



ACT Policing Senior Constable Shona Davis at the Special Needs Christmas Party in Canberra.



Law enforcement has the responsibility to protect the community – but police officers are also part of the community they serve. Whether it's at the whole-of-AFP level or as individual citizens, engaging within the community is as fundamental to law enforcement, as it is in life.

AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin says people need to feel that you understand them, that you listen to their concerns, and that you care about the problems they face. He says the key to achieving this lies in building and maintaining relationships of trust with the community.

“Both as an organisation and as individuals – communicating with the people we serve is not only a good idea but part of the fabric of what AFP people are about,” Commissioner Colvin says.

Achieving this isn't always easy in today's complex hive of diverse and changing communities. Organisations need to change with the times. Yet, despite the rise of the digital world, engagement with the world is still a mix of traditional and new technological solutions.

It is hard, however, to ignore the importance of digital communications in the modern world. Federal Agent Erica Hanisch was an integral part of launching the AFP's Facebook page in February 2012 and expanding its social media presence to Twitter and YouTube.

Engaging moments

Community engagement is at the heart and soul of serving those whom we protect.

by Graham McBean

Commander Michael Chew proudly displays his contribution to the AFP's Movember support.



The necessity to engage with new media can be seen in the phenomenal success of the Facebook page and other social media platforms. The AFP Facebook page now has more than 316,000 followers and more than 13,000 Twitter followers. The AFP is also broadening the number of Twitter accounts to international AFP offices and National Missing Persons is about to open its own Facebook page.

Federal Agent Hanisch says the success can be attributed to the two-way conversation with the public; by being transparent with the Facebook community about what the AFP does; and by demonstrating a willingness to engage with their audience.

"We engage with them," Federal Agent Hanisch says. "It's important to a social media audience that they feel as though they have a connection with the people within the organisation they're following. No one wants to talk to a machine. We need to be conversational, empathetic, and open to entertaining new ideas, even if they differ from those of the AFP."

The Facebook success is not just about having lots of followers – but being followed by a large section of the public brings its own rewards. One of the AFP's biggest social media successes in recent times was a post about a woman wanted on warrant in Sydney.

The post was uploaded on a Friday afternoon and the woman was arrested over that very weekend. In that time, more than one million people viewed the post because people were sharing it and commenting on it and getting engaged.

While the potential problems of social media are well documented, Federal Agent Hanisch says some problems are actually opportunities, where angry or disparaging comments can be addressed and the attitude of the commenter 'turned around'. She says everyone has a right to an opinion and a right to voice that – providing they're not just 'trolls'!

"I don't see it as a negative thing," she says. "I see it as an opportunity for us to engage with them, change their minds perhaps and maybe even swallow a bit of pride and take what they say on board and maybe change the organisation as a result. It's not all about us just promoting what we do – it's a two-way street."

Movember

Taking part in a community event as a whole-of-agency has the benefit of bringing much needed promotion and support of worthy causes, such as the annual Movember fundraising event for men's health.

This year's Movember Triple Zero Challenge (which includes law enforcement and the broader emergency services community) raised \$367,953. These included contributions from Team Australian Federal Police and regional offices.

Leading Perth fundraiser Federal Agent Damion Millar finished Movember with \$1080 raised for 'The Fuzz' team in Perth Office. The Fuzz was organised by Perth colleague Federal Agent Bennet Plus and despite an actual aversion to facial hair irritation, Damion says it is important to support the message of men's health.

"I know depression is pretty big," Federal Agent Millar says. "And suicide rates are high with men who have depression through things like broken marriages and mental illness. I've got to say that growing facial hair is not for me. I've been clean shaven for most of my life apart from maybe a three-day growth, and it really irritates me.

"The other thing was that I haven't been involved for a while. Years ago whilst participating in Movember, I got up very early for a morning shift and shaved before I realised what I was doing I had shaved most of it off and I was half way through the month. So I thought I would do it again this year and see how much I could raise."

The Perth fundraising was impressive and innovative. Federal Agent Millar says police Mo Bro Federal Agent Jon Piec raised \$533 in coins by 'fining' his colleagues that entered his work corral. "It was a great effort by Jon to keep the donations coming," says Federal Agent Millar.

The AFP also had the added distinction of having long-term AFP Movember fundraiser Commander Mick Chew voted as 'Best Mo' for the Triple Zero team by an alleged panel of experts at Mo Headquarters.



AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin addresses the Institute of Public Administration Australia in Canberra. Commissioner Colvin says communicating with people is part of the fabric of what AFP people are about.

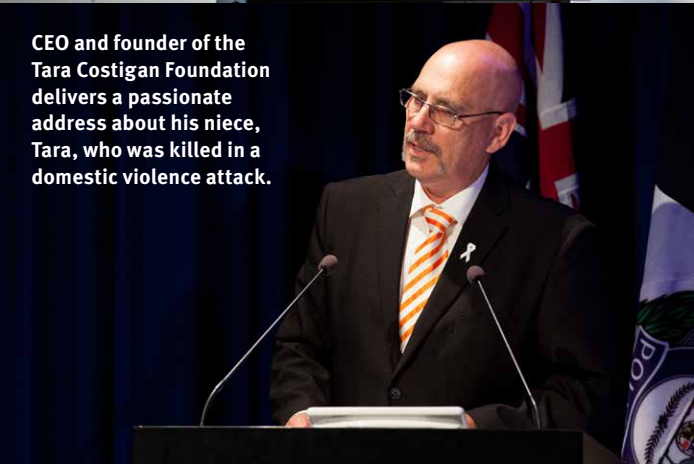
Engaging moments

Having the AFP present at community events is also a crowd pleaser. Throughout the year, AFP members around Australia and the world lend their time and expertise to numerous events from open days to community celebrations like the annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade.

'Redman' is always a crowd pleaser with the kids and has been "on duty" at the Defence Expo sponsored by Holsworthy Army Barracks. So too is AFP mascot Kenny Koala. The many variations of Constable Koala have appeared around the world to provide a symbolic way for the AFP to connect with the public. ACT Policing, in particular, is deeply embedded in the Canberra community as its community policing service.

It's not just a matter of being a good corporate citizen, or individual citizens as part of the community. Commissioner Colvin says the police role lies in increasing public safety, protecting the community, and preventing and disrupting crime through a clear understanding of the community environment.

"Our objective is to support and build social cohesion, not undermine it. We achieve this by building relationships of trust with the communities we serve. We have a responsibility to identify opportunities and develop programs to strengthen this trust."



CEO and founder of the Tara Costigan Foundation delivers a passionate address about his niece, Tara, who was killed in a domestic violence attack.

White Ribbon Day

Another important community message supported by the AFP is White Ribbon Day campaign to end violence against women. The AFP and Department of Human Services jointly supported the Canberra-based charity, the Tara Costigan Foundation at AFP headquarters in December last year.

The Tara Costigan Foundation provides long-term support to victims of domestic violence to help rebuild their lives and break the cycle of violence. Currently operating in Canberra, the Foundation is working towards rolling out its service model nationally.

The fundraiser had the added poignancy when founder and CEO of the foundation Michael Costigan spoke of his journey since his niece, Tara, was killed in 2015 by her former partner with an axe as she held her five-day-old baby girl.

Speaking about the Foundation's motto, 'together we are strong', Michael urged all men to be warriors and work together to effect change in our culture for good.

Opening the event, Commissioner Colvin said all violence against women begins and ends with a lack of respect. "Respect is often misrepresented, particularly in cultures like policing, as something that has to be earned. Respect shouldn't be earned – it should be given."



At a community event 'Redman' is always popular with the public.