefits of correctly filling in an Occurrence Book and what follow-up might be needed.”

Commander Scott says the AFP is doing important work with the Criminal Investigations Division – particularly assisting the Sexual Offences Squad and analysing past briefs of evidence in the prosecutions area.

“We have been looking at failed briefs – issues in the past that haven’t worked. We have someone going through old briefs and trying to work out how they could have been better prepared and how the cases could have been more successful.”

Commander Scott says even small but key recommendations can have a dramatic result on operational effectiveness. He cites one example by an AFP team that noticed there was no detailed record kept of the people in custody at a particular police station. There was little knowledge transfer from one shift to the other. At shift changeovers the incoming supervisor didn’t know why people were detained, or whether they had any medical conditions.

AFP officers working at the station proposed that a whiteboard be introduced where basic details of people in custody could be recorded such as name, date of birth, why they were arrested, the date for release and any medical conditions. It was a simple but very effective initiative.

The RPNGC and AFP have reviewed the project and the concept is now being appropriated to all stations in the National Capital District.

In addition to obvious benefits pertaining to human rights, this strategy has the potential to help minimise civil litigation against the RPNGC and produce potential savings to the nation.

“This is a good example of where we have worked closely with the RPNGC to introduce a management



AFP members receive a traditional greeting on arrival in Papua New Guinea.



AFP Commissioner Tony Negus and Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Commissioner Tom Kulunga sign the formal agreement to enact Phase IV of the Papua New Guinea-Australia Policing Partnership.

Below: AFP Commissioner Tony Negus attends the formal arrival parade in PNG.





AFP members will mentor and advise at RPNGC stations in Port Moresby and Lae.

technique that has been broadly accepted and implemented,” Commander Scott said. “Within the human rights agenda, this is a significant change as it has the potential to influence RPNGC practices and professionalism.”

Another important element of the AFP mission is the development of gender awareness within policing. The effort and success achieved by the AFP in overseas missions has earned it international respect. The lessons learned from these missions are now being employed in PNG.

Commander Scott says the market places are important to the livelihood of a lot of PNG citizens but they are also very dangerous. Many women who work in the markets have, for years, complained about the sexual violence and robberies that occur there.

“The RPNGC has established a police station in one of the main markets, and have female police officers staffing the station,” Commander Scott said. “There are some pretty amazing police women here who take a lot of risks to be on their own in a police station.”

He says it’s a great initiative and the AFP has enhanced it by influencing regular beat patrols in the markets.

“We have encouraged officers from each of the stations to conduct proactive, highly visible patrols within the markets and surrounding areas.

“This initiative not only has the potential to positively influence the public perception of the RPNGC, we have also seen RPNGC officers more motivated and confident.

“As we see enhanced levels of public confidence in the police, it is likely we will see an increase in crimes being reported which weren’t reported in the past. This potential increase in crime statistics can be seen as a positive move forward, but will also put more pressure on the RPNGC to attend to those reports.”

Early results are flowing through to the community. Commander Scott says it is a positive sign for the mission – and for the community.

“Although we haven’t made major reforms, it is just a subtle movement in the right direction where people are feeling safer, more comfortable and more confident in the police, and the police have more confidence in themselves.”



National Manager International Deployment Group Mandy Newton meets a local merchant during a visit to a market in PNG.

Below: Gender awareness is making markets a safer place for women in PNG.

